

Hospital stay

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into their custody.

Cardiology specialist Sajal Krishna Banerjee, a member of the medical board formed for Ghulam Azam's treatment at BSMMU, told The Daily Star that around 2:00pm they handed their final report over to BSMMU Director Brig Gen Abdul Majid Bhuiyan. "In the final report, the medical board was of the opinion that there is no need to keep Ghulam Azam at the prison cell of BSMMU any longer," he said.

Talking to The Daily Star, Brig Gen Majid, who is from the medical corps of Bangladesh Army, said around 4:00pm they sent a letter to the inspector general of prisons (IG-prisons) urging him to decide on taking Ghulam Azam back to jail.

Responding to a query, Brig Gen Majid said the medical board discovered a small stone in Ghulam Azam's gallbladder. The BSMMU

director, however, said they already consulted specialists who said the stone is not that harmful and there is very little scope to treat a patient who is 89 years old.

IG-Prisons Brig Gen Ashraful Islam Khan said he was yet to receive the letter sent by the BSMMU authorities. "We will decide after receiving the letter," he said while talking to The Daily Star.

International Crimes Tribunal sent Ghulam Azam to jail on Wednesday after he had appeared before it in connection with crimes against humanity during the 1971 Liberation War. The jail authorities sent him to the BSMMU prison cell later that day. BSMMU formed the three-member medical board to check his health.

Ghulam Azam has been charged with 62 counts of crimes against humanity at the International Crimes Tribunal.

UK minister for int'l dev

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yesterday on a three-day official visit to Bangladesh.

Mitchell will highlight the planned scale-up of Britain's aid programme in Bangladesh and the British government's commitment to results, value for money and transparency.

He will meet Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, government officials and political figures, development partners and non-government organisations, said a British High Commission press release.

During his visit, Mitchell will reiterate the UK's partnership with Bangladesh, discuss the country's governance and economy, and highlight the opportunities for growth and development.

The UK, through the Department for International Development (DFID), is the largest bilateral grant donor in Bangladesh and has set ambitious goals for its support to the country for the next three years.

The goals include helping five million people lift out of extreme poverty, ensuring that 1.2 million women give birth safely under skilled carers, assistance to 1.5 million girls and boys in completion of primary school and providing access to safe water to 1.2 million people.

Mitchell will visit UK-funded projects in urban and remote areas to see how UK aid is helping Bangladesh meet the challenges of urbanisation, climate change and social exclusion.

Mitchell said: "Aid spent well has the power to transform lives. I am delighted to be in Bangladesh and see for myself the difference that UK aid is making to the lives of the poor."

"Britain is committed to do more to tackle the causes of poverty here in Bangladesh - doubling our efforts to protect livelihoods, stimulate growth and provide access to food, basic healthcare and education where the need is greatest, where we can achieve results and where we can demonstrate value for money."

Andrew Mitchell was appointed the UK's Secretary of State for International Development on 12 May 2010.

Hearing today

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Detained Salauddin, who faces 24 charges of crimes against humanity, will be produced before the tribunal today, prosecutor Rana Dasgupta told The Daily Star yesterday.

Salauddin committed the crimes as an individual and also as the brigadier of collaborating force Al-Shams in Chittagong, as his father Fazlul Quader Chowdhury was the founder of that force and a loyal supporter of the Pakistan rulers, Rana said.

Fazlul Quader Chowdhury, who had been a central minister of Pakistan during Ayub Khan regime, became the Speaker of Pakistan National Assembly in 1963.

He had established a torture camp at his Goods Hill residence in Raozan, where Salauddin tortured many pro-liberation people during the war for independence, the prosecutor said.

Rana added the prosecution had collected evidence

that Salauddin was responsible for killing more than 100 people including Natun Chandra Singha, founder of Kundeshwari Oushadhalaya; Makhanlal Sharma in Madhya Bahira, and Manindra Barua, Dayal Hari and Mahesh Mahajan in Bishwaspara of greater Chittagong.

The prosecution on November 14 last year submitted charges against the BNP leader, alleging that he had been directly and indirectly involved in crimes including genocide, killing, torture and abduction during the war.

On December 19 last year, the ICT accepted the charges and fixed today for the hearing on charge-framing.

The tribunal may today hear the petitions filed on Salauddin's behalf, seeking his release from the charges, adjournment of the proceedings against him, and the cancellation of a state defence lawyer's appointment, the prosecutor said.

EVM, webcam ready

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Narsingdi deputy commissioner's office yesterday, Chief Election Commissioner ATM Shamsul Huda also said all activities inside the centres including those of presiding and polling officers would be monitored through webcams.

In response to a query, he said EVMs would be used in all local government elections from now on. The Election Commission has planned a five-tier security arrangement for the Narsingdi polls, he added.

Describing the security measures, Shamsul Alam, the district election officer, told The Daily Star that 15 mobile courts, each led by a magistrate, would be dealing with election-related offences.

There will also be several "strike forces" comprised of Rapid Action Battalion and police personnel who will keep a watch on the situation and take steps, if necessary, to prevent any untoward incidents.

Besides, a "reserve force" of 150 policemen will be ready to support mobile courts and strike forces, if needed, to foil any attempt at hampering the vote.

Shamsul said check-posts would be set up at all the points through which vehicles would move in and out of the municipality.

"There will be check posts at the entrances of the polling centres too to frisk and allow in only the voters and officials concerned," he added.

The mayoral by-election will be held nearly two and a half months after the killing of the previous mayor, Lokman Hossain. The EC announced the by-election on December 13.

A total of 77,581 voters are expected to exercise their franchise at 31 polling centres in nine wards of the municipality.

