

Bangladesh a country of equity, unity

JS body on religious affairs ministry tells UN rights team

UNB, Dhaka

A three-member delegation, led by United Nations Special Rapporteur Heiner Bielefeldt, met the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Religious Affairs Ministry in the city yesterday.

Two other members of the team are human rights officers Chian Yew Lim and Mika Kanervavuori.

Committee Chairman Bazlul Haque Haroon described the existing social, cultural, political and economic bonding among the people of all religious faiths. "Bangladesh is a country of equity and unity. All enjoy equal rights here. There is no dispute among people," Haroon told the UN delegation.

He also referred to the country's constitution that guaranteed equal rights of all religious faiths, said a PID handout.

The team expressed satisfaction over the religious freedom in the country and Bangladesh's achievement in various indicators, including women empowerment.

The UN Rapporteur arrived in Dhaka on Sunday to assess the state of

freedom of religion or belief in the country.

Following his nine-day visit till September 9, he will present a report with his conclusions and recommendations to the UN Human Rights Council next year.

He is keen to learn more about the efforts to eliminate the root causes of violence, intimidations and vigilantism in the name of religion and developments in promoting and protecting religious freedom, especially initiatives of inter-religious dialogues.

The work of the Special Rapporteur, as mandated by the UN Human Rights Council, also requires him to identify existing and emerging obstacles to the enjoyment of the right to freedom of religion or belief and present specific recommendations to overcome them, according to Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Standing committee members M Aslamul Haque, Sadhan Chandra Majumdar, AKM Awal, M Makbul Hossain, Mohammad Amir Hossain and Dilara Begum were present.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina addresses a discussion marking the National Mourning Day, organised by Bangladesh Chhatra League at the Bangabandhu International Conference Centre yesterday.

PHOTO: PMO

Fugitives jailed in first verdict

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Reports suggest that the two directors of the company, which was listed on the stock exchange through initial public offering in 1996, settled in Canada.

Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission (BSEC) filed the case against the two in 1997 on charges of manipulating share prices through fraudulent means in 1996. It filed another 14 cases against 38 individuals, eight listed companies and six brokerage firms over similar charges.

The share price index of the DSE rose as high as 3,648.75 points on November 5, 1996. The following day, it started falling and eventually came down to 462 points in May 1999. Share prices of listed companies soared abnormally, even by several hundred times, before the crash that left millions of investors broke.

The main avenue from the capital's Motijheel Shapla Chattar to the Ittefaq crossing had turned into a kerb market in 1996, attracting lakhs of small investors to trade on the street. Many of them used to come to the kerb market in the early morning for trading with paper shares and go home in the afternoon with hefty profits.

A kerb market is one where trading takes place even outside official hours and without officials procedures.

However, the kerb market in Motijheel was flooded with fake share certificates; insider trading took place with involvement of many stockbrokers and company owners; and the small investors became the victims of the cheating.

Only days before the market collapsed, the then Awami League-led

government had claimed credit for an outstanding performance in the stock market.

After the crash, however, it formed a probe committee in December 1996, headed by Aminul Islam who was vice-chancellor of Jahangirnagar University at the time.

The committee submitted its report to the government on March 27, 1997, identifying a number of companies and some of the country's biggest brokers and influential individuals involved in market rigging.

The big names include Beximco, Premium Securities, Olympic Industries and TK group. Four members of the DSE were also named in the report.

All of them were accused by the stockmarket regulator in the 15 cases, 12 of which were stayed by the higher courts.

Proceedings of only three cases had been continuing in the special tribunal, which gave verdict in one case yesterday.

"It's a positive thing that the special tribunal came up with a verdict in one of the cases on the 1996 sharemarket scam," said Faruq Ahmad Siddiqi, former chairman of the BSEC. "The rest of the cases should be disposed of," he added.

Masud Rana Khan, a lawyer for the BSEC, told journalists that initiatives were taken to try the rest of the cases in the tribunal.

According to the government probe report, as sponsor director Mashukur Rasul was holding 8.28 lakh shares and Iftekhar Mohammad 8.35 lakh shares of Chic Tex. But without prior disclosure and in violation of securities rules, they sold out the entire holdings when the prices rose above Tk

40 from below Tk 10 just within four months.

This means, each of them made a profit of over Tk 2.5 crore.

In 2009, Chic Tex was transferred to the Dhaka bourse's over-the-counter (OTC) market, a separate trading floor for junk shares. Listing on the OTC market means the companies are non-performing, non-operational or they have no existence.

