

College student stabbed dead

Stabbing follows altercation; motive unclear

A CORRESPONDENT, Jessore

A college student was stabbed to death by a youth in Raipara area of Jessore town last night.

The dead, Hasibul Hasan Tarafdar Jim, 17, of Choramara Dighirpar area in the town, was a class-XI student at Jessore City College.

Quoting witnesses, Ilyas Hossain, officer-in-charge of Kotwali Police Station, said the incident happened around 9:00pm when Jim was hanging out with his friends near the house of a drug peddler in Raipara area.

Suddenly, an altercation broke out between an unknown youth and Jim. At one point, the youth stabbed him and fled.

Jim was rushed to the Jessore 250-bed General Hospital where doctors declared him dead, the police official said.

The reason behind the altercation and the identity of the alleged killer could not be known immediately.

Meanwhile, a few crude bombs exploded in Choramara Dighirpar area after the news of the incident spread. Rezwanul Hasan Antu, a class-IX student at a local school, was hurt in the incident. He was being treated at the hospital in Jessore, said police.

HC questions

FROM PAGE 16

including Aynunnahar Siddiqua. Petitioner's lawyer Aneek R Haque told The Daily Star that the police did not have authority to collect information about tenants under the rules. They could only take a specific step, he claimed.

The DMP on February 29 announced that it had been collecting "identification information" about landlords and tenants since November last year and asked all to provide such information by March 15.

On March 13, another HC bench rejected another petition that sought an order to stop the collection of tenants' information, saying that the DMP was allowed to take any step under DMP rules and regulations, 2006, to prevent terrorism and militant activities in the city.

ROW OVER KILLING OF WOUNDED PALESTINIAN

Netanyahu defends Israeli army

AFP, Jerusalem

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu defended the Israeli army yesterday as controversy gripped the country over a soldier caught on video shooting a Palestinian assailant in the head as he lay on the ground.

The incident on Thursday led to the soldier's arrest and strong condemnation from military officials, but some rightwing politicians and their supporters have reacted angrily to the response.

Netanyahu on Thursday joined condemnations of the soldier's behaviour but appeared to backpedal slightly Sunday in remarks at the start of a cabinet meeting.

"Any challenge to the morality of the IDF (Israel Defence Forces) is outrageous and unacceptable," he said.

"The soldiers of the IDF, our children, maintain high ethical values while courageously fighting against bloodthirsty murderers under difficult operational conditions.

"I am certain that in all cases, as in the current one, the inquiry takes into account all conditions. We must all

support the IDF chief of staff, the IDF and our soldiers, who safeguard our security."

Netanyahu leads one of the most rightwing governments in Israeli history but holds only a one-seat majority in parliament.

Video from Thursday's incident in Hebron in the occupied West Bank spread widely online and threatened to further inflame tensions amid a wave of violence that erupted in October.

It showed a 21-year-old Palestinian, who along with another man had allegedly stabbed a soldier minutes earlier, lying on the ground, apparently after being shot.

The soldier then shoots him again, in the head, without any apparent provocation. The Palestinian, Abdul Fatah al-Sharif, was killed.

Sarit Michaeli, a spokeswoman for Israeli rights group B'Tselem, which posted the video, called it an "execution".

The UN's special coordinator for the Middle East peace process, Nickolay Mladenov, called it "a gruesome, immoral and unjust act".

Jamaat calls hartal today

FROM PAGE 1

with the beginning of the hearing on a writ petition filed 28 years ago challenging the legality of Islam's status as the state religion in the constitution.

The High Court yesterday set today for the hearing.

A special bench of Justice Naima Haider, Justice Quazi Reza-Ul Hoque, and Justice Md Ashraf Kamal is scheduled to begin the hearing at 2:00pm today.

The government led by military ruler HM Ershad on June 9, 1988 inserted a section in the eighth amendment to the constitution making Islam the state religion.

Fifteen distinguished citizens filed the writ petition with the HC that year challenging the amendment.

Following a supplementary petition, the HC on June 11, 2011, issued a rule upon the government to explain as to why the part of the eighth amendment to the constitution, which made Islam the state religion, should not be

declared illegal.

