

Rule issued to Sangram editor, 3 others

Court Correspondent

The International Crimes Tribunal-1 on Sunday issued a rule asking Abul Asad, editor of vernacular daily Sangram, a mouthpiece of Jamaat-e-Islami, and three others to explain why contempt of court proceedings should not be brought against them for publishing statements over a trial pending.

The three-member tribunal, headed by Justice M Enayetur Rahim, issued the contempt rule interrupting the lone defence witness (DW-1) for war crimes accused ATM Azharul Islam, as he referred to reports published in the daily Sangram defending the accused after formally started the case with evidence of the prosecution witness.

The three others contemnors are Ekramul Huq Dulu, ex-Muktijhoddha Sangsad Commander, Rangpur unit, Sangram's local correspondent and Azizur Rahman Ranga, president of Chhatra League, Rangpur unit in 1971.

All the four contemnors have been asked to appear in person before the tribunal on August 20 for making their explanations.

Earlier, DW-1 Anwarul Huq, son-in-law of accused Azharul's brother, during his testimony affirmed some documents, especially the educational certificates of the accused. The defence counsel, however, failed to produce the remaining three other DWs as allowed by the tribunal. Later, designated prosecutor Zead Al Malum cross-examined the DW-1 in part.

The tribunal adjourned the proceedings for Monday.

On November 12, 2013, the tribunal framed charges against ATM Azharul Islam, a Rangpur commander of Al Badr, a secret killing squad of Jamaat-e-Islami during the Liberation War in 1971, for his involvement in crimes against humanity, including genocide, during the Liberation War, dismissing the discharge plea filed by the accused.

Also a leader of Jamaat-e-Islami, Azharul faces six counts of charges of crimes against humanity during the 1971 Liberation War like killing, abduction, confinement, torture, loot, arson, rape and genocide in Rangpur district.

A week after submitting the formal charge by the prosecution, the tribunal on July 25, 2013 took cognizance of the charge against the Jamaat-e-Islami assistant secretary general as it found a strong prima facie case against the accused under subsections 3(2) and 4(1) (2) of the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act 1973.

According to the prosecution case, Azharul had been involved in the killing of more than 1,200 unarmed innocent civilians in Rangpur during the Liberation War in collaboration with the Pakistan occupation army.

It mentioned that Azharul Islam had played a key role in the killing of intellectuals, cultural personalities, physicians and lawyers in different areas of Rangpur during the 1971 war.

On August 22, 2012, police arrested Azharul from his Moghbazar house in the capital in connection with the war crimes case, hours after the tribunal issued a warrant for his arrest following a prosecution plea.