

## SQ Chy

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never compromised on the question of democracy," Ripon said, adding that Salauddin was elected MP six times.

On Wednesday, the apex court dismissed petitions of Salauddin and Jamaat leader Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojahed for reviewing its verdict that upheld their death penalty given by two war crimes tribunals in 2013.

Yesterday's press briefing was organised to inform the media that Khaleda would return from London tomorrow.

Ripon, also BNP's international affairs secretary, claimed Salauddin was not a criminal and he was not in the country during the time he is said to have committed war crimes.

He further claimed that on Salauddin's behalf, several documents were produced before the court and several local and foreigners were cited as witnesses. Salauddin said he was in the then West Pakistan during the war, Ripon said.

"We as well as the entire nation would be happy if these things were considered. Then it might have proved that Salauddin was not in the country during that time and therefore it was impossible for him to commit those crimes," he added.

Asked if the BNP believed Salauddin's claim that he was not in the country during the war, Ripon said the party believed whatever Salauddin said as he belongs to it. He also submitted evidence in favour of his statement, claimed Ripon.

Replying to another question, he said his party is in favour of the trial of the "real war criminals".

On July 29, the BNP alleged that Salauddin had become a victim of political vengeance after the SC upheld his death penalty handed down to him earlier.

## Local govt

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support to a candidate in a municipality election.

Earlier on October 12, the cabinet approved the draft of the law.

President Abdul Hamid on November 2 promulgated an ordinance amending the local government act. The ordinance stipulated that both mayoral and councillor aspirants will contest the polls in a partisan manner.

But the government later changed its decision and placed the bill in parliament, keeping the provision for holding only the mayoral polls under the banners of political parties registered with the EC.

According to EC officials, elections to around 245 out of 317 municipalities are likely to be held next month.

## Sylhet court

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League, and Ataur Rahman Geda, a police informant.

Mosharraf Hossain, officer-in-charge (investigation) of Kotwali Police Station and also investigation officer of the case, submitted the charge sheet against them to Sylhet Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's court.

Of them, Mahib, who had been absconding, surrendered before the court on November 10.

Ebadur, Rakib and Geda were arrested after the incident and they gave confessional statements admitting their involvement in kidnapping and killing Sayeed.

On March 11, they abducted Sayeed, a fourth grader at Hazi Shahmeir Primary School, for a ransom of Tk 5 lakh and later killed him. Police on March 14 recovered Sayeed's body wrapped in sacks from Ebadur's house at Jharnapar in the city.

## Serving poor

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catholic mission called Parish Suihari.

He ran a small dispensary at Mirzapur each day from 9 in the morning till 12 noon, and treated about 40 to 50 patients.

Most of his patients were from the lower tier of the society.

He would wake early in the morning, said sister Dipti, his assistant.

After having breakfast, he would go out to visit patients at different hospitals in Dinajpur town. Later in the afternoon, he would again visit patients at Saint Vincent Missionary Hospital in the town.

"This is the routine the doctor had been maintaining ever since he came to Dinajpur," she told The Daily Star.

Piero's parents are still alive and he has three brothers and a sister. Two of his elder brothers are married and living in Italy while he and his younger sister and the other brother had dedicated themselves to serve humanity, joining the catholic church, said father Silas.

Sister Dipti said even though people knew that he has been hurt, they have not stopped coming to the dispensary for treatment.

He had been serving as a volunteer at the Dinajpur Medical College Hospital.

Belal Hossain, a patient at the surgery ward of the hospital, said the doctor would visit the ward each day and enquire after the patients. He would even check their prescription and sometimes would pay for their treatments.

## SQ Chy submitted

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The court said there was no explanation why he did not produce the certificate before November 16 this year, the date on which he actually produced it before the apex court.

"Further, the authenticity of the certificate has not been certified by an authorised officer of the High Commission Office of Bangladesh stationed in Pakistan," the SC said.

The apex court also said the convict was not only physically present in the brutal and diabolical incidents of crimes, but also actively participated in those killings. He also showed no repentance or remorse for his conduct at any point of time, rather he expressed disdain towards the trial process.

In the judgment on the petition of Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojahed, the SC observed that the barbaric, gruesome and brutal crimes committed by Mojahed were comparable with Hitler's Gas Chamber Genocide or Jallianwala Bagh massacre (in Punjab on April 13, 1919, when the British Indian Army fired on innocent civilians killing hundreds).

It said Mojahed's ruthless Al-Badr Bahini being instigated, suggested, provoked and incited by him had kidnapped and killed intellectuals, which was a cold-blooded savagery.

"Does Islam permit killing of those unarmed people? While awarding the sentence, the court must take into consideration the unbearable pains, tears rolling down the cheeks and sufferings of the widows and children of the victims, who cried for getting justice for about 43 years," the SC said.