On June 30, 2011, the parliament passed a bill on the constitution's 15th amendment retaining Islam's status as the state religion.

The amendment, however, restored "secularism" as one of the four fundamental principles of the state, which had been omitted by a martial law regime after the 1975 bloody changeover.

In its statement, Jamaat, a key component of the BNP-led 20-party alliance, said Bangladesh is a Muslim country and Islam has been included in the constitution as the state religion. No demand has been raised from people to remove Islam from the constitution.

"If the government takes any initiative to remove Islam from the constitution, the people of the country will not accept it," Jamaat said in the statement.

Ambulance, hospitals, fire service and vehicles related to the media will remain out of the hartal purview, according to the press release.

Jamaat ready to take new name

FROM PAGE 1

"Our preparation for renaming Jamaat is almost final," Amiruzzaman, ameer of Chittagong (North) Jamaat, told this newspaper recently. "District- and upazila-level leaders have received instructions in this regard."

Jamaat policymakers started preparing to have a new name after an investigation agency in August 2013 began probing the war crimes allegations against the party.

However, the process of trying or banning Jamaat for the 1971 crimes remains halted, frustrating justice seekers and campaigners.

"Everything depends on the government's move. Though our preparation to rename the party is at the final stage, we will not proceed until the government takes the initiative to ban us," a central leader said, wishing anonymity.

Another Jamaat leader said the party has thousands of leaders and activists who will not just sit idle if the government bans it. They will be with the "new party".

"Banning Jamaat will be good for us as we will get rid of the bad name with the disappearance of the word Jamaat."

Another party leader said, "Jamaat policymakers think people will forget the party's previous mistakes if it comes up with a new name. Besides, many people, including youths, dislike the word Jamaat."

According to insiders, well-known Jamaat leaders -- central or grassroots -- will not be in any posts but they will run the "new party" from behind. Little-known or mid-ranked leaders will hold the portfolios.

For example, a Jamaat leader said, Abbas Ali Khan was Jamaat's acting ameer from 1976 to 1992. But in reality, it was Ghulam Azam who led the party from behind. After getting citizenship, Ghulam became the Jamaat ameer.

Amiruzzaman of Chittagong (North) Jamaat said his position as the unit chief will be renamed "chairman" when the party takes the new name.

THE WAIT FOR TRIAL

Justice seekers and victims and their families have long been pressing for the trial of Jamaat as a party.

Their demand received fresh vigour after February 5, 2013 when youths occupied Shahbagh intersection in the capital demanding highest punishment for war criminals and a ban on Jamaat and its student body Islami Chhatra Shibir.

Following the unprecedented Shabbagh Movement, the government amended the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act, 1973 and the investigation agency launched the probe.

The agency handed over the probe report to the prosecution in March 2014, recommending a ban on Jamaat and six other organisations, which were associated with the party in 1971. The probe body found involvement of these anti-liberation bodies in grievous crimes committed during the Liberation War.

Based on the report and other documents, the seven-member prosecution team started working to prepare formal charges for initiating trial.

But 15 months after the amendment, the law minister in May 2014 said the amended war crimes law was not enough to try and punish any political party, as it had no provision for punishment of a guilty organisation.

Against this backdrop, the prosecution team has stopped their preparation for filing a case against Jamaat, frustrating the justice-seekers and campaigners for the war crimes trial.

"Whenever we ask the law minister about banning or trying Jamaat for its involvement in crimes against humanity, the minister assures us that the government is taking measures to amend law," Shahriar Kabir, war crimes researcher and executive president of Ghatok Dalal Nirmul Committee, said yesterday.

"In January, the law minister promised us that he will take necessary steps within February to amend law to pave the way for trying Jamaat. But the minister is yet to do this," he said.

"The government will be able to explain why they are not amending law to try Jamaat."

He also said it would be suicidal not only for Awami League but also for the country not to ban Jamaat politics. Until it is banned, the party's conspiracy against the pro-liberation forces will continue.

The Daily Star failed to reach Law Minister Anisul Huq despite several attempts.

