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The Daily Star

SECOND EDITION

Plus Star Lifestyle

TO
People's Right to Know

REGD. NO. DA 781

VOL. XVIII No. 8

DHAKA TUESDAY JANUARY 22, 2008

www.thedailystar.net

MAGH 9, 1414 BS

MUHAMMAD 12, 1429 HJRI

20 PAGES PLUS STAR LIFESTYLE PRICE: Tk 10.00



4 DU teachers, 11 students acquitted

4 convicted students pardoned by president; 10 RU students freed following clemency too; case withdrawal process starts; DU detainees' release hinges on today's verdict

SHAKHAWAT LITON, CHAITANYA CHANDRA HALDER and KAMRUL HASAN KHAN

A Dhaka court yesterday acquitted four Dhaka University (DU) teachers and 11 students of violating Emergency Power Rules (EPR) in one of the two cases filed against them in connection with last August's campus unrest.

In a late afternoon development yesterday a presidential order pardoned four other absconding DU students, who had been convicted in connection with the same case by the same court earlier in the day.

The same presidential order also pardoned 10 Rajshahi University (RU) students and an employee of the institution, who had been convicted last December of torching a Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI) vehicle during the campus violence there triggered by the DU incidents. All imprisoned RU people were freed last evening following the presidential pardon.

In another development into the night, the government decided to withdraw another case against yet unknown persons in connection with assaulting police and an army camp that had been on the DU campus at the time of the violence. It also decided to drop the names of 18 persons from the charge sheet in another case in connection with torching of an army vehicle in the capital during the violence, while deciding to scrap another case in connection with setting fire to RU vice-chancellor's residence during the incidents on that campus, according to government handouts sent to the media last night.

Meanwhile, the DU vice-chancellor told The Daily Star last night that the government directed



The four Dhaka University teachers being taken back to jail from a Dhaka court yesterday after they were acquitted in a case. Judgment in another case filed against them is to be delivered today.

the authorities to submit the final report in yet another case in connection with the torching of the army vehicle in the capital, meaning that case is also likely to be thrown out.

Despite yesterday's acquittals, detained DU teachers Prof Sadrul Amin, Prof Anwar Hossain, Prof Harun-or-Rashid, Prof Neem Chandra Bhowmik, and detained student Moniruzzaman Sardar were not released, as the verdict in the other case filed against them, for the same offence, is scheduled to be delivered today.

All eyes are now set on today's verdict, watching whether the DU

teachers and students are acquitted or convicted in the second case for violating EPR, following their acquittal and pardon on the same charges in the other case.

The long-awaited verdict yesterday morning could not bring any immediate resolution of the ongoing crisis on the campus due to the morning conviction of the absconding students.

On hearing the verdict, family members of the acquitted four teachers said the verdict proved that the detained teachers had done nothing wrong, but they could not be fully happy because of the four absconding students'

conviction.

Soon after the news reached the campus in the morning, DU students under the banner of Students against Repression brought out a march categorically rejecting the verdict and chanting slogans demanding acquittal of all, while terming the verdict 'a farce'.

The court in the morning sentenced each of the four absconding students to two years of imprisonment in the case filed with Shahbag police station on August 23. It also fined the convicted students --- Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) DU Unit President Hasan Mamun, its General Secretary Saiful Islam

Feroz, its activist Kamrul Islam Kochi, and former Chhatra Union leader Aziz Hasan --- Tk1000 each, in default of which each of them was to suffer one more month in jail.

Sensing probable deterioration of law and order on the campus centring the verdict, a large number of police were deployed at every entry point.

The way the government had handled the cases against the RU teachers and students, raised doubts about the release of DU teachers and students, prompting the DU community to launch agitation demanding unconditional release of their detained peers.

In a case in connection with violating EPR, a Rajshahi court on December 4 sentenced four RU teachers to two years rigorous imprisonment, although it had not found sufficient evidence for the conviction, triggering a huge public outcry.

In response to the rising public demand, the caretaker government later released the four RU

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Families happy, demand quick release

DU CORRESPONDENT

Families of the detained teachers and a student expressed satisfaction over their acquittal, demanding their immediate release and withdrawal of all cases for maintaining a congenial academic atmosphere on the campus.

The families of the four teachers

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Govt talks with parties to start when both sides are ready

Says chief adviser

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Adviser (CA) Fakhruddin Ahmed yesterday said the government will start dialogue with political parties when both sides are ready, as they need time for preparation.