Bandarban

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NGO field workers Shesanta Tripura, 30, of Thanchi, and Rintu Chakma, 25, of Rangamati, Ching Sha Aung Marma, 48, a worker of Thanchi Health Complex, Hla Sa Thui, 11, a class-VI student of Tilak Mukherjee Memorial School at Gopalganj, farmer Aung Hla Pru Marma, 30, Kanti Tripura, Mong Hla Ching Marma, tourists Rajib Chowdhury, Hasan and Tariqul Alam Sujan of Chandpur and Tanvir Rezwan of Mugga, Dhaka.

The four who died in Bandarban Sadar Hospital were Jacob Tripura, 28, field facilitator of Caritas, Nurul Islam, a contractor, and Samu Dutta and Belua Barua. The 10 injured and admitted to Chittagong Medical College Hospital were bus driver Subhash Das, 55, Liton Mia, 40, Hla Gayang, 15, Daw Sing Nue Marma, 14, Mang Sing Marma, 18, Chiro Ma, 23, and tourists Nurul Huda Tipu, 42, Salehin, 28, Sahab Uddin, 36 and Abdul Hoque, 42.

Bangladesh Army and BGB personnel, firemen and police joined locals in the rescue operations that ended at 4:30pm. However, the mangled bus remains in the ravine.

The first bus of the morning to Bandarban from Thanchi upazila left from the bus stop around 8:00am yesterday with approximately 40 people on board. shortfalls in the externally-funded ADP budget will not be substituted with taka funding.

An official at the finance ministry, who requested anonymity, said the government has already taken some measures to meet the conditions put forth by the IMF and more would be taken in the future.

The lending agency advised the government to issue a circular to the ministries concerned by January this year indicating that

It only travelled six to seven kilometres before falling into the gorge, said Neyamatul Karim, officer-in-charge of Thanchi Police Station.

Injured passengers were quoted as saying that the driver most probably misjudged the treacherous hilly roads at Shilerjhir in the dense fog.

Many died as the bus tumbled down into the gorge while several others received grievous injuries, they said. The rescue operation was carried out manually without the help of any equipment.

Asked about the possibility of someone still lying trapped down there, BGB official Nurul Momen said, "We do not have any information that someone is missing...We need heavy equipment to pull the bus out."

Bandarban Deputy Commissioner Mizanur Rahman visiting the spot said the district administration will bear the treatment expenses of the injured.

He also said Tk 5,000 and 500kg of rice will be given to the families that lost a loved one in the accident.

A month short of two years ago, nine people were killed and over 35 were injured when a bus carrying students of Chittagong Government College on a picnic fell into a ditch beside Bandarban-Chittagong highway in Bandarban.

Concluding prayers

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and abroad will pray for spiritual progress, exaltation and welfare of the Muslim community.

The concluding prayers are likely to start anytime between 11:30am and 1:00pm.

President Zillur Rahman, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Leader of the Opposition Khaleda Zia and many more dignitaries are expected to join the concluding prayers.

Road traffic on Dhaka-Mymensingh highway and Abdullahpur-Ashulia road will remain suspended from morning till the end of the prayers.

Meanwhile, Abdul Majid, 65, of Barisal died of cardiac arrest at the Ijtema venue yesterday morning, raising the death toll to eight.

Stringent security measures have been put in place in and around the venue. About 12,000 security personnel have been deployed to ensure safety of the devotees.

Besides, hundreds of volunteers are working round the clock to make sure the event runs smoothly.

Devotees from 32 districts and over 15,000 foreigners are attending the first phase of the Ijtema. The second phase is scheduled for January 20-22.

Tablighi Jamaat has been organising the annual congregation in Tongi since 1946.

would be lucky if I die here," said 70-year-old Kamaluddin Miah, who came from Sylhet to seek divine blessings.

Many were cooking meals in stoves beside their makeshift tents, while some others took flattened and puffed rice to avoid the hassle of cooking.

Devotees waited in long queues at different temporary medial camps set up on the Ijtema ground.

"Most of them are coming to us with cold-related complaints. We are giving them first aid. If we find anybody with serious illness, we refer him to Tongi Hospital," said Adam Ali, a medical service provider.

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turn to the own fund to meet the project costs, he added.

The planning ministry and the Economic Relations Division of the finance ministry have held several meetings with the ministries concerned over the last one and a half years but the situation did not improve.

According to Bangladesh Bank statistics, till January 3, the government borrowed Tk 17,300 crore from the banking system. The target in this year's budget is Tk 18,957.

However, the target has already been revised at more than Tk 25,000 crore.

The finance ministry said the borrowing may get doubled if the government did not cut spending.

The IMF last month gave a number of recommendations as conditions attached with its ECF loan. To ease pressure on the bank borrowings, it suggested in the beginning of January that fuel price is increased by Tk 5 per litre. The government has already implemented it.

Besides, the IMF asked the government to increase electricity price at the retail level in February.

The major lending agency said as a result of the hike in fuel and power prices, additional demand for subsidy by Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation and Power Development Board will go down by Tk 15,000 crore in the current fiscal.

Govt moves to cut bank borrowing

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International Monetary Fund (IMF) for its possible \$1 billion credit, the officials said.

Sources at the finance and planning ministries said that failing to utilise foreign funds, the ministries have been using the government's own fund. It is creating heavy pressure on the bank borrowings.

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The lending agency advised the government to issue a circular to the ministries concerned by January this year indicating that

year utilised only 13 percent of the allotted project aid -- lowest in the last four years.

On the contrary, they spent 25 percent of their allocation from the local fund which is highest in the same period.

The finance ministry official said it is not mandatory to take permission from the finance division for spending up to the third instalment of the yearly allocation.

As a result, when the ministries find hindrances in getting foreign funds, they

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