

## Govt questioned

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torture in 1998. It was due one year after accession.

"And the government's failure to submit a report for an exceptionally long period of time compelled this committee to schedule a review of Bangladesh in the absence of a report. "We regret that despite the fact that the committee gave the government a nine months' notice of its intention to review the country's compliance with the convention, it submitted a report to us only one week ago.

"Could you explain to us more clearly why there has been such a delay in submitting this first periodic report?" she questioned.

In the report, the law minister said it was prepared in consultation with all stakeholders, including different ministries, rights organisations and non-governmental organisations.

He also mentioned that some civil society members failed to attend the view-exchange meeting.

Drawing the delegation's attention, Gaer sought to know the details of the invitees.

"Could you tell us and provide us with information who you consulted with, when and who was actually invited?" the CAT vice-chairperson asked.

Earlier, the session began with CAT Chairman Jens Modvig, also associate professor of Forensic Science of Copenhagen University, inviting the Bangladesh law minister to present his report.

Referring to the Torture and Custodial Act 2013, the law minister said in the report that the government enacted it to give effect to the convention and also as part of the government's unequivocal commitment to the obligations of international human rights instruments.

The minister gave details of the government's legal, administrative and judicial actions for implementing the convention. He also mentioned some judicial directives, especially from the Supreme Court in this regard.

Anisul further said the government has taken measures to provide all kinds of support to the women and children, who have fallen victim to violence.

He pointed out that committees on prevention of violence against women and children have been formed at district, upazila and union levels.

The minister also provided information on 94 complaints against Rapid Action Battalion.

Following investigations, 49 of those were found to be false and 44 were "confirmed". And the court conducted further proceedings and handed down various types of punishment to 31 people.

Gaer wanted to know whether those 31 were punished in line with the Torture and Custodial Act 2013.

She also said that according to the Civil Society Joint Alternative Report submitted to the CAT, only 10 cases have been filed so far under the act, and none of those has been disposed of yet.

She also asked whether the government will reject the Rab, Special Branch and police's demand for exemption from the act for the sake of obtaining confessions.

The Bangladesh delegation includes State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam, officials from different ministries, and representatives from intelligence and law enforcing agencies. The session resumes today.

## Bangladeshi

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told reporters on Monday.

Upon arriving at the scene, police found three women and one man dead. Police have declined to identify the deceased, or the cause of death, and are not searching for further tips on the case.

Menhaz appeared in an Ontario court on Monday and police said he is expected to reappear in court via video link on August 2.

He was taken into custody from the scene of the crime on Sunday, when York Regional Police (YRP) responded to a call shortly before 3:pm EDT to a residence in Markham, Ontario, 30km south of Toronto, reports Reuters.

Some media houses have reported that all four victims are thought to be from one family.

However, officials are yet to confirm the victims' identities. The coroner's report is expected within a couple of days, after which police will release the identities, Pattenden told Reuters.

City News in Toronto reported that the victims were family members of Menhaz, but this has not been confirmed by police nor the coroner's office.

Ammara Riaz, a former tenant of the Zaman family, said she never would have expected the young man to be accused of such a crime, according to news portal The Star.

Riaz, who rented one of the two basement apartments in Zaman's home for about five to six years until she moved out last year, confirmed that the people living in the house were Moniruz Zaman, his wife Momotaz, their daughter Malesa and son Menhaz, along with their grandmother.

Riaz couldn't confirm the spellings of the names, but she did confirm that a profile photo on the gaming site was that of Menhaz, as a gamed

## Dengue now in 61 districts

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dengue who are undergoing treatment at two government hospitals and nine private hospitals."

Azizur Rahman Siddiqui, civil surgeon of Chattogram, said, "People who visited Dhaka came back with the dengue virus. We will try our best so that not a single life succumbs to the disease."

Meanwhile, AJM Nasir Uddin, mayor of Chattogram City Corporation (CCC), declared that dengue tests would be done for free at all CCC-owned hospitals from Sunday.