After recommendations from another probe report on another stockmarket crash in 2011, the Securities and Exchange Ordinance 1969 was amended in November 2012, empowering the government to set up special tribunals to try capital market-related cases.

The tribunal that jailed the two Chic Tex directors began functioning in July this year.

Root out 'weeds'

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International Conference Centre.

The BCL organised the discussion on Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Bangamata Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mujib.

The PM said the collaborators and flatterers of the defeated force are still there in the country.

Bangabandhu in his write-ups said Bangladesh's land is very fertile where trees and weeds grow up so easily, she added. "We've to clear the weeds so that the useful trees could grow easily."

Hasina, also the AL chief, said two types of politics are prevailing in the country now -- one is being used as a money-making tool illegally and another is devoted to people's welfare. "We are doing the second type of politics... being a politician, it's the greatest achievement for one to earn the trust, confidence and love of people."

About the August 15 bloodbath that killed most of her family members, she said it was not just a killing of a family. Rather, the target was to destroy the nation's independence and victory, she noted.

That's why the killers also assassinated the four national leaders behind bars as they conducted the Liberation War and earned the victory for the nation.

She said propaganda had been spread against the AL. "The propaganda was so planned that it seemed Awami League committed a great sin by liberating the country... Awami League turned out to be the greatest enemy of the country."

The AL chief said the defeated forces had spread the propaganda as Bangabandhu started the trial of war criminals. Ziaur Rahman, however, stopped the trial and rehabilitated them by amending the constitution, she added.

"After 75, it seemed that Bangladesh was not an independent country anymore... there was a bid to make it a colony again."

About Khaleda Zia's birthday celebrations on August 15, the PM said she celebrates a fake birthday because she never believes in Bangladesh's liberation and independence.

"She [Khaleda] had been with the occupational force, she was the collaborator of that force... their defeat caused pain to her. To express solidarity with the occupational force, she celebrates her birthday on August 15 though it's not her birthday..."

AL General Secretary Syed Ashrafur Islam, Prof Dr Sultana Shafi and Dr Fakhrul Alam of Dhaka University, among others, spoke at the programme, with BCL President M Saifur Rahman Sohag in the chair.

Jakir Hossain, BCL general secretary, conducted the programme.



Wearing black badges, teachers of Shahjalal University of Science and Technology in Sylhet bringing out a silent procession on campus yesterday protesting the attack on teachers allegedly by Chhatra League activists the day before.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Give them Rs 5 lakh

FROM PAGE 1

The National Human Rights Commission of Bangladesh and a Bangladeshi lawyer of the killing case yesterday confirmed the decision of the Indian rights watchdog.

Felani's father Nur Islam said he wanted justice and would take the money in compensation if it did not cost him the justice.

"I want justice for the killing of my daughter... I will not mind receiving compensation, but not in exchange for justice," he told The Daily Star over phone yesterday.

"The BSF man shot dead my daughter in front of me. I have been waiting for justice for the killing of my daughter for last four and a half years," he added.

A writ petition seeking retrial of the murder is now pending before the Indian Supreme Court.

On January 7, 2011, on her way home from New Delhi with her father, 15-year-old Felani was shot while crossing the border illegally as her clothes got stuck in the barbed-wire fence at Aanatapur border point in Phulbari upazila, Kurigram.

fresh global outcry and renewed the call for an end to border killings.

SM Abraham Lincoln, a Kurigram public prosecutor and lawyer of Felani murder case in Bangladesh, said the Indian NHRC board members made the call unanimously in a suo moto move and directed the Indian central government to pay the compensation through the Indian High Commission in Bangladesh.

The lawyer said the truth had been established through the move that Felani was a victim of BSF shooting.

"Now we hope accused BSF man Amiya Ghosh will be given the due punishment as the compensation is only a token," he added.

Prof Mizanur Rahman, chairman of Bangladesh NHRC, welcomed the decision and termed it a "positive instance" for the cross-border cooperation to protect human rights.

He told The Daily Star that they had requested their Indian counterpart to play their due role so that Felani's family members got justice.

The Indian government was bound to pay the money, he said, adding that they had earlier implemented their NHRC's recommendations properly. Amid pressure from rights organisa-

tions, India opened investigations and the trial started at a BSF court in August 2013. Felani's father Nurul Islam and relatives testified in the proceedings.

On September 6, 2013, the court cleared Amiya of the murder charge, drawing further anger from the victim's family and rights activists of both sides.

