



A procession by BNP parade through a road in the city's Kakrail yesterday, marking the Independence Day.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

BNP demands non-partisan, neutral govt

FROM PAGE 1

Carrying the national flag, placards, banners, festoons and portraits of top party leaders, the BNP men marched towards Shantinagar amid tight security.

They chanted slogans demanding the release of their party Chairperson Khaleeda Zia, who was sent to jail in a corruption case on February 8.

The rally ended in Nayapalton around one hour later after marching through Kakrail and Shantinagar streets, creating traffic jam in Motijheel, Fakirapool, Bijaynagar, Kakrail, Shantinagar and Malibagh areas.

BNP's freedom fighters wing Muktiyoddha Dal also brought out a procession with a symbolic coffin. "Democracy has gone in this coffin" was written on it.

In his brief speech before the procession, Fakhrul called upon the government to take steps for holding the next general elections under a non-party administration.

"The prime minister must resign and parliament should be dissolved before the polls," he said.

He also said the country's people were deprived of all their basic rights as the government had snatched them away. "We fought the Liberation War with the spirit of democracy but the government has established a one-party rule by destroying that very spirit after assuming office."

The BNP leader urged his party colleagues to take a vow to restore peace, democracy and peoples' rights in the country.

Several hundred law enforcers were

deployed at different points from Nayapalton to Malibagh crossing to fend off any untoward incident.

Earlier, a three-member BNP team, led by party standing committee member Nazrul Islam Khan, met Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan to seek permission for their rally scheduled to be held on March 29 at the Suhrawardy Udyan.

Emerging from the meeting, the BNP leader told journalists that the home minister told them that the government had no objection to the holding of their rally.

"He [the minister] said he would inform us about the permission after discussion with the authorities concerned. We found him positive, but we will wait for his confirmation," Nazrul said.

He said they also discussed the indiscriminate arrest of their party leaders and activists and repression against them. "We requested him to stop it. I think the minister took it seriously."

Later, the home minister told journalists that the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) commissioner would decide whether the BNP would get the permission.

"If our police commissioner thinks there is no apprehension of anything bad on March 29, he will grant permission for the rally. This is his duty," he said.

The minister also said the DMP may permit BNP to hold its rally if it changes the schedule and venue. "It is our duty to ensure security of the people so that no untoward situation is created."

An untold rape, life thereafter

FROM PAGE 1

happened in her aunt's house in the capital's Merul Badda until seven months into her pregnancy.

Her brother, Khaled, not his real name, aged 22, said he could not believe when a Tongi hospital found his sister to be pregnant.

A few questions and the harrowing tale came rushing out of the young girl's mouth.

It all began when the girl was 10 years old. Mannan, four times her age, used to try to physically abuse her every day to and from her way to school in Jafrahkhal under Bamna thana, she claimed.

Her family tried to stop Mannan and informed his family but they rubbished their allegations and called them liars. To escape, the girl came to Dhaka in 2015. However, she could not escape Mannan. He eventually found her address and then came to Dhaka, where the girl was living with her aunt. On June 6, 2015, Mannan tricked his way into the rented house when she was alone.

He allegedly raped her before leaving with a warning: tell anyone about the incident and he would kill her.

The devil came to her doorstep three more times within a month and raped her, the girl claimed when recounting the days she wants to forget.

Try as she may though, her baby and the legal battle always bring her back to the reality of the situation.

Every time, Mannan raped her, he dangled the fear of death over her. It drained her of the will to speak up, scream and let others know of the injustice she was being put through, she said while talking to The Daily Star on a Friday afternoon in January.

BECOMING A PARIASH

It took a while for the victim's family to muster up the courage to file a case. When they went to the police, they were advised to file a rape case with the special tribunal because of the delay.

A medical report was necessary and so Khaled took his sister to Maternal Child Health and Training Institute, Azimpur. As per the ultrasound report submitted to the court, along with

other case documents, the girl was 33 weeks pregnant on March 14, 2016.

The report also mentions Mannan, the "rapist", as her "husband".

"The hospital staffers were asking for the name of her husband," Khaled said. "What could I do? I called the lawyer and asked him. He told me to give the rapist's name."