Hasan Shahriar Kabir, director of the directorate of Chattogram divisional health office, said every government hospital would conduct free dengue tests. Action will be taken against those who do not do so.

Around 66 suspected dengue patients were undergoing treatment at Mymensingh Medical College Hospital (MMCH).

MMCH authorities have started free antigen tests to diagnose dengue at two pathology departments of the hospital's outdoor and emergency units from yesterday.

In Kishoreganj, some 59 dengue patients were taking treatment at different hospitals, including at Kishoreganj General Hospital, said Dr Md Habibur Rahman, the district's civil surgeon.

Around 139 people were infected with dengue in the district over the last two weeks, said the civil surgeon.

Regarding the patients, the doctors said they were likely infected with the disease in Dhaka and other areas outside the district. They were

admitted after they returned to Kishoreganj.

Meanwhile, hospitals in the capital are still struggling to deal with the excessive number of dengue patients and also those who are coming to take the dengue tests even if they are not running a fever.

"Our pathology departments are struggling to provide free dengue tests due to the large number of patients," said Uttam Kumar Barua, director of Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College and Hospital.

Some 268 patients were being treated in the hospital and the number of patients is increasing every day, he said.

### PRIME MINISTER

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said, "The government is working to tackle dengue ... the leaders and activists of the party should work alongside it."

Hasina, now in London, made the remarks at a special extended meeting of the Awami League at the party headquarters, which she joined via teleconference. Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader briefed the media in this regard.

"People should be aware of dengue. We've to regularly clean our households," she said, urging everyone to combat the situation with patience, according to Quader.

The majority of dengue patients are from Dhaka. Earlier this month, the WHO said the dengue situation was alarming in Bangladesh but it was not out of control.

### RAILWAYS TO TAKE ANTI-DENGUE MEASURES

Meanwhile, the railway ministry has directed all railway offices and establishments to take extra cleanliness measures to prevent the breeding of Aedes mosquitoes.

The ministry gave several directives during a meeting held its office on Monday to create awareness on dengue fever and how to control its spread. Rail Secretary Mofazzel Hossain presided over the meeting.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, the secretary said Bangladesh Railway had around 500 stations, a number of offices, residents, trains and establishments.

The railway stations, especially, are vulnerable as they can be breeding grounds for mosquitoes. This is why the directives have been given to carry out cleanliness drives at the stations and other establishments, taking help from city corporations or municipalities, he said.

### MAYOR KHOKON SEEKS PEOPLE'S HELP

Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) Mayor Sayeed Khokon yesterday sought help from the people to tackle the Aedes mosquitoes.

Speaking after a mobile court drive at Shantinagar, the mayor said DSCC was working hard to tackle the disease but it needed the help of the people to destroy mosquito larvae.

He said they have identified under construction buildings at the DSCC areas where the number of Aedes mosquito larvae is higher than in other places.

Khokon said the problem could be tackled with a united effort.

### WELFARE MINISTRY CANCELS ALL

### LEAVES

The leaves of all officials and employees of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has been cancelled due to dengue and the floods.

"According to the decision of a meeting that took place on Monday afternoon, the leave of all officials of the Health and Family Welfare Ministry has been cancelled due to the flood and dengue," said a press release signed by Maidul Islam Prodhan, the ministry's information officer.

Besides, a monitoring cell has been formed at the office of Health Minister Zahid Maleque. It will monitor the dengue outbreak situation and ministry activities regarding it round the clock.

The monitoring cell will also take action if any hospital does not comply with the government directives regarding the price of dengue test, said the release.

## HC starts

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to interfere in it, they argued.

The defence lawyers said that Khaleda had been suffering from different diseases and she had already served two and a half years in prison in connection with this case. Thus, she deserves bail.

On October 29 last year, Khalea was awarded with seven-year imprisonment by a special court in Dhaka in connection with Zia Charitable Trust graft case.

