RAMNA BATAMUL BOMB ATTACK

22 years gone, justice still elusive

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

Both the victims and convicts of Ramna Batamul bomb blasts have been deprived of final justice due to legal tangles, even 22 years after the gruesome incident.

Different issues, including repeated adjournments and reconstitution of High Court benches, have unusually delayed disposal of the case filed for killing of 10 people in the blasts.

Besides, it is still uncertain when the appeals filed by the convicts and death reference, which have been pending with the HC for the last nine years, will be heard and a judgement will be delivered, as there is apparently no extensive initiative in this regard.

At the same time, another case filed under the explosives act is still pending with a Dhaka court. Its trial proceedings are ongoing there.

Contacted, Attorney General AM Amin Uddin told The Daily Star that the death reference and appeals are pending with the HC.

"Hearing of this case will be held only after the chief justice assigns a bench of the High Court for this. I don't know when the chief justice will assign the bench. The attorney general's office can do nothing to start hearing," he added.

Two bombs exploded during the Pahela Baishakh (Bangla New Year, 1408) celebrations at Ramna Batamul, organised by Chhayanaut on April 14, 2001. Ten people were killed and dozens injured.

A Dhaka court on June 23, 2014 handed down death penalty to eight militants of Harkat-ul-Jihad al-Islami (Huji), including its top leader Mufti Abdul Hannan, for the killing. Six other militants of the banned Islamist outfit were sentenced to life imprisonment.

If a lower court sentences any person to death, its judgement is examined by the HC through hearing arguments for confirmation of the death sentence.

The case documents and judgement reach as death references to the HC from the trial court after the latter delivers the verdict.

Mohammad Shishir Manir, a defence lawyer of the case, told this correspondent that the death reference has been registered with the HC in 2014.

"Till date, it has not been disposed of by the High Court. The government has sought adjournment of hearing repeatedly, as many as 376 times. Last time, the death reference was sent to the chief justice, and till date, no bench has been assigned for hearing the matter," he said.

"Since there is no concrete evidence

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A worker moves a colourful bunch of shoes from a small factory in Fulbaria to the wholesale market, located in the same neighbourhood, from where they will be sent across the country. This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Country got less water from Ganges in the first half of March

Says JRC member

BSS, *Dhaka*

Bangladesh got a little less water against its fair share in the first quarter of March from the common Ganges river, said Dr Mohammad Abul Hossen, member of the Joint Rivers Commission (JRC), Bangladesh, yesterday.

"The Joint Rivers Commission of Bangladesh and India will hold a meeting in May, and we [Bangladesh] will ask whether India is diverting water from the river," he said.

However, Bangladesh has received a good volume of water from Ganges this year, Dr Hossen added.

"Considering the baseline data of the historical water flow of the river for 40 years [1949-1988], it can be said that Bangladesh has received a good volume of water from Ganges this year," he told BSS.

According to the Ganges Water Sharing Treaty 1996, Bangladesh and India share water of the Ganges based on every 10-day period from January 1 to May 31.

The treaty was signed by the then Indian Prime Minister HD Deve Gowda and Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on December 12, 1996, in New Delhi.

It established a 30-year water-sharing arrangement and recognised Bangladesh's rights as a lower-level riparian.

India and Bangladesh share 54 common rivers. The JRC of India and Bangladesh was established in 1972 as a bilateral mechanism to address common border and trans-boundary river issues of mutual interest.

The treaty states that if the volume of water is 70,000 cusecs or less at Farakka Point, both Bangladesh and India will get equal share of water (35,000 cusecs).

PRAYER TIMING
APRIL 14

	Fazr	Juma	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN	4-20	12-30	4-45	6-23	7-45
JAMAAT	4-30	1-15	5-00	6-33	8-15

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

SEHRI, IFTAR TIMING

RAMADAN	APRIL	SEHRI	IFTAR
22	14		6:23
23	15	4:14	6:24
24	16	4:13	6:24

MY DHAKA

The sweetness of PAHELA BAISHAKH

RBR

It's a tradition to usher Baishakh on a sweet note, and so, sweetmeat once again takes centre stage in our celebrations. From that van vendor at the corner of any local bazaar or park where children crowd for sugary treats, to branded and popular sweetmeat shops -- all are busy making their special offers.

Mostafa Taher, 50, is a computer programmer with a sweet tooth, and every Baishakh he buys sweetmeat for his friends and family.

"This has been a tradition of our household for decades," said Taher. "Rather than going for sweets from renowned shops, I buy goodies like kodma, murki, and goja from street vendors. The gift serves as a reminder of our childhood, and for me, it's the perfect Baishakhi gift."

Halkhata, or opening of new accounts by traders, which is an integral part of Baishakhi revelries, is almost unthinkable without sweets. Jewellers and traders observe the occasion with a grand spread of mawa laddu, coconut sweet balls, luchi and niramish.

A wide range of traditional sweets is made from chhana (cottage cheese). The list is endless and each district of our country has its own specialty. To name a few Dhaka favourites, chhanar jilapi is made from cottage cheese, khoya, and flour. It resembles the spiral of a jilapi and being soaked in sugar syrup makes it soft. Kalojaam has a pink interior; gurer shondesh comes in the shapes of beetle leaf, fish, and nakshi flowers; a drier version of shondesh is pera.