Khaled and his sister would find themselves in such difficult situations every now and then.

The duo and their older sister recently moved to a new house in Uttara. This was to escape neighbours constantly asking about the "missing father".

"While renting this house, we told the house owner and people living nearby that her husband left her," Khaled said, sitting in his two room house, when explaining why he was initially hesitant to give the address to The Daily Star.

"Locals around our previous house got to know the story," he added.

All three siblings started living in Dhaka in 2016 because they had been threatened by Abdul Mannan and his family members in the village. "They are influential there. Mannan owns land and his children are working abroad, so they have money," Khaled said.

His widowed mother started living in her parental house in the same village after family members of the accused hurled abuse at her and physically attacked her on several occasions.

Against this backdrop, Khaled is pursuing the legal battle with whatever little he earns as a garment worker. After all, he is the only guardian who can fight for his young sister and the baby boy.

QUEST FOR JUSTICE

However, as time ticks by, his desperation grows.

Every time, he has to bring his two children, the victim and the baby, all the way from his residence to court and then return home awaiting the next hearing. He knocks the doors of whoever he thinks can help -- the media, lawyers, legal aid agencies.

Months after the submission of the judicial inquiry report in April 2016 to

the special court, he approached advocate Mizanur Rahman in his chamber and drew his attention to his sister's ordeal. The lawyer stood by him free of charge in the next court hearing on the inquiry report, along with the public prosecutor.

"That day [July 25, 2016] the court passed the arrest warrant," Khaled said. He felt he had come one step closer to the justice they were seeking.

The accused remained missing for months. On November 2 of the year, he surrendered to the court with a bail prayer. The bail was rejected and he was sent to prison.

After Mannan was released on the HC bail, Khaled claimed he came across him at Jafrahkhal Bazar during Eid last year. Mannan didn't miss the opportunity; he threatened to harm Khaled and his family.

Enquiring whether the accused had filed any other appeal with the HC, Khaled learnt he had prayed to the court for the case's transfer to a Barguna court.

Fearing that everything would go in Mannan's favour if the trial took place in the district as the accused was an influential local, he went to the office of the Supreme Court Legal Aid, the government agency that extends legal support to poor people. The legal aid office assigned a lawyer to deal "with the case with care."

Khaled could not trust the state counsel assigned to represent the victim at court. He, in fact, never had the opportunity to talk to the deputy attorney general in or outside the HC.

In this regard, human rights lawyer Salma Ali over the phone said, "State counsels remain overburdened with cases [of different types] so the rape cases are of little significance [to them]."

Often cases lose their ground due to the lack of coordination or cooperation, she said, adding that commitment and women-friendly environment are a must to ensure justice in rape cases.

Besides, a neutral committee should be formed to monitor the progress from time to time in the trial

of rape cases, and accountability of all involved in the trial be ensured, Salma noted.

It was felt to be so true when Khaled, with The Daily Star correspondent, spent two days in the second week of January to find out what order was issued in the last hearing at the HC on December 13, 2017.

Running between desks for hours, it was dug out that the defence had withdrawn its appeal with the HC and so there was no bar to the case proceeding to the lower court.

Without the HC order, the special tribunal would not hold the hearing on the scheduled date -- January 18 this year. But everyone -- from lawyers to office clerks engaged in writing draft orders, keeping records and sending the orders to the disperse section-- had different versions and suggestions.

Finally, The Daily Star knocked the door of one of the honourable judges at the back of the court room, seeking help. He was ready to talk when convinced he would not be named by the media.

Listening to the case history, he called in one office clerk and asked him to communicate the order immediately so that the lower court could resume the case proceedings.

Thanks to him and another HC administrative official, who also wished not to be named, Khaled finally got the HC order copy.

While Khaled was insisting on getting the copy, an office clerk named Riyad said important orders like bail orders get issued immediately, but the orders like the one Khaled needed remain buried under piles of papers for months.

Khaled took out a note of Tk 500 in a gesture of what is so well-known in the court premises -- lobbying -- so he could expedite the process. As the copy reached the disperse section, Khaled went along with the court staff carrying the signed order to the special tribunal, as suggested by the administrative official.

His effort didn't go to waste as the hearing was finally held but there is probably a long journey ahead.