The Anti-Corruption Commission filed the case against Khaleda with Tejgaon Police Station on August 8, 2011.

## Then OC, 10 others testify

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bleeding. I was rushed to United Hospital unconscious," he said, adding, "I still have grenade splinters in my body."

Another witness Sub-Inspector Sumon Kumar Kunda, of the counter terrorism unit, told the court that the militants hurled grenades at them and opened fire on them as soon as a police team, including him, reached the spot.

"Different parts of my body were wounded as I was hit by splinters and I fell on the ground. Later, I was rescued by my fellow men and admitted to United Hospital," he said.

"Hearing about the militant attack,

a police team, led by AC Jahangir Hasan, went near the gate of the Holey Artisan Bakery. Two or three minutes later, the militants hurled grenades at us. I was seriously injured. Around nine splinters hit my body," said SI Md Nuruzzaman, of the counter terrorism unit.

On August 8, 2017, a police team, led by Additional Deputy Commissioner Abdul Mannan of the counter terrorism unit, arrested Abdur Sabur Khan alias Sohul Mahmud from a mango orchard in Chapainawabganj's Shibganj upazila in connection with the café attack case, said SI Ashrafal Haque Babu, of the unit.

Besides the four, seven others -- Inspector Khan Nurul Islam, Inspector Md Shahidullah, Inspector Abdur Rahim, SI Nasir Uddin, ASI Gobinda Das, ASI Aminul Islam and constable Manik Babu -- also testified before the court.

Judge Majibur Rahman of the Anti-Terrorism Special Tribunal recorded their statements. Later, lawyers of the accused cross-examined the witnesses.

During yesterday's hearing, eight accused in the case were produced before the court. Prosecution witness SI Babu also identified Abdur Sabur Khan among the accused before the court.

The court set August 6 for the next

hearing in the case.

With yesterday's 11 prosecution witnesses, 85 testified before the court.

On July 1, 2016, armed militants stormed the café and killed 20 hostages, mostly foreign nationals. Two police officials were also killed during the 12-hour standoff.

On July 23 this year, Inspector Humayun Kabir of the Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime Unit submitted the charge sheet to the chief metropolitan magistrate of Dhaka, accusing eight people for the attack and naming 211 as prosecution witnesses.

On November 26 last year, the tribunal framed charges against the eight.

## Tk 3 crore in compensation sought

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they were waiting for the arrival of Md Abdus Sabur Mondal, the head of Digital Service and Public Service Innovation Cluster and E-Service Implementation Specialist of the Access to Information (a2i) Programme at the Prime Minister's Office.

Contacted, Abdus Sabur said he did not know that a critically injured patient was kept waiting. "Such an act is unacceptable," he said.

Rights organisation Legal Support and People's Rights submitted the petition, which also requested the HC

to direct the authorities concerned to take steps so that ferries prioritise ambulances carrying critical patients.

In the petition, the organisation appealed to the HC to order the shipping secretary to conduct an inquiry into the incident and to ask the authorities to take appropriate legal action against those responsible.

Advocate Zahir Uddin Limon, chairman of Legal Support and People's Rights, told The Daily Star that the HC may hold hearing on the writ petition today.

Thirteen-year-old Titash Ghosh, a student of Kalia Pilot Secondary

School in Narail, was critically injured in a motorbike accident in the district on July 24.

A day later, doctors of a local hospital referred him to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) for an emergency operation.

The family, along with the 13-year-old, were traveling to Dhaka in an ambulance, which arrived at the Kathalbari Ferry Terminal in Munshiganj around 8:00pm on July 25.

A ferry called "Ferry Cumilla" was reportedly already at the pontoon, which had its gate closed and was not

loading vehicles.

The family learnt that the ferry would be late as it was waiting for the government official.

The ambulance was stuck on the pontoon and could not reverse or shift to another because of the queue of vehicles in front and behind it.

The ferry started loading vehicles around 10:20pm when the authorities learnt that the government official was close by.