"The barbaric gruesome and heinous crime which under the petitioner's [Mojahed's] leadership his Badr Bahini committed is a revolt

against the humanity," it added.

The Al-Badr Bahini committed brutal crimes of killing of intellectuals only to cripple the new-born country which is apparent from the facts, the Appellate Division observed.

Chief Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha wrote the judgment on the petition of Salauddin and Justice Hasan Foez Siddique wrote the verdict on the petition of Mojahed. Justice Nazmun Ara Sultana and Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain agreed with them.

## 69 hajj agencies

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this, said people involved in the business.

The embargo on Umrah visas has taken a heavy toll on Biman Bangladesh Airlines as the national flag carrier used to fly the majority of Umrah pilgrims.

Biman reduced the number of weekly flights on Dhaka-Jeddah-Dhaka route to five from seven in April in the wake of a drop in the number of passengers travelling by its flights.

In the meantime, the Umrah season commenced on November 14 and will continue until the end of Ramadan. Bangladeshis will not be able to perform Umrah until the Saudi government withdraws the ban.

However, Saudi Hajj Minister Bandar Al-Hajjar has recently said a new system will be put in place and executive bylaws issued soon to increase the number of pilgrims visiting the Middle Eastern country every year.

The ministry will continue using e-portal to issue visas, which will not take more than a few minutes, he added.

As many as 51,321 Bangladeshis performed Umrah last year.

## No rhetoric

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in the next five years.

Zoleka Mandela, granddaughter of Nelson Mandela, who lost her daughter in a road crash in 2010, urged all not to make empty commitments but to take necessary action to save lives.

Annually 500 children die on roads across the world, which should end, she said.

The world is not doing enough to scale down road crashes, which is the leading cause of the preventable deaths, observed participants in yesterday's discussion.

Some developed countries have been able to reduce deaths on roads by enforcing law, improving infrastructures and educating drivers but still road crashes remain the leading cause of deaths of young people, aged between 15 and 29 years.

The reason behind UN including road safety in its newly adopted SDGs is that sustainable development is not achievable without reducing deaths of so many economically active youths and spending a huge amount of money to treat the injured.

## 11 held

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Meanwhile, the US-based SITE Intelligence Group in a post uploaded on its website yesterday said, "The Islamic State (IS) claimed three attacks in Bangladesh including the assassination attempt on Italian priest Piero Parolari."

Yesterday, police produced the arrestees before the Chief Judicial Magistrate's Court in Dinajpur and sought remand for Mahbubur Rahman Bhutto, secretary general of district Jamaat, in custody for five days. The court granted the remand prayer of police for a day and sent the 10 others to jail, said investigating officer of the case Baslur Rahman, also a sub-inspector of Detective Branch of police in Dinajpur.

The DB was tasked with the investigation of the case, said Ruhul Amin, Dinajpur superintendent of police.

Teams of DB, Criminal Investigation Department and Police Bureau of Investigation were working separately on the case, he added.

On Wednesday, injured Parolari was first taken to Dinajpur Medical College Hospital. Later that day, he was flown to Dhaka and admitted to Combined Military Hospital.

The Italian pastor has been in Bangladesh for three decades. He serves St Vincent Missionary Hospital in Dinajpur and a local catholic mission called Parish Suihari.

The 57-year-old is the third foreigner and the second Italian to have come under attack from unidentified assailants in the country in the last one and a half months.

Italian aid worker Cesare Tavella was shot dead by criminals in the capital's Gulshan on September 28.

Five days later, Japanese national Kunio Hoshi was gunned down in Rangpur.

On October 5, pastor Luke Sarkar of a Pabna church survived an attempt on his life by three youths who tried to slit his throat with a knife at his house.

## Eight charged with cocaine smuggling

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Detectives submitted a charge sheet accusing eight people in the case filed in connection with the seizure of liquid cocaine found in a container carrying sunflower oil in Chittagong Port.

The accused are: Golam Mostafa Sohel, a manager of Prime Hatchery, a sister concern of Khatungan-based firm Khan Jahan Ali Ltd, and his cousin Mehedi Alam, an official of a security company, Mostafa Kamal, a consultant of a foreign company, AK Azad, manager Cosco Shipping Agency, Atiqur Rahman, commercial executive of Mondal Group, and Saiful Islam, an official of a C&F firm.

Of the accused, Saiful was released on bail on November 18. Except two accused expatriates -- Md Fazlu and Bakul Miyan -- living in the UK, the rest are now in jail, said police sources.

The expatriates were shown fugitives in the charge sheet, said court sources. They said Assistant Commissioner Md Kamruzzaman of Detective Branch of Chittagong Metropolitan Police, also the investi-

gation officer of the case, placed the charge sheet before a Chittagong court yesterday afternoon.

The Court of Chittagong Metropolitan Magistrate would hear on the charge sheet on November 22, said Additional Deputy Commissioner (prosecution) Kazi Muttaki Ibne Minan.

The name of Khan Jahan Ali Ltd's proprietor Nur Mohammad was dropped from the charge sheet even though he was accused in the first information report, said court sources.

The container with 107 barrels of sunflower oil arrived at Chittagong Port on May 8 from Bolivia via Uruguay.

On information, Customs Intelligence officials sealed off the container on June 6 and it was opened in presence of officials of different agencies on June 8.

Later, samples from each of the 107 barrels of sunflower oil were sent for tests in two laboratories in Dhaka where liquid cocaine was found in one of the barrels.

On June 27, police filed the case

## A dozen priests

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your burial or let your family do it? Inform [us] today."

"I really am scared. Now I have limited my movement to the church compound," said the priest, whose quarter is within the premises.

The five priests, who serve churches in and around the capital, wished anonymity on security grounds.

They told this correspondent that at least seven other clergymen who had received the same threat. At least five of them had registered general diaries with different police stations of Dhaka.

Most of them have restricted their movements.

"I always remain afraid that somebody is following me to kill," said a priest of a Mirpur church.

According to Bangladesh Christian Association (BCA), the country has around 3,000 churches served by as many priests.

On Wednesday, unknown gunmen shot an Italian doctor-cum-pastor Piero Parolari in Dinajpur. Earlier on October 5, pastor Luke Sarkar escaped an attempt on his life when three suspected radicals tried to slit his throat in Pabna.

Parolari is now under treatment at the Combined Military Hospital in Dhaka while Luke fled his area on October 28 without informing anyone about his next whereabouts.

"We do not write anything against any religion. We do not even run conversion campaigns. Why did we become a target?" said a clergyman in the capital.

"The kind of uncertainty we are in is unprecedented," he added.

BCA Organising Secretary William Proloy Samadher feels the same.

"We now feel unsafe to an extent that we experienced never before," he says.

"We are receiving information from across the country that priests are

getting death threats," William says, claiming the number of clergymen to have received such threats would be at least a few dozens.

Khandab Lalul Kabir, who commands the Rab unit responsible for law and order in Savar and Mirpur areas, said that they had received such allegations and beefed up security for the churches and the priests.

"We are in constant touch with them," he said.

Asked whether they were satisfied with the security arrangements, several pastors replied in the negative.

"The government has to do more ... Even though several days have passed since the text messages were sent, the security agencies failed to track down any of the senders," said a clergyman.

## Two more

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raped my mother...the army men left our house after half an hour of torture," she said.

The witness said Mujibur took Pakistani army men to one of their neighbouring home and army men raped a woman after Mujibur showed her. The victim narrated the incident to the witness before committing suicide a few days later, she said.

"I want justice," the witness pleaded before the tribunal as tears rolled down her face.

During the cross-examination of the witness, defence counsel Golam Kibria engaged in a heated argument with a judge of the tribunal and at one point, three judges left the court abruptly at 12:52pm.

While leaving, Justice Anwarul Haque, chairman of the tribunal, said they would sit at 2:00pm but later court officials and lawyers said the tribunal adjourned proceedings until November 22.

## Internet use drops sharply

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delivered verdicts upholding the death penalties of war criminals Salauddin Quader Chowdhury and Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojahed.

The authorities said they were well aware of the situation but they would not make any decision to lift the ban before getting the home ministry's nod.

However, sources said the government might think about lifting the ban after three to four days for a short while and see what happens.

State Minister for Post, Telecommunications and Information Technology Tarana Halim said a single life is more important than "Facebooking and free chatting".

The ban would be lifted when the government felt it was safe to do so, she said yesterday after a meeting with her ministry colleagues and experts of the Bangladesh Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (BTRC).

"We are sorry for the inconvenience of the users, even I am suffering but we need to understand the situation," Tarana added.

She said some people were circumventing the block and enjoying Facebook, WhatsApp and Viber and that the experts were working to stop the going around.

In response to a query, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal told parliament that suspension of Facebook, Viber and WhatsApp was

temporary and that many countries take such steps on occasions.

The government had also "mistakenly" shutdown the internet on Wednesday for the first time in the country's history.

Even though internet was restored in about 75 minutes after the shutdown, many users yesterday complained about poor speed and other difficulties.

About 10 percent of the Internet service is down, Suman Ahmed Sabir, chief strategy officer of an International Internet Gateway (IIG) Fibre@Home, told The Daily Star.

"Also, the blocking of Viber and WhatsApp has caused some websites to become