He said talks between the Election Commission (EC) and the political parties are going well and hoped that it would end soon, facilitating dialogue between the

government and the political parties.

The CA made the remarks while talking to newsmen after he and his wife Neena Ahmed enrolled their names as voters with photographs and fingerprints at Gulshan Model School and College in the city.

Replying to a question about the possibility of holding elections ahead of the targeted timeframe, the head of the caretaker government said it depends on how the

government can complete the preparatory works for the polls.

"And if those activities are accomplished in time, the elections can be held ahead of the targeted time," the CA told the newsmen.

The CA expressed satisfaction over the progress of voter listing with photographs by applying modern technology and in transparent manner. Chief Election

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Political parties, civil society hail verdict

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of different political parties yesterday hailed a court verdict that acquitted Dhaka University (DU) teachers and students in connection with the August violence on campus, saying the judgment proved the teachers were absolutely innocent.

They also said it was unfortunate that the four teachers and the student, who were under arrest, had to endure sufferings in the last few months.

Welcoming the verdict, legal experts and civil society members urged the government to take immediate steps for settling the remaining issues.

They also held the government responsible for not handling such a

sensitive affair in a thoughtful manner, saying that the ongoing demonstrations on the campus could have been avoided.

Praising the verdict, Awami League Presidium Member Suranjit Sengupta said all of them should be released.

Terming Dhaka University the Oxford of the East, BNP Standing Committee Member Lt Gen (ret'd) Mahbubur Rahman said the court verdict and the presidential mercy for the convicted students is a "respectful solution" to the crisis.

Rizvi Ahmed, acting office secretary of pro-Khaleida faction of BNP, said students and teachers are the enlightened people of our country and it is their duty to protest wrongdoings. The verdict

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Status of cases

DU CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday decided to withdraw a case against yet unknown persons in connection with assaulting police and an army camp that had been on the DU campus at the time of the August violence on Dhaka University (DU) campus last year.

It also decided to drop the names of 18 persons from the charge sheet in another case in connection with torching of an army vehicle in the capital during the violence, according to government handouts sent to the media last night.

The government directed the authorities to submit the final report in another case in connection with the torching of the army vehicle, meaning that case is also likely to be thrown out.

A case in connection with

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Mahbub Jamil, ex-secy Samaddar made special assistants to CA

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Business leader Mahbub Jamil and former secretary Manik Lal Samaddar were appointed special assistants to the chief adviser yesterday, with Jamil being the first one to enjoy the status of a minister.

With the latest appointments, the number of special assistants to the chief adviser rose to five.

Chairman of Singer Bangladesh and a former president of Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industries (MCCI), Jamil will be in charge of the ministries of industry, civil aviation and tourism, and sports and youth affairs.

He is also a former president of Foreign Investors Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI).

Samaddar is a former secretary to the planning ministry's implementing, monitoring and evaluation division (IMED). With the status of a state minister, he will look after the ministries of fisheries and livestock, and information and communication technologies.

On January 10, three persons were appointed for the newly

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DU teachers, students to continue demo until all cases withdrawn

DU CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka University (DU) teachers and students yesterday vowed to continue their demonstrations on campus until all cases filed against university students and teachers in connection with the August violence are withdrawn.

Meanwhile, the government yesterday freed 10 Rajshahi University (RU) students and an employee convicted in a case filed in connection with torching a DGFI vehicle.

The DU teachers' and students' vow comes despite four teachers and 11 students being acquitted yesterday in a case filed in connection with violating the Emergency Power Rules (EPR) in August last year. Four absconding students in the case were convicted but received presidential pardon in the afternoon. They had been sentenced to two years' imprisonment.

Hearing about the verdict, demonstrating students of the university rejected it saying they do not want "partial justice". They termed the conviction of four

students and their presidential mercy 'a farce'.

Students under three separate platforms -- Students Against Repression led by left-leaning student organisations, Chhatra-Bandhu led by Bangladesh Chhatra League and Nirjatan Protirodhi Shikharhi led by Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal -- have been demonstrating on the campus in a bid to press home the demand for detainees' unconditional release.

The three students' platforms laid siege to the vice-chancellor's office to press home their demand yesterday.

The students brought out separate processions inside the arts building, business studies faculty and other places on campus chanting slogans against the verdict. They hoisted a black flag atop Curzon Hall of the university.