Around 11:00pm, the official arrived and the ferry started moving.

Titash died on the ferry, family sources said.

## Six customs men 'helped' dodge tax

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were formed between 2016 and 2018 by the NBR and the CCH to investigate allegations of irregularities.

After completion of their probe, six of the committees recommended departmental action against the officials involved in the corruption, while three are yet to submit their reports.

The probes found that the 48 officials forged or hid documents and even manipulated physical examination reports, allegedly due to underhanded deals with the C&F agents.

CCH Commissioner Fakhru Alam told The Daily Star in June, "I don't know why punitive measures were not taken despite the irregularities of the officials being proved."

"Transfer from one section to another is not a punishment. I have been treating this issue with importance since office joining last week. Departmental action against the officials will be taken very soon," he added.

The irregularities uncovered by the probes varied in nature.

A seven-member committee formed at the end of 2015, led by Hossain Ahmad, the then commissioner of Pangaon Customs House, revealed that Tk 150 crore duty was dodged

on 171 consignments between September 2009 and December 2010 in connivance with 35 officials.

The report submitted in September 2016 also said those officials ignored "data base value" during taxation and submitted fake Clean Report of Findings (CRF).

Another probe committee formed in March 2016 discovered four customs officials hiding the original documents of two consignments of cigarettes worth Tk 12 crore, by misinvoicing it as fabrics to avail duty free facility.

Revenue Officer Mahbuba Begum, one of the four officials accused, said "I was not involved in the irregularities. On the day of the incident, I was in additional charge of the section. Someone may have removed the relevant documents afterwards."

Another 2016 investigative committee found evidence against three customs officials of forging bank documents to release five consignments of cosmetics goods, levying only 34 percent duty instead of the stipulated 105 percent.

In 2018, yet another probe committee found two officials falsely declaring a consignment to be 14 tonnes of synthetic fabrics though the

importer declared it to be four tonnes in documents.

Assistant Revenue Officer Rafiqul Islam Amin, one of the two officials, told The Daily Star he had found irregularities during physical examination but his reporting boss Saiful Rahman forced him to sign the report as per the declaration.

The Daily Star tried to reach Deputy Commissioner Saiful Rahman, however, his phone was found switched off.

### A DROP IN THE WATER

The latest of the corruptions came to light after a report on the tax-dodging was submitted by a probe committee on July 10. The committee, headed by Kazi Ziauddin, additional commissioner of customs, was formed to look into discrepancies in the delivery of the 16 consignments between the books of the Customs Register and the Airport Warehouse Delivery Register and those of the National Board of Revenue (NBR).

The report said the customs and the airport warehouse showed that the consignments were released from the airport, but those were marked as undelivered in the server of the NBR.

The CCH Commissioner said they would "issue a notice" against the

officials soon, adding steps would be taken after they replied.

Asked why the issue took so long, he said the matter was being reviewed.

He had earlier told The Daily Star that although they had detected many incidents of tax dodging earlier, this was the first time someone had taken delivery of goods without paying taxes.

The probe into the matter began in the last week of June to investigate the incident.

The report concluded that six customs officials and one of its employees helped the C&F of Water Ways Shipping Agencies Limited dodge taxes.

The accused are revenue officers Mashiur Rahman, Fazlur Rahman; asst revenue officers Imran Hossain, Nurul Mostafa, Karunamoy Chakma; and radio operator Swapnan Mazumdar.

Mashiur Rahman, one of the accused, denied the allegation. "It happened due to some mistake. We had no connection with this," he said.

Commissioner Fakhru Alam said, "We have temporarily suspended the licence of the C&F agent and will cancel it if they are found guilty after investigation."

"We will also take legal action against the six officials involved if needed."

## Japan

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Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi.

Abdul Momen said Taro Kono would tell Myanmar to speed up the repatriation.

"We said if repatriation does not take place quickly, Japan's investments both in Bangladesh and Myanmar may not be safe," he said.

