

## Kala Jahangir

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of the four cases filed for killing four DCC commissioners on different dates.

Earlier, Kala Jahangir was given death sentence for killing Advocate Habibur Rahman Mondol while 'killer' Abbas got 17 years' RI in an arms case.

The court acquitted Ripon Khan and Raquibul Bari as the charges brought against them were not proved.

The punishment of the fugitives will be effective from the day of their arrest or surrender and the convicts with death can appeal to the High Court (HC) against the verdict within 30 days from the day of receipt of judgement copy, the judge said.

The victim's parents Waliur Rahman and Rabeya Begum and his wife Ferdousi Ahmed were present in the court during the delivery of verdict. They broke down in tears and expressed their satisfaction over it, but apprehended that the fugitives might attack them at any time.

The proceedings of the case were stayed for a long time following an order of the HC.

Earlier, the prosecution and the defence completed their arguments

and the court recorded statements of 16 prosecution witnesses.

Saidur Rahman Newton, DCC Commissioner of ward No 8 was gunned down by a gang of miscreants in the city's Dhanmondi on May 10, 2002. The victim's mother filed a murder case with Dhanmondi Police Station the same day.

During the investigation of the case, Ayub, Shakhawat and Rubel gave confessional statements to magistrates on different dates.

The detective branch (DB) of police pressed charges against Kala Jahangir and 19 others on February 28, 2004.

Special Public Prosecutor Abdul Latif Talukder appeared for the state while Syed Rezaur Rahman, Moslehuddin and Mohammad Shahjahan defended the accused.

Three other DCC Ward Commissioners - Binoy Sarker Bina of ward No 72, KM Ahmed Raju, of ward No 46 and Shahadat Hossain Sikder of ward No 44 - were also killed on different dates.

The cases of the killings are pending with different courts of the city.

## Saifur blames

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those in the export processing zone (EPZ). But vandalism was unleashed there too. Again factories other than readymade garment units have also been targeted, he said.

If the workers have any grievances over their pay and other benefits they could have told it to the prime minister and their problem could be solved through discussion, the minister noted.

## BSF kills

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opened fire on the cattle traders while they along with cattle were coming to Bangladesh from India. They died on the spot.

The BSF men then took away the bodies.

A source in BDR 41 Rifles Battalion admitted the killing of two Bangladeshi traders by the BSF.

BDR asked its Indian counterpart to return the bodies.

## Commerce minister

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The government will carry out inquiries and find out who were the culprits behind such 'heinous' acts causing a huge loss to the country's readymade garment (RMG) sector, the minister said.

Referring to Islamist militant activities and the government's move to arrest them a few months back the minister said, "I ensure that the government will take all possible measures to find out the criminals behind the garment industry ransacking."

Turning his attention to the Canada-Bangladesh business relations, he said, it is improving gradually. Exports to Canada was \$125 million in 2003-04 which has increased to \$271 millions in 2004-05, he noted.

"The government has reshaped the business policy for the post MFA (Multi Fibre Arrangement) era and encouraged the private sector creating opportunities for local and foreign investors for new ventures. This sector has been the engine of growth," he said.

He assured CBCCI of assistance in improving bilateral relations between Bangladesh and Canada.

Barbara Richardson, high commissioner of Canada in Dhaka, appreciated the growth of economy in the country and the private sector's role in it.

Bangladesh and Canada have strong business relations and it will further improve, she said, adding that Canada will now diversify its import basket from Bangladesh.

CBCCI President Masud Rahman said the chamber's significant role is to accelerate economic prosperity through strengthening trade and investment cooperation between the two countries.

Its role will also be to properly utilise the opportunities that the Canadian government has granted including duty free access of Bangladeshi products to Canada.

Trade Commissioner Mortoza Tarafder, CBCCI Vice-president Shahab Sattar, and Director Tanwir Nawaz also spoke.

## CNG scam

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each parliamentary standing committee will sit at least once in a month.