Shahriar Kabir said only banning Jamaat is not enough. The government should also ban different NGOs, financial and other organisations run by the party to stop the spread of Moududibad. "The government will also have to snap Jamaat's ties with different international bodies." Founded by Abul Ala Moududi in

1941, Jamaat was banned twice during the Pakistani era in 1959 and 1964 for its communal role. It got banned again just after independence in 1971 but was allowed to return to politics after the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1975.

Last year, a UK review revealed that Maududi's *takfiri* ideology that permits use of "extreme violence" for establishing Islam in the society was adopted and followed by Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, a UK review reveals.

According to the review, *takfiri* ideology has consistently been understood as a doctrine permitting the stigmatisation of other Muslims as infidel or apostate.

Former British ambassador to Saudi Arabia Sir John Jenkins and Charles Farr, the director general of the office for security and counterterrorism in the Home Office, conducted the review.

In Bangladesh, two special tribunals set up to deal with wartime offences in several verdicts put the spotlight on Jamaat's role in 1971 and termed it a "criminal organisation".

According to historic documents and witness accounts, Jamaat opposed the birth of Bangladesh and took part in atrocities during the Liberation War. It, however, never repented for this.

In August 2013, a special High Court bench by a majority view declared Jamaat's registration with the Election Commission illegal.

In July 2014, the law ministry completed a draft for bringing about amendments to incorporate specific provisions for punishment of organisations. Under the draft amendment, the war crimes tribunal will have powers to ban any organisation and prohibit its activities in any name or any form or in disguise, if convicted of war crimes, said sources.

But no progress has been made in this regard.

Tureen Afroz, who led the prosecution team while preparing the case, said, "It does disappoint us to a certain extent as, after repeated media statements from the ministry of law, the amendment to the ICT law is not taking place."

Making or amending law is the responsibility of parliament, Tureen told The Daily Star, adding, "Until parliament passes the amendment, we can't proceed with the trial of an organisation."

Criminals busy

FROM PAGE 16

Mohammad Reaz, a local, claimed.

At least 5,000 trees have been stolen over the last six months, another local, requesting anonymity, said. The gangs are known to the locals and also known to be very dangerous, he said.

A section of locals have turned some forest land into cultivable land and grow paddy there but forest officials never look into it, he alleged.

If anyone protests, forest officials harass them by filing false cases, it has been alleged.

Gangamati Forest Beat Officer Mohammad Parvez said an unidentified gang is cutting down trees and also turning the forest area into cultivable land.

"These actions are undermining my position and authority," he said. He pointed out that they have only three forest guards which was insufficient to monitor such a large area of forest.

"I already submitted a complaint to Kalapara Police Station [in this regard]," he added.

Faruque Hossain, Mohipur range officer, said the gang mainly cut down trees in the middle of the night. "Our forest guards are not armed and they cannot face armed gangs."

Contacted, Ajit Kumer Rudhro, Patuakhali Divisional Forest Officer (DFO), said he had asked to the police to take legal action over the matter.

GM Shah Newaz, OC of Kalapara Police Station, said they were investigating.

3 Bangladeshi

FROM PAGE 16

procedures of the victims.

Around 50,000 Bangladeshi migrants in Libya have been passing hard times as the security situation in the North African country worsened due to fighting among factions allied to the country's two rival governments since 2014.

Amid escalating violence, the Bangladesh government banned the export of manpower to the country in July last year.

Later, the foreign ministry advised the Bangladeshi migrants to stay alert and avoid areas where demonstrations were being staged.

The migrants were also asked not to move into conflict zones, particularly Benghazi and Misrata.

Libya has been in chaos since the death of Muammar Gaddafi in October 2011 following a war between his loyalists and rebels backed by the Americans, British, and France and several Arab countries.

Currently, the country has two competing parliaments -- the Eastern House of Representatives and the rival General National Congress.

On last December, the United Nations mediated a deal for the creation of a unity government which could not be implemented yet.

EC won't take

FROM PAGE 16

by electoral irregularities, stuffing ballot boxes, and clashes between supporters of rival candidates.

Around two dozens people were killed in pre-polls, polling day, and post-polls violence, according to media reports.

Talking to reporters yesterday, Shah Nawaz claimed that the violence took place because of the over enthusiasm of some people.