How the dossier

FROM PAGE 16

government and prime minister Tony Blair, who had to step down from office and a deep division in the party, a whole range of new thinking about the correctness of the invasion and ultimately the formation of an inquiry commission headed by Sir John Chilcot that laid bare in its more than 6,000-page report how the British government had based its attack on Iraq on falsehood.

As the BBC first broke the story that the dossier had been doctored, the outcry that followed led to the suicide of the source of the BBC story, Dr David Kelly, a renowned chemicals weapons expert and Nobel Peace prize nominee, and the resignation of BBC's chairman, the director general and the reporter who had unveiled the truth.

HOW IT ALL BEGAN

Barely a month into the fall of Saddam, BBC Radio 4 in its Today programme on May 29, 2003 said top officials involved in preparing the dossier had revealed the government had inserted the claim that WMD could be launched within 45 minutes.

Immediately after this stunning allegation, a bitter row started between BBC and Downing Street which contradicted the claim within one and a half hour of the broadcast.

Andrew Gilligan, reporter of the programme, then repeated the allegation in his column in the Mail on June 1. He wrote that his source had said while conventional missiles could be launched in 45 minutes, there was no evidence that this applied to WMD. His source further said this doctored was done by Alastair Campbell, Blair's communication director.

The next day, BBC's Newsnight programme made similar allegations that the intelligence services were under heavy political pressure over the evidence that WMD could be launched within 45 minutes.

BBC reporter Gilligan was summoned by the House of Commons foreign affairs select committee to question him about his claims. Gilligan stood by his report and said his source of information was credible and it was in fact one of the senior officials who drew up the dossier.

A week later, Alastair Campbell was also summoned by the select committee where a furious Campbell accused BBC of lies and falsehood.

"The allegation made by the BBC defence correspondent ... is that the prime minister put to the country and to parliament a false basis for putting at risk the lives of British servicemen," Campbell told the committee. He also said the 45-minute claim is correct and demanded apology from BBC.

BBC hit back the same day, saying that it stood by Gilligan and his source and refused to apologise.

Amid the growing row, David Kelley confessed to the ministry of defence on June 30 that he had spoken to Gilligan but denied most of the remarks in report as his own.

Campbell, a seasoned spin doctor, wanted to leak Kelly's confession to the media in order to discredit BBC.

As the row grew, the BBC board of directors met and issued a statement defending Gilligan and asked Campbell to withdraw his allegation of bias against the corporation.

Two days later on July 8, the UK government revealed that one of its experts on WMD had talked to Gilligan at a central London hotel before the war. It said if this expert was Gilligan's source, then he had exaggerated the meeting content.

The next day, Defence Secretary

Geoff Hoon sent Dr David Kelly's name to BBC asking the corporation to confirm if he was Gilligan's source, a request BBC turned down. But by this time the media became aware of the identity of the BBC source and by afternoon Downing Street confirmed Kelly's name.

As pressure mounted on Dr Kelly, he told the foreign affairs select committee on July 15 that he was not the main source of BBC's claim of the "sexed up" dossier.

Now all hell broke loose as opposition Tory MPs came down heavily on the government accusing it of lies and deceit. The Labour government was now in an existential crisis.

Two days later, Dr Kelly went missing after he went on an evening stroll. The next day, his body was found. Kelly had committed suicide by slitting his wrist.

HUTTON COMMISSION AND BBC TOP BRASS RESIGNATION

The UK government set up a judicial inquiry by Lord Hutton into the death of Kelly.

Hutton surprisingly gave a wholesome clean cheat to Tony Blair and all his companions. He also cleared the British intelligence of producing any fake WMD evidence.

The Hutton report is today dubbed as an attempt to whitewash the wrongs of the Blair government. Tony Blair, satisfied with Hutton's findings, went to parliament and said, "The report itself is an extraordinarily thorough,



Alastair Campbell

detailed and clear document. We accept it in full."

Blair also demanded BBC apology as Hutton said the BBC's allegation of sexing up the dossier was unfounded and lambasted the organisation's editorial policy for "defective reporting".

Following this, BBC Chairman Gavin Davies, director General Greg Dyke and reporter Gilligan resigned.