Even the BSF chief "did not agree" with the findings of the court. A retrial was ordered after Bangladesh expressed displeasure and took the matter to the Indian border force top brass in New Delhi. Felani's father had also appealed to the Indian high commissioner to Bangladesh for revision trial in the case.

However, the retrial began only to end with the accused being acquitted again. The same court revised the trial upholding its previous verdict in July this year.

The Indian human rights body Amnesty India yesterday filed a writ petition with the country's Supreme Court, saying human rights were violated in Felani murder and confusion was created surrounding the trial process.

The court has fixed October 6 to hear the petition, Abraham Lincoln told The Daily Star.

BNP turns 38

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Under such a situation, the BNP is celebrating its 37th founding anniversary today.

To mark the occasion, the party has no plan to organise even a march as in the previous two years.

BNP's activities have come almost to a halt after its pullout from anti-government agitation. Except for some media briefing and indoor meetings occasionally in the capital, there is no other noticeable activity of the party right now.

Contacted, BNP spokesperson Asaduzzaman Ripon said over 20,000 BNP leaders and activists are now behind bars in around 22,000 cases across the country. He also said over 4.5 lakh BNP men were accused in different cases.

"From this statistics, you can easily imagine what sort of torture and obstacles we have been facing for the last several years," he added.

"It's true that BNP is now going through a very critical juncture. But we are confident of overcoming the situation after reorganising the party comprising those who truly bear the ideal of Shaheed Ziaur Rahman," BNP Standing Committee Member Lt Gen (ret'd) Mahbubur Rahman said.

The party also needs to get rid of the elements who don't believe in BNP's ideals and are causing trouble for party with their politics driven by greed.

Talking to The Daily Star, a number

of BNP stalwarts said the party should hold regular meetings at different levels to ensure transparency and democratic practices within the party.

Some BNP leaders say BNP Senior Vice-Chairman Tarique Rahman's controversial speeches on Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his interference in party activities from London are also responsible for the present condition of the party, at least to some extent.

Following the debacle in the three-month's movement, BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia has taken initiative to reorganise the party -- from grassroots to the central tiers -- to inject fresh blood before coming up with fresh agitation programmes.

The party is also making preparations for holding its sixth national council by November, party leaders said.

The BNP chief on August 9 instructed the party's 75 district units to form fresh committees comprising dedicated and competent leaders through councils by September 30.

"The process of reorganisation so far didn't get full momentum and could not boost the morale the frustrated party men," a BNP central leader engaged in the revamp process, said.

Nazrul Islam Khan, a member of BNP standing committee, said the revamp process got obstructed by the government as it has started afresh harassing BNP men and filing "false" cases.

Two DU, JnU students

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The detainees -- DU student Razib Baroi and JnU student Amit Kumar Das -- identified themselves as activists of Bangladesh Chhatra League, said police.

Both had been staying at Jagannath Hall of DU.

"We are examining the political and academic identities of the two," said Abu Bakar Siddique, officer-in-charge of Shahbagh Police Station.

As of filing this report at 2:30am today, a case was yet to be filed.

Rajib is a vice-president of Jagannath Hall unit BCL, according to hall sources. Sajib Biswas, general secretary of Jagannath Hall BCL, however, said Rajib is only an activist.

Police said private firm employee Ansar Ali and his female friend went for a stroll at Suhrawardy Udyan near

the TSC on the evening of August 16.

As they were coming out of the park, a gang of around five stopped them at the TSC gate of the park and took away Ali's debit card and the girl's necklace and earrings.

Meanwhile, some more youths joined in and threatened Ali that they would rape the girl unless he provided them with the debit card's PIN.

As Ali complied, one group held back the duo and another went to the Dutch Bangla Bank's ATM booth at the TSC. They withdrew Tk 50,000 from his account.

The CCTV footage from the ATM booth confirmed Amit's identity, the OC told The Daily Star, adding that police were conducting raids at different places to nab the others on the basis of information gleaned from Amit and Rajib.

ISIS burns 4

Iraqi Shia fighters alive

AFP, Baghdad

The Islamic State group strung up four Iraqi Shia fighters with chains and burned them alive, according to footage posted online, the latest gruesome execution video from the jihadists.

The victims -- identified as fighters in the pro-government Popular Mobilisation forces from southern Iraq -- were suspended from a swingset by chains attached to their hands and feet, then set on fire.

ISIS, which overran large parts of Iraq last year and still controls much of the country's west, said the murders were in revenge for the alleged burning