Polls violence is not a new culture in Bangladesh, he said, adding, "Many people were killed in violence in previous elections in our country."

Killing and violence occur not only during election time, but also during the normal times, he claimed.

The commissioner, however, hoped incidents of violence would be fewer in the next phases of polls.

"We have taken some strong actions against electoral irregularities in the first phase of polls. We will take stronger actions in the next phases of elections, if anyone commits violence," he said.

The EC has given directives to law enforcers and election officials to do everything for fair polls, Shah Nawaz said.

4TH PHASE POLLS SCHEDULE Elections to 743 UPs will be held on May 7 across the country.

The last date for filing nomination papers is April 7. Nomination papers will be scrutinised on April 10 and 11 and the last date for withdrawal of nomination papers is April 18.

The EC last night finalised the polls schedule and sent it to the district election officers concerned.

It also asked the district election officers to announce the poll schedule at their respective districts today.

Elections to around 650 UPs will be held on March 31 in the second phase, while around 680 on April 23 in the third phase. Around 1,400 more UPs will go to the polls in two other phases until June.

Wife calls man

FROM PAGE 16

"The calling of names and hurling of abuses such as 'Haathi', 'Mota Haathi' and 'Mota Elephant' by the appellant (woman) in respect of her husband -- even if he was overweight, is bound to strike at his self respect and self esteem," Justice Vipin Sanghi said.

The woman had contended the family court relied on "vague and non-specific" allegations while granting the divorce. She argued he failed to give specific instances of alleged cruelty with dates, time and particulars.

The High Court, however, rejected this argument.

"When two parties are in a marital relationship, neither is expected to maintain a logbook and note down therein each and every instance of matrimonial offence committed by the other," Justice Sanghi said.

The judge also took note of other complaints by the man that his wife not only slapped him but also asked him to leave the house. The man said

his wife threatened to immolate herself with kerosene and implicate him and his family in a dowry case.

The woman left the matrimonial home with her jewellery and belongings, and told the man to transfer his property in her name if he desired her to live a "devoted wife", the man alleged.

"Such events are clearly destructive of the matrimonial bond and would naturally give rise to a bonafide and genuine belief and apprehension in the mind of the respondent (husband) that it is not safe for him to peacefully and mentally continue the relationship..." the High Court said.

The man also said on the night of February 11, 2005, she hit his private parts when he wanted to have intercourse and injured him.

"Each of this... incidents are grave and weighty matrimonial offences/misconducts by the appellant (woman), which cannot be described as events relating to normal wear and tear of a marriage," the judge said.

Syria army retakes

FROM PAGE 16

jihadists sparked a global outcry with the systematic destruction of treasured monuments.

"Palmyra will be the central base to broaden operations... against Daesh in numerous areas, primarily Deir Ezzor and Raqa," the army said in a statement carried by state media, using an Arabic name for IS.

The northern city of Raqa is IS's main Syrian bastion and the oil-rich eastern province of Deir Ezzor is another key stronghold.

Backed by a barrage of Russian air strikes, Syrian troops and allied militia launched a major offensive to retake the desert city this month.

Palmyra is both a symbolic and strategic prize for Assad's forces, as it provides control of the surrounding desert extending all the way to the Iraqi border.

At least 400 IS fighters were killed in the battle for the city, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said. On the government side, 188 troops and militiamen were killed.

"That's the heaviest losses that IS has sustained in a single battle since its creation" in 2013, the director of the Britain-based monitoring group, Rami Abdel Rahman, told AFP.

He said two cars packed with explosives blew up in the afternoon, one west of Palmyra and the other northeast of the city.

JIHADISTS UNDER PRESSURE

A military source told AFP that IS mili-

tants had retreated towards the east as the army made its final push.

Syrian state television broadcast footage from inside Palmyra's famed museum, showing jagged pieces of sculptures on the ground and blanketed in dust.

A stone head of one statue lay in the centre of one room. Most artefacts were evacuated by antiquities staff before IS arrived in May 2015, but larger pieces that could not be moved remained in the building.

An AFP journalist inside Palmyra said residential neighbourhoods were like ghost towns with no civilians in sight while damage was widespread.