Pressures from the communications ministry act behind the committee chairman's not holding regular meetings, sources said.

The Committee Chairman Syed Manjur Hossain, however, once again expressed his determination to probe the allegations against the communications ministry in import of CNG autorickshaws and allocation of land to set up CNG refuelling station.

"We asked both the sub-committees to place their report in the next meeting on June 1. Otherwise the committees will dissolve automatically on that day," Manjur Hossain told reporters after the meeting held at Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban yesterday.

"If they fail to submit report, the main committee will take the next step about the matters," he added.

Nadim Mostafa, ruling BNP lawmaker and head of a sub-committee tasked with probing alleged irregularities in import of CNG autorickshaws, told reporters that he would submit the reports on their investigations in the next meeting.

"We have not got all the necessary papers from the ministry. That is why we could not finalise the report," he said.

Ruling BNP lawmaker Mahmudul Huq Rubel, who is head of the other sub-committee tasked with probing alleged irregularities in allocation of land for setting up CNG refuelling stations, requested for time extension till June 10 but the committee did not comply with, sources said.

The committee recommended that the ministry take initiative for BRTC bus services across the country.

They condemned recent violence in the garment industry units in and around Dhaka and demanded finding out the culprits through proper investigation.

## EC yet to stop

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rejected the EC's appeal against the HC directive and asked the EC to prepare the voter list based on the existing electoral rolls.

Legal experts, however, said the EC should have ordered to stop the task. "The Election Commission should take initial step to stop the task after the court's order and it can wait for the certified copy of judgment to cancel the draft voter list prepared," Ghulam Rabbani, former judge of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court, said yesterday.

But the EC has made no move formally regarding the SC's judgment while the EC Secretariat officials are in a quagmire. "We are waiting for the Election Commission's directives in this regard. But the commission is waiting for the certified copy of the judgment," a senior official of the EC said.

Law officers at the EC Secretariat said they are trying to collect the certified copy of the judgement.

Most of the Tk 60 crore already spent from the public exchequer for preparing a fresh voter list seems to have been wasted and four-month-long efforts of about three lakh-strong manpower for preparing the voter lists have virtually turned futile exercises.

The EC will have to initiate new procedure to prepare the voter list based on the existing electoral rolls and the task will involve fresh preparations and expenditures.

Besides the experts who have been monitoring the preparation of the controversial voter list, some election officials both in the EC Secretariat and field level blamed the CEC and two other election commissioners, Justice Mahfuzur Rahman and SM Zakaria, for wasting the money.

They said the money would not have been wasted if the commission prepared the voter list following the January 4 HC directives.

"The chief election commissioner was misguided by his colleagues in preparing the voter list," said a senior election officer wishing

anonymity.

The government cannot escape responsibility for the wastage as it provided support for the CEC to prepare the fresh voter list ignoring the HC directives, he added.

He said the government has appointed two election commissioners to provide the CEC with majority in the commission as the then two election commissioners were in favour of implementing the HC's directives to prepare the voter list.

"The chief election commissioner could not justify the preparation of the fresh voter list, but the two election commissioners will remain in the posts," he said.

### HUGE TASK TO BE STARTED

The EC will have to start massive task again to revise the voter list of 2000. The EC had prepared the draft voter list published on May 3 in about nine months since August last year. But it has only five months ahead before the next caretaker government assumes power to conduct the next parliamentary elections.

Officials at the EC Secretariat said they should immediately start the task, but they are passing time idly as the EC is waiting for the certified copy of the judgement. The EC will have to recruit a large manpower to do this task.

The posts of secretary and additional secretary at the EC Secretariat are vacant while promotion of some field level officers who have been working for over 20 years at the same post has been stalled due to unwillingness of a section of officers at the EC Secretariat.

The EC acting secretary left Dhaka last week for South Korea, but he did not empower any officer to discharge his task.

