

Court Correspondent A prosecution witness, also a freedom fighter, on Sunday accused Sirajul Huq, known as 'Kashai Siraj', Akram Hossain Khan and Abdul Latif Talukder of killing about 500 unarmed civilians at different parts of Bagerhat during the Liberation War. "The accused had not only killed people, but also plundered the houses of the villagers followed by an arson attack and violated women," Hazra Zahidul Islam Monu, now 61, told the International Crimes Tribunal-1 while testifying against the trio as PW-11. Hailing from Kachua sadar upazila of Bagerhat, Monu said accused Siraj and some of his associates on April 22, 1971 reached Kachua from Bagerhat by a boat and held a meeting at Duckbungalow with local activists of Muslim League that opposed the 1971 Liberation War. During the meeting, some 100-150 people registered their names as Razakar, the auxiliary force of the Pakistan occupation army, said the PW, adding that the following day the listed people, led by accused Akram and Latif, left for Khulna to take Razakar training. Making a pointed reference, Monu said on November 22 in '71 a small group of Razakar led by all the three accused brought captured Ashraf Ali Khan, Satish Chandra Mandal, Nazrul Islam, Babu Khan and Monindra Nath Saha from Tangrakhali to their makeshift camp at Kachua. Later, the Razakars at the behest of the three accused had gunned them down on the Bhairab River bank after torture in confinement, he said. Before concluding his testimony, the PW identified the three accused in the dock. The PW will be cross-examined by the defence counsel on Monday. On November 5 last year, the tribunal indicted detained accused Siraj, 72, Latif, 68, and Akram, 62, of Bagerhat for their involvement in crimes against humanity during the Liberation War. The three commanders of Razakar, an auxiliary force of the Pakistan occupation army, face seven counts of charges of crimes against humanity that include killing, genocide, loot, arson, rape, abduction, torture, and conversion of Hindus to Muslim under duress during the Liberation War in Bagerhat district. ASP M Helal Uddin, investigation officer of the case, listed 65 prosecution witnesses (PWs) to testify before the tribunal against the three accused to prove the war crimes charges. Among the charges, four have been brought against Siraj alone for the killing of more than 600 people, two against all three of them for the killing of 47 people, and one against Akram and Latif for killing a person.