They also urged all students and teachers of all educational institutions across the country to form human chains at their respective institutions today.

Setting January 23 a deadline for releasing the detainees, DU teachers

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Garbage floats on the lake near Swadhinata Stambha in Suhrawardy Udyan in the capital showing the authorities' utter negligence in keeping it clean.

Pintu to be further quizzed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former deputy minister Abdus Salam Pintu may be taken on further remand today in connection with the August 21 grenade attack case as investigators are yet to squeeze a statement about his involvement, sources said.

Pintu also remained tight-lipped about the alleged link of former home ministry boss Lutfozzaman Babar and Hawa Bhaban to the attack on an Awami League rally on Bangabandhu Avenue in 2004.

Asked about the latest developments after Pintu's arrest, Criminal Investigation Department (CID) chief Phani Bhoushan Choudhury said: "There is no major development in the investigation."

"As his three-day remand expires today, we'll produce him before the court and seek further remand to learn who else were involved," a CID official told The Daily Star last night.

The investigators arrested Pintu in the city on January 18 after they had been confirmed that he was involved in the attack that left 24 AL leaders and activists killed and scores wounded.

Mufti Abdul Hannan, detained

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FOOD CRISIS

Purchase rule relaxed to import 5 lakh tonnes of rice

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The economic affairs committee of advisers yesterday relaxed procurement rules so that 5 lakh tons of rice can be purchased from India to tackle the ongoing food crisis in the country.

The committee also approved import of 25,000 tonnes of fertiliser from Saudi Arabia.

The committee on economic affairs, presided by finance adviser Mirza Azizul Islam, met at the Chief Adviser's Office yesterday even though the meeting was scheduled for today.

Food ministry sources said the government will need to open the letters of credit (LC) by the end of

January and make 95 percent advance payment to India for the 5 lakh tonnes of rice that India offered to sell directly to the government of Bangladesh.

Earlier, India offered to export the rice with conditions that the Bangladesh government would import the rice through its five state-owned organisations.

Since both these conditions were at odds with the procurement rules of the government, it decided to relax its procurement regulations to expedite import of the rice from India.

A government delegation led by Food Secretary Ayub Mian visited India recently to set a price of the

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2 firms place proposals to BB to buy Oriental Bank

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two investment consortiums have submitted technical and financial proposals to Bangladesh Bank (BB) for buying the Oriental Bank.

The consortiums are Domestic Investment Consortium and Switzerland-based ICB Global Finance Group Holdings-AG, said Bangladesh Bank sources.

The central bank will open the technical proposals of the bidders today and evaluate those on January 24, a source in the central bank said.

"If we find the technical proposals of the bidders satisfactory, their financial offers will be opened on February 4," the source said.

The final decision on selling the Oriental Bank will be made on February 11 and the central bank

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BHAWAL NAT'L PARK Illegally set up factories may be legalised

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is mulling the legalisation of factories set up illegally in the Bhawal National Park, but has decided not to allow any new factories on the protected forest.

The director general of the Department of Environment (DoE) has been asked to look into specific and stringent regulations for the factories to continue operating in the 2,572-acre core area of the nature reserve, said the Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Syed Fahim Munaim yesterday after the weekly meeting of the council of advisers.

The meeting chaired by Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed decided that the government would consider giving clearance certificates to the factories and other structures there if they meet the conditions set in the new regulations.

As of 2006, the DoE handed out such certificates to 16 factories.

New conditions would include eco-friendly provisions in the factories such as effluent treatment plants and limit of their size and operations, Fahim said.

The press secretary said that not many people had followed the existing rules on constructing

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Khaleda's nephew Tuhin gets 8yrs for tax evasion

UNB, Dhaka

A special court, trying high-profile corruption suspects, yesterday sentenced Shahrin Islam Tuhin, nephew of detained former prime minister and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, to eight years imprisonment in a tax evasion case.

Judge Tanzina Islam also fined fugitive Tuhin Tk92 lakh, in default, he is to suffer another nine months in jail.

The sentence will come into effect from the day he is arrested or when he surrenders to the court, court sources said.

Deputy Tax Commissioner Golam Kabir of the National Board of Revenue (NBR) filed the case against Tuhin nearly two months ago, accusing him of evading Tk 8.18 lakh income tax between fiscal years 1998 and 2007 and concealing Tk 3.29 crore in his wealth report submitted to the NBR.

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