In absence of the acting secretary, officials are consulting with an election commissioner, who was the immediate past secretary to the EC Secretariat, sources said.

## Tight security

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of intelligence forces have also been increased.

Visiting Mirpur, Tejgaon and Uttara areas, where protesting workers had vandalised factories and demonstrated on streets. The Daily Star correspondents found the areas calm. Law enforcers were seen patrolling the areas, as well as guarding some of the factories that were attacked on Tuesday.

Some protesting workers tried to bring out processions at several areas in the city including at Shewrapara, section No 14 in Mirpur, behind Purabi Cinema in Pallabi, and Rayerbagh bus stand in Demra yesterday morning but law enforcers foiled their attempts.

A total of nine cases were filed with Mirpur, Tejgaon and Kafrul police stations (PS) against several hundred including duty free access of Bangladeshi products to Canada.

Nine persons arrested in Mirpur and 11 each in Kafrul and Tejgaon on Tuesday, were produced before the court yesterday, who were later sent to jail.

No case was filed with Uttara and Sutrapur PSs.

**GAZIPUR**  
Several hundred workers yesterday demonstrated at Borobari area at 9:00am and vandalised Moonlight Garments factory. BDR and police later dispersed the protesters, a correspondent in Gazipur reports.

Several hundred demonstrators got on the Dhaka-Mymensingh highway at Salna and ransacked factories of Concord Garments, Utah Knitting, Quality Garments and Sang Kwang Apparels about at 11:00am.

Local people alleged that police stormed Salna village and indiscriminately beat up people, leaving at least 10 injured. One of them was admitted to Gazipur Sadar Hospital.

Rab helicopters flew over Gazipur twice in the morning while BDR, Rab and police were seen patrolling troubled spots, reports news agency UNB.

Vehicle traffic on the Dhaka-Mymensingh highway was thin with only a few vehicles seen on the road.

Meanwhile, 29 people including union leaders Mashrafe Mishu and six others, arrested on Tuesday from the district, were produced before court yesterday with a 10-day remand prayer. The court granted five-day for each of them.

Three policemen, who are in charge of Chandana, Konabari and Hotapara police outposts, filed three cases with Joydevpur PS against 2000 people.

**SAVAR**  
Uncertainty looms over the fates of thousands of workers outside Dhaka Export Processing Zone (DEPZ) as those have been declared closed for an indefinite period.

"We did not get last month's salary and fear we will have to fast in the coming days as we're running out of our savings," Halima, a finishing-section worker of Little Star Spinning Mills Ltd (LSSML), told this correspondent as she was standing outside the burnt factory building.

"We cannot even look for new jobs as all the factories here are closed indefinitely," a frustrated Halima said.

Meanwhile, some workers left their rented houses for their home villages Tuesday.

According to the workers, the situation is worst for the workers of six burnt factories.

Meantime, 12 platoons of BDR men, about 400 Rab members and large contingents of police have been deployed at all sensitive places in Ashulia and Savar including the DEPZ.

Fifty fire fighters were working in each shift at the burnt sites.

An uneasy calm is prevailing at the

localities due to the fear of police harassment and arrest including in Zirabo, Zamgora, Gazirchat, Noroshingapur, Shimoltoly and Kathgora where thousands of workers live.

Most of the workers did not come out of home yesterday as a rumour ran regarding an order to open of fire on any kind of demonstration.

A police van with 20 to 25 riot police on board was seen patrolling the two highways making announcements through bullhorns prohibiting people to hold any unnecessary gathering on any side of the highways and asking everyone to leave for respective destinations immediately.

Fire at LSSML was extinguished completely yesterday morning. "We hope to start again soon with all our former employees back to job. We have not estimated the amount of loss yet," said Md Ali Hossain, assistant manager of the factory.

State-run news agency BSS reports quoting a BÉPZA news release that enterprises of DEPZ will resume normal operation today with full facilities.

