

1971 WAR CRIMES

Trials of organisations ever elusive

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

The Awami League government has partially fulfilled its electoral pledge to hold trials over 1971 war crimes by bringing individuals to book but it is yet to make any considerable progress in trying organisations.

Since the last amendment to the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act-1973 in February 2013, which has provisions for trials of only individuals, the government has been saying necessary amendments would be made to facilitate the trial of anti-liberation organisations.

The law ministry prepared a draft to amend the law in 2014 but over the last seven years no visible steps have been taken to pass the amendment, leaving unfulfilled the demand for trial of the organisations which acted as collaborators of the Pakistani occupation forces to commit one of the deadliest genocides of the last century.

Law Minister Anisul Huq on many occasions said the government was working to amend the law but his words are yet to be translated into deeds.

Contacted on March 23, Anisul Huq told The Daily Star that the government would take necessary steps to try the organisations involved in crimes against humanity and war crimes during the Liberation War, in

SEE PAGE 5 COL 1



Members of the Detective Branch and Naogaon district police beat up BNP activists who gathered in the town's KG's More area to stage a protest over the "killing on the Independence Day".

PHOTO: COLLECTED

150 injured as BNP men clash with cops

STAR REPORT

At least 150 people were injured in separate clashes between police and BNP activists in Kishoreganj and Noagaon yesterday.

The clashes ensued when the party activists tried to bring out processions as a part of their central programme.

In Kishoreganj town, at least 100 people were injured in two separate clashes between BNP activists and policemen.

Aminul Islam Ashfaq, organising secretary of the BNP's Kishoreganj district unit, claimed that some 100 men were injured when police attacked them at the town's Sholakia and Ekrapur areas without any provocation.

As per the party's central programme, protesting "killing people on Independence Day", the party men in processions were on way to the district party office in Rothkhola area around 11:30am.

Soon after bringing out the processions, police rushed to the spot and started throwing abusive words towards them and

SEE PAGE 5 COL 4

ROAD TO FREEDOM THIS DAY IN BANGLADESH LIBERATION WAR HISTORY

Kushtia reclaimed

MARCH 30 & 31, 1971

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

THE BATTLE OF KUSHTIA

At 4:00am on March 30, 1971, Bangladeshi forces, comprising East Pakistan Rifles (EPR), police and civilians under the leadership of Abu Osman Chowdhury, then a major and commander of the fourth wing of EPR, attacked the Pakistan occupation army in Kushtia from three sides. The Pakistani soldiers apparently panicked at the thought of being engulfed by so many thousands of furious Bangladeshis. They started fleeing the outposts and, subsequently, took shelter at the district headquarters. The Pakistan army suffered heavy casualties in their retreat. By the end of the day Bangladeshi forces took control of the whole of Kushtia except district headquarters and its adjacent areas. The war continued next day. Bangalee forces reclaimed Kushtia, and only a few Pakistan army men managed to escape the district town alive.

A detailed report on this furious resistance was published in the Time magazine on April 19, 1971. INDIRA PLEDGES SUPPORT FOR BANGLADESH On March 31, Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi moved a resolution in parliament strongly criticising the military action in Bangladesh. She demanded an immediate end to the violence "which amounts to genocide". She also promised "whole-hearted sympathy and support" for the people of "East Bengal".

Earlier, Indian Foreign Minister Swaran Singh's tepid tone as to India's response to the events in Bangladesh was criticised in parliament. There was growing pressure, both inside and outside the

SEE PAGE 5 COL 5

ROHINGYA RELOCATION UN to carry on dialogue with govt

Diplomats to visit Bhasan Char April 3

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Wrapping up a three-day visit to Bhasan Char, a UN delegation said it wants to continue dialogue with the government.

"The United Nations is grateful to the government of Bangladesh for its facilitation of the visit and looks forward to continuing the dialogue," Mostafa Mohammad Sazzad Hossain, assistant communication officer at UNHCR Bangladesh, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Meanwhile, a delegation of foreign diplomats stationed in Dhaka is likely to visit the island in Noakhali's Hatiya on April 3 to take a first-hand view of the housing facility for 100,000 Rohingyas.

Sources said the envoys may go to the island by helicopter and are likely to return the same day.

The development comes following an impasse of more than a year between the government and the UN regarding the global body's technical assessment

SEE PAGE 5 COL 5

Bangladesh behind Nepal, Pakistan in smartphone use

Says GSMA report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh is lagging behind most of its South Asian peers in terms of smartphone use, according to a report of GSMA, which represents mobile operators worldwide.

The report, released yesterday, said 41 per cent of mobile phone users had smartphones in Bangladesh.

India has the highest percentage of smartphone users, at 69 per cent, followed by Sri Lanka with 60 per cent, Nepal 53 per cent and Pakistan 51 per cent.

SEE PAGE 5 COL 4

Today is the 50th Death Anniversary of S N H Rizvi



We request all relatives, friends and well-wishers to remember him in their prayers and to pray for eternal peace of his soul

1971 GENOCIDE Pakistan should offer apology to Bangladesh

Says ex-Pakistani envoy DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

A former Pakistani diplomat has said the people of Pakistan should urge their government to offer a formal apology to the people of Bangladesh for the genocide its military committed in 1971.

Hussain Haqqani, who served as Pakistan's ambassador to the United States from 2008 to 2011, made the remarks during a virtual talk titled "Bangabandhu Sheikh

SEE PAGE 5 COL 4

COUP IN MYANMAR Ethnic rebel group warns of conflict

Calls for int'l intervention against military crackdown; protest death toll tops 500

REUTERS

One of Myanmar's main ethnic minority rebel groups yesterday warned of a growing threat of major conflict and called for international intervention against a military crackdown on opponents of last month's coup.

Myanmar has been in turmoil since the army ousted an elected government led by Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi on Feb. 1, detaining her and reimposing military rule after a decade of tentative steps towards democracy.

While cities and towns across the country have been consumed by protests against the military, fighting has also flared between the army and insurgents in frontier regions and refugees are spilling over borders.

The Karen National Union rebel group, which operates in the east along the border with Thailand, said it was bracing for a major government offensive.

"Now, thousands of Burma military ground troops are advancing into our territories from all fronts," the group said in a statement.

"We have no other options left but to confront these serious threats posed by the illegitimate military junta's army in order to defend our territory."

The group urged the international community, Thailand in particular, to help Karen people fleeing the "onslaught" and for countries to cut ties with the junta to stop the

SEE PAGE 5 COL 4



PRAYER TIMING MARCH 31

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 4-45 12-45 4-45 6-20 7-45
JAMAAT 5-20 1-15 5-00 6-25 8-15

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION