



Dhaka Central Jail in Keraniganj on the outskirts of the capital. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is expected to inaugurate the jail-1 of the prison tomorrow. The photos were taken on Thursday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

## Central jail outside city

FROM PAGE 1  
now accommodates over 8,000 prisoners against its capacity of 2,600.

A training institute, a park and a museum will be set up on the premises of the Dhaka jail, he added.

According to Banglapedia, the Old Dhaka jail was built on 36.76 acres of land. The prison's history dates back to the eighteenth century.

A "criminal ward" was built in Dhaka in 1788, says the website of the prison authority. Later, the prison was built on Nazimuddin Road which became one of the largest jails in the country.

The jail authorities received the land in Keraniganj from the Dhaka deputy commissioner's office in May, 2004. They later handed it over to the Public Works Department for building

the structures. The construction of the new jail began in 2008.

About the allegation of poor construction work, IG (Prison) Brig Gen Syed Iftekar Uddin said they informed the higher authorities about some lapses in the construction.

He hoped they will be able to restrict the use of mobile phones and drugs by the inmates.

## Rampal plant deal likely this month

UNB, Dhaka

The EPC (engineering, procurement and construction) contract for the proposed 1,320MW coal-fired power plant in Rampal near the Sundarbans is likely to be signed this month.

Power Secretary and Chairman of Bangladesh-India Friendship Power Company Ltd (BIFPC) Monowar Islam said this while addressing a workshop on Power System Master Plan, organised by Japan International Cooperation Agency (Jica), at Bidyut Bhaban in the capital yesterday.

"The date for signing the contract is yet to be confirmed. But hopefully, it will be signed within this current month."

The power secretary's remarks came at a time when campaigns against the plant on environmental grounds are stepping up efforts.

The BIFPC, a joint venture company of Dhaka and New Delhi, has been implementing the 1,320MW coal-fired power plant project.

Following concerns raised by different rights groups about the plant's proximity to the Sundarbans, a UNESCO team recently visited the site and held discussions with officials from different government departments. The team is yet to disclose their findings. It is alleged that their freedom to survey the site and collect evidence was severely restricted.

Presiding over the workshop, the power secretary said 96 percent people would come under electricity coverage by the end of 2019.

Experts from Jica made a presentation on the Power System Master Plan up to 2041, under which initially a plan will be made for 2016-30 and later it will be extended up to 2041.

## 2 cleaners murdered

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

Unidentified criminals hacked two cleaners to death in Faridpur town when they were cleaning a road early yesterday.

They are Manik Zamadar, 28, a cleaner of Faridpur municipality, and his brother-in-law Bharot Zamadar, 22, a cleaner of Natore municipality.

Abdul Awal Mia, a local, said he found the bodies lying on Miapara Road at West Khabashpur around 5:00am. He was going to a mosque to say his Fazr prayers.

The bodies had stab wounds in the heads and faces.

Manik's father Kishore Zamadar said Bharot had come to visit them from Natore.

Bharot used to help Manik whenever he came to Faridpur, he said, adding that the victims went to work around 3:00am.

Abdul Gaffar, sub-inspector of Faridpur Kotwali Police Station, said police recovered the bodies and sent those to Faridpur Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsies.

The motive behind the killing could not be known immediately.

## Slack investigation

FROM PAGE 1

activist, was hacked to death near his home in Mirpur. He was the first to have fallen victim to such attacks by suspected militants.

Investigators are yet to submit charge sheets in the cases over the murders of Avijit, Niloy, Ananta and Dipan. So far they have just arrested a handful of suspects.

"The arrests, made in connection with the killings [of bloggers and a publisher], seem like a stage-managed drama," Ananta's brother-in-law Samar Bijoy told The Daily Star yesterday.

"Such atrocities will continue until law enforcers arrest the real perpetrators and the masterminds," he added.

Requesting anonymity, a family member of blogger Niloy, murdered by suspected Islamist militants inside his rented house in the capital on August 7 last year, expressed his frustration over the investigation into the killing.

"Law enforcers don't catch the real criminals. They arrest people randomly and cook up stories," he said.