"The outsiders unlawfully forced in the Dhaka EPZ factories and ransacked 27 garment factories of Dhaka EPZ, set ablaze a Korean sweater factory, A-One (BD) Ltd and damaged several vehicles inside the Dhaka EPZ," added the release.

## 11 trade bodies

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The presidents and chairmen of these chambers and trade bodies in a joint statement declared their solidarity with the owners of readymade garment and other industries, whose factories were damaged and looted by the miscreants in the last few days.

They said the miscreants caused damage to the factory buildings, burned machinery and raw materials and forced the workers to come out of the factories.

The image of the garment sector, which earns a bulk of the foreign exchange, was tarnished at home and abroad as a result of the violence, they observed.

"We appeal to all concerned to save these factories from wanton destruction in the hands of hooligans and miscreants not related to the workers," said the statement.

The business leaders said since the government is responsible for ensuring the safety of life and property, it should do so in the case of garment industries too.

Signatories to the statement include presidents and chairmen of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI), Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI), Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI), Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI), Bangladesh Chamber of Industries (BCI), International Chamber of Commerce Bangladesh (ICC-B), BSTMPLA, Bangladesh Employers' Federation (BEF), BCCAAMEA, LFMEAB and Bangladesh Terry Towel and Linen Manufacturers' and Exporters' Association (BTTLMEA).

## Iajuddin

**FROM PAGE 1**  
control without medicine."

A physician said they are optimistic about the 75-year-old president's recovery.

Bangladesh High Commissioner in Singapore Munshi Faiz Ahmed received the president at Singapore Airport 9:50pm, Mokhlesur Rahman Chowdhury, press secretary to the president, told The Daily Star last night.

The high commissioner told Chowdhury that the president's condition was stable when he reached Singapore.

Earlier, an air ambulance carrying the ailing president took off from Zia International Airport at 5:00pm. The Speaker saw the president off at the airport.

The president will be undergoing treatment at Mount Elizabeth Hospital in Singapore. He is accompanied by his wife Prof Anwara Begum and son Imitiaz Ahmed.

Iajuddin was admitted to the CMH at 3:30pm on Tuesday for a medical check-up. A seven-member medical board, headed by Professor MA Malek, was formed for his treatment.

The medical board advised sending him aboard for treatment as his condition was not improving expediently, sources said. "His heart condition is not good," a source said.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, who is now visiting the United Arab Emirates, inquired about the president's health condition over telephone.

Due to the president's illness, Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar who was scheduled to back home today from London, returned to the capital yesterday cancelling his programmes.

Sircar had earlier acted as the president in 2002 following the resignation of Professor AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury from presidency.

## Nazrul

**FROM PAGE 16**  
President Iajuddin Ahmed, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina have issued separate messages, paying rich tributes to the rebel poet whose poems and songs had inspired the nation during the War of Independence in 1971.

Different socio-cultural organisations have chalked out programmes to celebrate the birth anniversary of the rebel poet.

The four-day programme of Nazrul Institute includes discussion, children and juvenile art competition, Nazrul songs competition, drama and documentary film on Nazrul.

The teachers and students of Nazrul Institute will place wreaths at the grave of the national poet on the Dhaka University premises in the morning.

Dhaka University (DU) has also chalked out programme to mark the day. Bangladesh Betar, BTV and private TV channels will air special programmes on the life and works of the national poet.

## AL demands

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Jaili, also co-ordinator of the 14-party opposition alliance, held the BNP-Jamaat alliance government responsible for anarchy in the RMG sector and said the government has shifted blame to the AL only to cover the main conspirators of creating anarchy in the RMG sector.

He demanded immediate stoppage of 'harassment' of the opposition leaders and workers in Gazipur, Tongi and Savar.

Senior AL leaders including Sajeda Chowdhury, Motia Chowdhury, Obaidul Quader, Mahmudur Rahman Manna, Aktheruzzaman, Abur Rahman, BM Muzzammel Haque, Asim Kumar Ukil and Maqbul Hossain were also present at the press conference.

### 3-PARTY DEMAND JUDICIAL PROBE

Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh (BDB), Jatiya Oikya Mancha and Bangladesh Tariqat Federation yesterday demanded judicial inquiry into the last few days incidents in the garment industries at Tongi, Gazipur, Savar and the capital.

A neutral inquiry committee led by a Supreme Court bench is very much needed for return of normalcy, Oikya Mancha President renowned lawyer Dr Kamal Hossain, BDB President AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury and Bangladesh Tariqat Federation President Syed Nazibul Bashir Maizbandari said in a joint statement.

At a press conference at the National Press Club yesterday, the three opposition leaders blamed the four-party alliance government for failure to take prompt steps towards finding solution to a genuine problem.

Dr Kamal Hossain, also the president of Gono Forum, said the situation has emerged due to the government's failure to contain price hike of essentials and power shortage, and unsatisfactory wage for workers.

He said the report of the demanded inquiry should be made public within one week.

BDB President Badruddoza Chowdhury said immediate negotiations with open mind are needed to reach a solution recognising the legitimate rights of the workers.

BDB Secretary General Major (ret) Abdul Mannan, among others, was present at the press conference.

## Workers talk

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said Bashar, a UKGT worker. The factory authorities increased his wage to Tk 1,000-1200 three months ago. The amount is too small even for a single person," he said.

The authorities of UKGT, a sweater factory at Jamgora in Savar, very often allegedly force workers to work overtime without fixing any wage and in most cases without any payment.

Although 'piece rate' (wages per piece of ready-made garments) is supposed to be more than Tk 22, workers used to be paid Tk 11.80, which enraged them most. Moreover, their wages were not paid in time and usually payment was made at the middle of a month, allegations said.

The factory authorities used to sack workers without any reason and did not allow any worker to enter the factory if he/she was late even by a minute. Workers were not allowed to enjoy many of the public holidays, they alleged.

Besides delayed payment of wages, the authorities always paid us less than our due wages. We don't know how the estimate of wages used to be made," said Faruk Hossain, timekeeper of the factory.

Despite repeated complaints about this, the factory authorities ignored the workers' plight. Sometimes, the workers even did not get their wages.

The factory-in-charge and the production manager always behaved with many female workers in indecent ways. They used objectionable words. Since we are poor, girls, we did not dare to protest this," said Dujan, a female worker of the factory.

Ear Hossain, another worker, said, "Prices of essentials are soaring but our wages remained the same for years. We are fighting for the price of our labour, and against those who are pocketing our money over the years."

UKGT workers have been agitat-

ing since May 3 for their 11-point demand including wage hike, weekly holiday and reducing extra working hours.

The factory authorities had assured workers of a decision on their demands by May 13 but they closed the factory on May 16, forcing the workers to take to the street, it is alleged.

When the workers demonstrated on May 18 and 20 at Jamgora, hundreds of workers from other factories joined them. The authorities of some factories later barred their employees from joining the agitation.

Monday's violence followed this.

While talking with a number of workers of garment factories mainly in Mirpur area of the capital, this correspondent learnt that of the factories that have come under attack, only a few do not pay wages regularly. But most of them make regular payments.

The workers however said the get too poor wages, and that the rising gap between their earning and expenditure is making their life miserable.

Lufunnesa, 30, a worker at Ying Ming International Ltd at Shewrapara, said, "A helper's wages range from Tk 950 to Tk 1,150 and a machine operator gets Tk 1,600 2,000 a month. In the past, we somehow managed to live with this poor amount but now our sufferings have mounted due to price spiral of essentials."

Md Rusel, 23, who irons clothes at M&M Shirt Shamim Group at East Shewrapara, said he gets Tk 2,100 a month. His factory pays wages regularly.

Opposing any violent movement for realising demands, he said workers should sit with factory owners and settle things peacefully. "If needed, I can also join them. We really feel our wages should be raised," he added.