Keeping the seasonal demand in mind, the chain stores that throughout the year specialise in traditional Bangladeshi sweetmeats also carry pitha and naru in their menu. Corporate gift boxes with local Baishakhi delights are now ubiquitous with Pahela Baishakh celebrations, and popular shops in Dhaka are providing various options.

Syed Ashraful Islam, senior manager at Premium Sweets, Gulshan, said, "Customers or corporate clients can choose from our assortment and order. We have a Baishakhi box starting from Tk 2,000, but people prefer to customise their orders according to their budget."

Despite offers from city's sweet-shops, Dhakaiites still crave regional culinary delights like roshmalai from Cumilla or buffalo milk curd from Bhola. Any chance people get to travel, they take the trouble of stopping at village bazaars for their unadulterated fresh sweetmeats. Dhakaiites often do not mind travelling a distance to buy fresh sweets.

One such small village sweetmeat store is a 10-minute detour on the way to Mawa Ghat; you take the left to Lohaganj, Halda Bazar, and inside a quiet green hamlet is a tin shaft store called Shree Durga Mistanna Bhandar. Ganesh Gosh, the store owner said that for Baishakh they will have a special menu because he has orders from Dhaka.

A quintessential Baishakhi meal of ilish paturi or shorshe shojne chorchori must be wrapped up with a sweet. We Bangalees have a sweet tooth; a meal without something sugary is always half done. So, this Baishakh, indulge a little and count your calories tomorrow!

Shubho Noboborsho!

PM to open Indian Ocean Confce May 12

UNB, *Dhaka*

Bangladesh will host the Indian Ocean Conference (IOC) in Dhaka from May 12 to 13, said foreign ministry spokesperson Seheli Sabrin yesterday.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will inaugurate the conference at a city hotel on May 12, the spokesperson told reporters at a weekly media briefing.

The sixth edition of the conference is being organised by India Foundation in association with the Bangladesh foreign ministry.

With the theme of "Peace, Prosperity and Partnership for a Resilient Future", the conference would bring together a luminary gathering of key stakeholders to chart the roadmap for strengthening the Indian Ocean Region.

60pc of Eid holidaymakers to leave Dhaka by road

Says report

UNB, *Dhaka*

About 1.5 crore people are expected to leave Dhaka -- including Dhaka North, Dhaka South, Gazipur and Narayanganj city corporations -- on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr, says a report.

Sixty percent of them will go by road and the rest by waterways and railways, according to a report of Shipping and Communication Reporters Forum (SCRF) released yesterday.

However, the organisation said that the report may not be fully accurate, as there is no complete database in this regard.

It said the road transport sector has no capacity to ensure smooth journey of such a large number of people in an orderly manner in the nine days from April 13 to 21.

According to SCRF's observation, toll is collected manually on many roads including national highways, some places of several long-distance roads are dilapidated and there are a significant number of risky turning points across the country.

Apart from this, motorcycles will run on the highways during the Eid, there is a possibility of severe traffic jams at various points and unexpected accidents.

Hearing on arms case against Arav Khan on May 7

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka tribunal yesterday fixed May 7 to hear arguments in an arms case filed against Rabiul Islam alias Arav Khan.

Judge Murshid Ahmed of Dhaka's Special Tribunal-14 set the date after completing all formalities in the case.

In the order, the judge said the self-defence statement of the accused was not recorded as he was earlier declared a "fugitive". So, the next date was fixed for arguments.

Earlier, the tribunal recorded the statements of 10 witnesses, including the complainant of the case.

Arav Khan is also an accused in a case filed in connection with the murder of a police inspector in 2018.

According to the statement of the arms case, Arav Khan went to the home of his father-in-law Sekendar Ali in Moghbazar on January 28, 2015, to collect money at gunpoint. However, Arav was arrested in front of the house by Ramna police. Police also seized a revolver from him.

Later, a case was filed against him under the arms act with Ramna Police Station.

Arav Khan, who runs a jewellery store in Dubai, is currently facing an Interpol red alert.

ACC sues ex-MD of Pragoti Industries

Case filed over forgery, misappropriation of Tk 39.8 lakh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) has filed a case against former managing director of state-run Pragoti Industries Limited (PIL) Touhiduzzaman for getting a job through forgery and misappropriating about Tk 39.8 lakh.

ACC's assistant director Mahbubul Alam filed the case.

According to the case statement, Bangladesh Steel and Engineering Corporation (BSEC) issued a circular for job opening in March 2011.

"Accused Touhiduzzaman did not apply for the post of additional engineer within the deadline. Besides, he created fake documents and submitted an application with the abetment of unscrupulous staff," reads the case statement.

Touhiduzzaman, who was later promoted to the chief engineer of PIL, was project director of Pragoti Tower.

There is an allegation against him of violating respective rules and appointing consultants in projects, embezzling about Tk 39.8 lakh.

Haileybury Bhaluka launches scholarship funds

STAR REPORT

The first premier international boarding school in Bangladesh, Haileybury Bhaluka, launched an "Academic Excellence Scholarship Fund" to support the Bangladeshi students yesterday.

The scholarship, worth USD15 million, was launched at a programme in a city hotel. This school-lifetime scholarship is applicable only for students joining Haileybury Bhaluka.

Speakers at the programme said the fund is open will offer up to a 100 percent merit scholarship, which would be given through all years of the awarded student's school tenure.

Students aged above 11 years can avail of the scholarship followed by an application process. It will also require a Cognitive Abilities Test (CAT4).