Referring to Oyasiqur's killing by three cleaver-wielding youths last year, he said it was the public that captured two of the attackers. "That was the only instance where the perpetrators were caught. But the law enforcers had no role in that."

Oyasiqur's father Tipu Sultan said if the real killers were punished, the criminals might have restrained themselves from committing similar crimes.

Dipan's father Prof Abul Quasem Fazlul Huq said it is the government's responsibility to ensure justice and establish the rule of law. But the government has failed to do that, and such incidents of brutal killing are recurring.

Rafida Ahmed Bonya, wife of slain writer-blogger Avijit, alleged that the government had been "reluctant to find and try the killers of the previous bloggers and a publisher".

"We have already seen that our so called 'secular' government will not side with us; they will either stay quiet or support the Islamic fundamentalists," she said in a Facebook post on Thursday in her reaction to Nazim's murder.

"It's completely unacceptable that you get hacked by the religious fanatics or arrested by the government of a democratic country when you express your views or simply ask questions about religion."

People need to forge a movement to fight Islamist fundamentalism in the country and also put pressure on the government to take steps in this regard, she said.

"The only way it will stop is if the people unite and protest vehemently against it, exactly the way they are doing today to protest the death of another online activist, Nazim."

"We will lose many more Avijits, Anantas and Nazims if we stop," added Bonya.

Avijit was hacked to death on Dhaka University campus after he and Bonya came out of Amar Ekushey Boi Mela on February 26. Bonya was badly injured in the attack.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, Maruf Hossain Sorder, deputy commissioner (Media) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, said police already submitted charge sheets in Rajib and Oyasiqur murder cases, and the cases over the murders of other bloggers and a publisher are under investigation.

Law enforcers have put on trial all but one suspected killers of blogger Rajib in May last year, around two and a half years after the killing.

The chief of banned militant group Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT) and seven former students of a private university were charged with the murder.

Police, however, are yet to track down the mastermind behind the murder -- Redwanul Azad Rana.

In September last year, the Detective Branch of Police pressed charges against five ABT members in Oyasiqur murder case.

Of the accused, Zikrullah alias Hasan and Ariful Islam alias Mushfiq were captured by the public minutes after the murder.

But police are yet to arrest the suspected masterminds -- Akram Hossain Hasib alias Abdullah and Junayed alias Taher.

The detectives also learnt about the involvement of suspected ABT members Masum alias Masud, Sharif and Abrar in the killing.

It, however, didn't mention their names in the charge sheet, as it is yet to get details about them.

The Criminal Investigation Department is investigating the killing of blogger Ananta, but it is yet to submit charge sheet.

The CID arrested two students of Shahjalal University of Science and Technology (SUST) -- Mannan Rahi and Abul Khair -- as suspected murderers.

Mannan confessed before a Sylhet court that he, Khair and three others hacked Ananta to death in Sylhet on May 12 last year for his write-ups.

On the eve of Avijit's first death anniversary in February, Additional Commissioner Monirul Islam of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) told journalists that police had identified three suspects who were at the crime scene during the murder.

He also said police had obtained evidence of the involvement of six to seven people who are members of Ansarullah Bangla Team.

At least eight people have so far been arrested in connection with the murder.

Niloy, a Gonojagoron Mancha activist, was the fourth blogger to have been hacked to death. Four cleaver-wielding youths killed him at his Goran flat on August 7.

Police arrested three people, including a nephew of State Minister for Labour and Employment Mujibur Haque Chhunu, in connection with the murder six days later.

## Abe invites Hasina

FROM PAGE 1

are Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States, while the European Union is also represented within the G7.

The agenda for this year's summit will likely focus on maritime security, anti-terror measures, and the refugee crisis.

According to Japanese Jiji Press, leaders of the seven developing nations, including Bangladesh, are expected to discuss development-related issues in the Outreach Meeting.

It said they were likely to hold talks with the heads of the G7 nations and the European Union during the event.

The UN secretary general and presidents of the World Bank, ADB and IMF are also set to participate in the meeting.



## Another threat to free speech?

FROM PAGE 1

foreign media to undermine any events of the Liberation War will also be a criminal offence.

It allows any individual to file a case against distortion or denial or misinterpretation of any events or documents in the said periods.

An individual, according to the proposed law, may be punished with a jail term of up to five years and in addition, a monetary fine of Tk 1 crore if convicted under the law.

The law commission drafted the proposal following remarks made by a few BNP leaders, including Khaleda Zia, questioning the number of martyrs in our Liberation War in 1971.

It has also sent the draft to the law ministry to take necessary step to translate it into law.

Apparently there are some justifications for such a law. However, a careful scrutiny of the proposed law shows its vague and draconian character.

It is vague because it does not specifically identify events and documents which should neither be distorted nor be denied.

There are numerous incidents that directly or indirectly relate to the time span of March 1 to December 16 in 1971. Not all incidents took place in the territories of Bangladesh [the then East Pakistan] and West Pakistan.

Incidents, many yet unknown, in connection to our Liberation War simultaneously took place in many other countries including India, USA, the Soviet Union, China and at the UN during that time.

World super powers were engaged in frenzied diplomatic actions around our Liberation War.

More new information about the diplomatic war is still being discovered as researchers and historians keep working. This may continue for many more years to come.

Their efforts have been contributing immensely to a more accurate picture of the history of Bangladesh's Liberation War. Their works help the future generation to improve the veracity of facts as they learn to assess various kinds of historic evidence.

Now the crucial question to ask is: can the law commission by itself prepare and tag a list of events related to our Liberation War with the proposed law?

Is it possible for an individual to keep himself informed and updated of all events before making any comments or writing anything without risking a criminal offence?

No list of documents published by the government in exile or by the one in independent Bangladesh from March 1, 1971 to December 16, 1972 is available in the public domain.

The law commission should also disclose a list of documents published by the government in between March 1, 1971 to December 16, 1972 to keep the citizen informed and safe from the threat of lawsuits.

Will the government publish any such list of all the published documents before the enactment of the law?

If people do not know about all of them, how will they keep themselves free from the risk of undermining or misinterpreting those documents?

### MAJOR THREAT TO FREE SPEECH

If the proposed law is enacted, making any comments or writing new articles or giving interpretation afresh on the basis of new findings of any event connected with the Liberation War will be a risky venture.

Writers and researchers may face accusation of either distorting or denying any events related to the Liberation War if their works do not match with accepted descriptions of events or documents published and publicised by the government in the said period.

There is another dangerous provision in the proposed legislation which allows anybody to file case for distortion or denial of Liberation War events.

The question can be asked, who will determine whether there has been any

distortion or undermining of facts before filing the case? This will open the floodgate for vexatious litigation to harass otherwise innocent persons.

So, things will be very complicated and difficult once the proposed law is enacted. It will also pose a major threat to people's freedom of speech and expression guaranteed by the constitution.

Once the proposed legislation is enacted, it may even halt the present trend of studying history.

### JUSTIFICATION FOR NEULAW

The law commission says some people have been publicly questioning our independence and the young generation is being misled. Even distorted history is being printed in text books. Besides, it is easy to mislead a large number of people by spreading distorted facts through electronic and social media.

"Our independence will be questioned if we can not fight this menace successfully," says the law commission in justifying the proposed law.

The law commission also cites the Holocausts Denial law and some legislation enacted in some European countries.

It says denial of genocide or supporting such crime committed during the regime of socialism after the Second World War in different European countries, particularly in some countries in Eastern Europe, has been criminalised through enactment of laws.

Currently, such legislations exist in 22 countries and genocide, crimes against humanity, crimes against peace and supporting war crimes have been brought under trial through existing legal system, says the law commission.

Austria, Belgium, France, Poland and Romania have made special legislation to hold trial of such offences, it adds.

### ARE ITS REASONS JUSTIFIED?

It looks like the law commission is either acting on faulty premises or has distorted the facts to justify the enactment of the controversial legislation in Bangladesh.

The enormous suffering inflicted upon the world by the Nazi regime has prompted a number of European countries to enact laws criminalising both denial of the Holocausts and the promotion of Nazi ideology.