Most buildings bore impacts from artillery shells and gunfire, and some were entirely reduced to rubble. Army sappers defused roadside mines in both the modern part of the city and in the old ruins.

A group of regime fighters meanwhile took time off to celebrate their win and kicked around a football in the middle of a street strewn with debris.

IS, behind a string of attacks in the West including last week's Brussels bombings, is under growing pressure from Syrian and Iraqi forces determined to retake bastions of its self-proclaimed "caliphate".

The jihadists used Palmyra's ancient theatre as a venue for public executions and also murdered the city's 82-year-old former antiquities chief.

Two ministers fined

FROM PAGE 1

pay the money to Islamia Eye Hospital and National Liver Foundation of Bangladesh within seven days. In case of failure, they will have to serve seven days in jail.

This is the first time that the SC has sentenced two sitting ministers for contempt.

Qamrul's counsel Syed Mamun Mahub and Mozammel Huq himself said they would seek a review of the verdict.

Following the judgment, various quarters called on the two ministers to resign on moral grounds, although legal experts are divided on whether they can hold office after conviction.

Soon after the verdict, Mozammel met Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her office. Later in the evening, Qamrul met Mozammel at the latter's house, said a reliable source.

The topic of discussion in either of the meetings could not be known. However, both the ministers are expected to attend today's cabinet meeting, added the source, asking not to be named.

Qamrul and Mozammel made headlines early this month, by coming down hard on the chief justice for two days in a row. They criticised the CJ, after the top judge of the country expressed dissatisfaction over the "poor performance" of the prosecutors and investigators of the war crimes tribunal in dealing with the war crimes case against Mir Quasem Ali.

Qamrul demanded formation of a new bench, keeping the chief justice out of it, for hearing Quasem's appeal afresh. Mozammel went on to say that the CJ should not be delivering the verdict in the appeal.

The verdict in Quasem's case was pending when they made the comments and the SC on March 8 sentenced the Jamaat leader to death.

Yesterday, an eight-member SC bench headed by the chief justice gave the verdict, after refusing to accept the unconditional apologies offered by the ministers, who were present at the court.

The court said it could not accept their apologies as their comments had maligned and undermined the office of the chief justice and interfered with the administration of justice. Also, there statements are highly derogatory and contemptuous.

Before delivering the judgment, the CJ said they did not bring the contempt proceedings against all the persons whose names were mentioned in the report of the daily Janakantha to

have spoken at the March 5 roundtable where the two ministers made derogatory comments.

"We have brought the contempt proceeding against only the two ministers to give a message to the whole nation," he added.

Earlier, Attorney General Mahbubey Alam, instructed by the court, read out the Janakantha report involving the two ministers' comments.

Following the verdict, the AG told reporters at his office that the constitution does not detail the fate of a minister convicted by the SC for contempt of court.

The cabinet may decide about them, as it is a question of morality, he said.

The SC judgement gave a message that the dignity of the court should not be damaged in any manner, he added.

Former law minister Shafique Ahmed told The Daily Star that there was no legal bar for the two ministers to continue to hold office.

Under article 58 of the constitution, the office of a minister will become vacant, if he or she resigns from the office by placing his resignation in the hands of the prime minister for submission to the president, he said.

The membership of a lawmaker might be vacant if he or she is convicted and sentenced to more than two years, Deputy Speaker Fazle Rabbi Miah told a private TV channel.

However, eminent jurist Shahdeen Malik said the two lost their moral rights to join cabinet meetings or to hold the office of minister as they have been convicted by the highest court.

Khurshid Alam Khan, an SC lawyer and editor of Dhaka Law Reports, told this correspondent that Qamrul and Mozammel should resign immediately, because they have been found guilty and their apologies have been refused by the Appellate Division.

Termining the SC verdict historic, the BNP demanded that the two ministers quit.

"After this verdict, the two ministers have no moral rights to hold the portfolio or to be in the government," said BNP acting secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir at a press conference at the party headquarters.

Khandker Mahub Hossain, a BNP leader and also the outgoing president of the Supreme Court Bar Association, made a similar call for their resignation.

"If they don't, the prime minister should take steps to remove them immediately to set an example before the people," he said.