

Court Correspondent

Taking cognizance of the offences of the 1971 war crimes against detained Serajul Huq alias Kashai (butcher) Seraj and two others, the International Crimes Tribunal-1 on Monday fixed September 30 for hearing on the charge framing.

With all three accused in the dock, the three-member tribunal, headed by Justice M Enayetur Rahim, passed the order as it found prima facie case for trial after examination of the formal charge, the investigation report, the papers, documents and evidence submitted by the prosecution in connection with the case.

The tribunal also appointed advocate MA Hasan as state defence counsel to conduct the case as accused Seraj disclosed before the tribunal that he does not have the financial capacity to engage any lawyer.

During the proceedings, Barrister Sarwar Hossain, the defence counsel for accused Abdul Latif Talukder, moved a plea seeking bail for his client on any terms and conditions. Designated prosecutor Barrister Syed Sayedul Haque opposed the bail plea since the offences made the accused are very grave like mass killing.

After a brief hearing from both sides, the tribunal turned down the bail petition saying, "We're not convinced to grant bail at this stage."

A day before, on Sunday, the prosecution submitted the formal charge with eight counts of offences against detained war crimes accused Serajul Huq alias Butcher Seraj, Abdul Latif Talukder and Khan Akram Hossain to the registrar of the tribunals.

The charges include killing, genocide, loot, arson, rape, abduction, torture and conversion from one religion to another under duress during the 1971 Liberation War in Bagerhat district. The accused had reportedly perpetrated the crimes against humanity during the 1971 Liberation War as commanders of Razakar, an auxiliary force of the Pakistan occupation army, according to the prosecution.

ASP M Helal Uddin, investigation officer of the case, listed 65 prosecution witnesses (PWs) to testify before the tribunal against the accused to prove the war crimes charges.