## CEC, 2 commissioners

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law clearly called for updating the existing voter list, he started ignoring them completely. So much so that after their meeting in August 05, the CEC stopped meeting them or talking to them over telephone till Januray this year, when two new Election Commissioners, more pliable to his way of thinking, were appointed to office. These two Commissioners - former secretary to the EC SM Zakaria and Justice Mahfuzur Rahman - immediately after assuming office started publicly criticising Munsef Ali and Mohammed Ali saying that they were misleading the public, and fully supported the CEC in his move to make a new voter list.

In the meantime, Awami League General Secretary Abdul Jaliil and two others went to the High Court (HC) challenging the CEC's move to go for a fresh voter list. In January this year, the HC pronounced that taking the previous voter list as the base, the list should be updated to include new voters and eliminate those who died, etc. The directive clearly called for updating of the voter list and not making a new one. Of the two new commissioners, Justice Mahfuzur went public criticising the verdict saying the HC had no power to pass such a judgement and give directives to the EC.

In a meeting of the EC, where the voting was three to two, with Aziz, Zakaria and Mahfuzur on one side and Munsef and Mohammed on the other, it was decided that the EC would appeal to the Supreme Court. Munsef Ali and Mohammed Ali retired last month. Now rid of the two dissenting commissioners, the CEC had no problem in having his way. While the appeal process was on, the CEC with the support of his two new commissioners went full speed ahead with the preparation of the fresh voter list. It was apparent from the way the voter list was being prepared that not much care was being taken to ensure its authenticity.

On May 3, the nation was stunned to discover that the voters had grown a whopping 22 percent as compared to the previous list totally contradicting the official statistics of our projected voter growth as per figures of 2001 census report. Stories after stories came out about fake voters, voters from non-existent villages, a single house having nearly 100 voters while whole villages having less than 10. Stranded Pakistanis who refuse to be voters having their names included and Rohingya refugees being made voters. Prominent persons including sitting MPs being excluded from voter list. In short the voter list was a scandal.

The CEC's attitude to the press is a story in itself. He never seemed to have realised that the role of the Election Commission was always to operate on the principle of complete disclosure and full public confidence. He did not seem to understand that not only was the EC to act with the highest propriety but also had to be seen to be doing so. He found the media to be meddling in his arbitrary ways and started first castigating it and then shutting it off.

The secretary of SM Zakaria while he was royalty to the EC needs to be underscored here. During the last two years of the tenure of the former CEC MA Sayeed, he declined to attend any meeting. When Sayeed asked the government to give him a new secretary, Khaleda Zia's government gave Zakaria an extension

in the post. Known for his total loyalty to the present government, he was rewarded with the post of election commissioner. His public support for the new voter list, which has now been turned down by the Supreme Court, also deprives him of any moral authority to continue as election commissioner. The same holds true for Justice Mahfuzur Rahman.

National Election is the process through which the majesty of public opinion is expressed. It is a most sacred task and we need people upon whom the public in general can repose the highest trust. However regrettable, Justice Aziz and Justice Mahfuzur do not enjoy that trust anymore. Zakaria never had it. It was only the government's extreme partisan decision that brought him here. For the sake of democracy and for a free and fair election, and before further indignity befalls them, they should resign. That will be their best service to the nation.

As for the government, we hope a significant lesson is learnt. Do not try to influence the election process by fiddling with the Election Commission. As our PM never tires of telling us about upholding the image of the country, can we return the favour and say, for God's sake constitute a truly independent Election Commission after taking all parties into confidence. Let us move away from the destructive logic of "Since we were not consulted in selecting the CEC when we were in the opposition, we will not consult anyone now." Too many crises are converging all at once. To overcome them, we need unity. The process of unity can begin with the process of selecting a new CEC and new commissioners. We are assuming that our appeal to self-respect will not fall on deaf ears.

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