The Rohingya crisis must be addressed soon to ensure the interest of Japan, Myanmar and Bangladesh.

"We hope the repatriation process would begin soon."

Asked about the Rohingyas' demand for a guarantee of citizenship, Momen said, "We agree with them on safety, security and free mobility. We don't want to get into the citizenship issue."

At a press briefing at Hotel Sonargaon in the capital later, Japanese Foreign Ministry's Deputy Press Secretary Jun Saito said Japan wanted to expedite the repatriation of the displaced Myanmar nationals. For that, Japan is also ready to promote dialogue between Myanmar and Bangladesh.

He said both Bangladesh and Myanmar are good friends of Japan and it wanted to work constructively to address the crisis.

About its investments in Myanmar, Jun Saito said business and human rights were two separate issues.

"We will uphold human rights and not compromise on that matter," he told reporters.

On criticism that Japan had not been vocal in demanding justice for the Rohingyas who had faced atrocities in Rakhine since August 25, forcing 750,000 Rohingyas to flee to Bangladesh, Jun said, "We want the facts to be known first. Investigation is going on. We support that."

Asked if Japan supports the Rohingyas' demand of guaranteed citizenship, the Japanese official said it was a delicate issue and had to be dealt "case by case".

### ROHINGYAS WANT CITIZENSHIP

The Rohingyas have said they don't want to stay in Bangladesh for long and wish to return to their homeland in Myanmar with the guarantee of citizenship, reports our correspondent in Cox's Bazar.

"We want to go back to our own country. But we should be given citizenship. Whenever Myanmar will declare us citizens, we will return there," Enamul Hasan, a Rohingya teacher, told visiting Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono at a refugee camp in Cox's Bazar's Kutupalong yesterday.

During the visit to the camps, Taro Kono went to a Rohingya Registration and Food Distribution Centre, run by the UN Refugee Agency, and saw food distribution and registration operations there.

He then talked to a few Rohingyas. A Rohingya girl named Monowara gave him a paper flower as a present.

During the meeting, Hamida Khatun said they did not want to be a burden on Bangladesh and that they wished to return to Myanmar.

They want to return to their place of origin, from where they were uprooted, and live in peace and safety, she said.

Rohingya repatriation was scheduled to begin on November 15 last year, but the refugees were unwilling to go back. They said the situation in the Rakhine State was not conducive to their return and that they had no guarantee of citizenship there.

Yesterday, the Japanese minister also visited some other refugee camps as well as oversaw a water reservoir and supply project running with financial assistance from Japan.

Japanese Ambassador to Bangladesh, Hiroyasu Izumi, and Bangladesh's Refugee, Relief and Repatriation Commissioner Mohammad Abul Kalam were also present.

## Rape accused

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The law enforcers also claimed to have recovered a firearm and seven bullets from the spot.

Borhan Uddin, officer-in-charge of Patia Police Station, said they received the body from Rab and sent it to Chattogram Medical College morgue for autopsy.

Rab filed a case with the police station regarding the "gunfight".

The Daily Star, however, could not independently verify the law enforcers' claims.

## Ethiopia

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planted, the country's minster for innovation and technology, Getahun Mekuria, tweeted.

Monday's challenge had encouraged citizens in Africa's second most populous nation to plant 200 million trees in one day. In 2017, India set the world record when around 1.5 million volunteers planted 66 million in 12 hours.

Ethiopia's goal for the whole season is even bigger than that; the national tree planting campaign aims to plant 4 billion trees during "the rainy season" -- between May and October -- according to a May tweet by Ahmed.

According to Farm Africa, an organisation working on reforestation efforts in East Africa and helping farmers out of poverty, less than 4% of Ethiopia's land is forested, compared to around 30% at the end of the 19th century.

The landlocked country is also suffering from the effects of climate crisis, with land degradation, soil erosion, deforestation, and recurrent droughts and flooding exacerbated by agriculture. Eighty percent of Ethiopia's population depends on agriculture as a livelihood.