In fact, those who denied Holocaust have done it to promote and profess Nazism. [Nazism is the body of political and economic doctrines held and put into effect by the Nazis in Germany from 1933 to 1945 including the totalitarian principle of government, primacy of especially Germanic groups assumed to be racially superior, and supremacy of the fuhrer.]

"The aim of these laws is to prevent the resurrection of Nazism in Europe by stamping out at the earliest opportunity-or to use the phrase "to nip it in the bud"- any public reemergence of Nazi views, whether through speech, symbols or public association," says Michael J Bazylar, professor of law, who has done extensive research on Holocausts in WWII.

Prof Bazylar is the "1939" Club Law Scholar in Holocaust and Human Rights Studies at Chapman University School of Law in Orange, California. His study titled "Holocausts Denial Laws and Other Legislation Criminalising Promotion of Nazism" examines laws around the world that are similar to what the law commission proposes.

Not all European countries have anti-Nazi laws. Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Spain and Switzerland have legislations criminalising the Nazi message and denial of Holocaust, the killing of millions of Jews and other people by the Nazis during World War II. Holocaust denial is also illegal in Israel.

Of those countries, Germany and Austria have taken these laws very seriously and vigorously prosecute both

speech and behaviour having reference to Nazism and Nazis--a member of a German political party that controlled Germany from 1933 to 1945 under Adolf Hitler. Other countries like Lithuania and Romania enforce the laws sporadically.

In the aftermath of World War II, the National Socialist Party [the Nazi Party] of Germany was branded a criminal organisation and therefore banned. The International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg in 1946 likewise ruled that the Nazi Party was a criminal organisation.

Professor Bazylar writes: "German law, however, does not just stop at banning the Nazi Party. As part of efforts to overcome its Nazi past, Germany has criminalised denial of the Holocaust and also banned use of insignia to Hitler's regime and, as mentioned above, written materials or images promoting the Nazi message."

He says, despite this strict interpretation of the German so-called Holocaust denial law, promotion of Nazi ideology in Germany is growing in two important areas-- music and the Internet.

Germany's neo-Nazis are increasingly using music to spread their message, particularly among the unemployed youth of the former communist East Germany, according to experts on extremism in Germany.

In Germany, Holocaust denial was outlawed in 1985 terming it as an insult to the personal honour of every Jew in Germany and a crime under the 1985 law. In 1994, Holocaust denial and approval of Nazism became a criminal offence.

Alongside the Western European countries, the Eastern European nations, after their liberation from Communism, have also followed suit, although, with some modifications. In November, 2006, the Estonia government enacted a law making it a crime to display Nazi-era symbols in public and prohibiting the public display of Soviet-era symbols, such as the hammer and sickle-- because of its history of being under Soviet occupation.

Other former communist nations including Latvia, Hungary and Poland also enacted laws banning the use of both Soviet and Nazi symbols at public meetings.

Poland, one of the most serious sufferers of Nazi barbarity, has criminalised the denial of both Nazi-era and Communist-era crimes.

In the UK and the USA, denial of Holocausts and promotion of Nazi ideology are not criminal offences as these are not prohibited.

The laws enacted in the European countries are very specific; they have not kept anything vague like the law proposed by the law commission.

Given the above references, is the law commission's justification for the draconian law strong enough?

### SHOULD WE STOP STUDYING HISTORY?

Nobody can deny the importance of studying history. The American Historical Association, the oldest and largest society of historians and professors of history in the USA, says a study of history is essential for good citizenship.

But once the proposed law is enacted, studying the history of our Liberation War will face a major threat. Will it be good for people wanting to be good citizens? Should we stop studying history to keep ourselves free from the risk of committing criminal offence?

Only a few people have questioned the number of martyrs during our Liberation War. There are some people who make comments that undermine our glorious history. Those people have been severely condemned and chastised for their comments.

All evidences show, the conditions in Bangladesh and in the European countries are not the same.

Therefore, will it now be wise to punish a whole nation by the enactment of the draconian law only to criminalise the comments of a handful of people?