ANOTHER DOUBT ON THE DOSSIER

Meanwhile, as it became increasingly clear there was no WMD in Iraq, the intelligence on which Iraq invasion began, started being questioned all around.

George Bush set up an Iraq intelligence commission to review any intelligence failure. The next day, Blair also set up a commission on February 3, 2004 led by Lord Robin Butler to review the British intelligence.

Four months later, Butler delivered its report that also cleared the Blair government of any doctored of document but said the key intelligence used to justify the war was unreliable and that the 45-minute claim should not have been included in the dossier.

The Butler committee drew sharp political criticism as it was not authorized to scrutinize the political decision making process of the Iraq war. Both the conservative party and Liberal Democrats opted out of the committee's working.

SC annoyed by frequent

FROM PAGE 16

The SC bench asked the BGMEA to submit an undertaking that it will not seek further extension of deadline for demolishing its building built illegally in the heart of Begunbari canal in Hatirjheel area.

The court had already extended the deadline twice -- for six months in March 12 last year, and then for seven months in October. The second deadline is set to expire on April 12.

During yesterday's proceedings, the SC expressed displeasure at the counsel for the BGMEA, Quamrul Haque Siddiqui, for seeking time extension over and over again.

The chief justice said, "You are playing with the Supreme Court order. This is so unfortunate. You should feel uneasy before approaching this court on this issue. We feel embarrassed."

"It cannot happen that you will appear before this court for your client and damage this court's reputation. The court order will not be implemented if you are given more time," he noted.

The SC said it will pass an order on the BGMEA's time petition after the submission of the undertaking.

The court was scheduled to pass an order on the petition yesterday.

Earlier on June 2, 2016, the SC upheld a 2011 High Court verdict that ordered demolition of the 15-storey BGMEA building.

The HC ordered the BGMEA authorities to demolish the building within three months, saying it was built on a land acquired through forgery, and that a part of the Begunbari canal was illegally filled with earth for constructing it.

BGMEA PRESIDENT'S BRIEFING

Siddiqui said the BGMEA will complete three floors of its proposed 15-storey building in Uttara on a priority basis so that it can shift its office there within a year.

Replying to a query, the BGMEA president said only piling and basement work has been completed so far as it took a lot of time to get approval for the building's construction from government agencies, including the Department of Environment, Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (Rajuk) and the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh.

The BGMEA started constructing the building in November last year after purchasing a 5.5-bigha plot from the government for Tk 11 crore.

He said the BGMEA will compensate those who purchased space in the existing building, but it will not give them the current market price for the space. They will get the amount they had paid for the space in 2006.

The BGMEA sold more than 166,000 square feet of space to different organisations in its building in Hatirjheel for Tk 5,000 per square foot. Around 40 offices of different organisations, including banks, are now housed in the 15-storey building.

Siddiqui, however, said that if the existing clients wish to buy space in the new BGMEA building, they would be given priority. The money they had paid around 12 years back will then be deducted from the price of the space in the new building (Tk 10,000 per square foot), and they will need to pay the remaining amount.

Madrasas must hold competition, says HC

FROM PAGE 16

the competition at schools, colleges and madrasas.

Writ petitioners' lawyer Taimur Alam Khondaker told this newspaper that following the HC order, madrasa students must take part in the competition like those of schools and colleges.

On January 18, the Cabinet

Division issued a circular asking madrasas and other educational institutions to hold the competition to encourage singing of the national anthem correctly and the practice of singing the national anthem at all educational institutions.

Nurul Islam Mian, a madrasa teacher in Kurigram, and Monir Hossain Shadhin Sheikh, a resident

of the capital's Kadamtoli, last week jointly submitted the writ petition to the HC, saying that madrasas are running under the Islamic law (Sharia). The law does not permit "competition of any type of singing."

The writ petitioners challenged the legality of the part of the circular, saying that the part relating to the madrasa is "erroneous and mislead-

ing" as section 5(2) of the National Anthem Rules-1978 mentions that "in all the schools, day's work shall begin with singing the national anthem".

So, the anthem rules are only applicable for the schools, not for madrasas, the petition said, adding that the part of the circular is against the spirit of traditional Islamic education.