



A number of leaders and activists of the BNP offer special prayers for late Arafat Rahman Koko, BNP chief Khaleda Zia's son, in front of Khaleda's Gulshan office. Koko's chehlum was held yesterday.

PHOTO: BANGLAR CHOKH

Khaleda attends son's chehlum

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia yesterday attended a special prayer and milad mahfil to observe chehlum of Arafat Rahman Koko at her Gulshan office in the capital.

Surrounded by her relatives, Khaleda prayed for the salvation of her son's departed soul with tears rolling down her cheeks, members of the BNP chief's media wings said.

They joined the prayers from Khaleda's office room on the first floor.

Koko, 42, died of heart failure at his rented house in Kuala Lumpur of Malaysia on January 24. He along with his wife and two daughters had been living there since 2008.

Widow of Koko and her two daughters came to Dhaka on January 27 to attend his funeral.

On February 2, his wife returned to Kuala Lumpur as their daughters were continuing their studies at an internationally reputed school there.

One relative of Koko was present in the chehlum, said a member of the media wing yesterday.

No leaders and activists of BNP or

its front organisations were seen trying to gather in front of Khaleda's office to attend the chehlum due to fear of police harassment and arrest.

Eminent jurist Rafique-ul Huq and expelled BNP leader Maj (ret'd) Akhtaruzzaman were the only persons outside the party who participated in the chehlum.

They separately called on the BNP chief at her office room.

Police and special branch officials allowed 16 students and teachers of two madrasas to attend the chehlum after noting down details of their addresses and recording their video images.

Around 60 people, including four BNP leaders who have been staying inside Khaleda's office since January 3, also attended the chehlum.

The programme began at the ground floor of the office around 11:30am with recitation from the Holy Quran and ended after Asr prayers.

Mufti MM Ashrafur Islam, a teacher of Mohammadpur Madrasa, conducted the munajat.

Later, foods (tehari) were distributed among the participants and people available outside the office.

9 cops closed in Kurigram for torturing lawyer

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kurigram

Nine policemen, including two sub-inspectors, were closed to district police lines yesterday afternoon for allegedly torturing a lawyer on the premises of Kurigram Chief Judicial Magistrate's Court on Tuesday.

The nine are Court Sub-inspector Moshir Kabir, SI Wahiduzzaman Molla of Kurigram Sadar Police Station and seven constables.

Constable Emdadul Haque of Dhaka Metropolitan Police on December 14 last year had sued one Maidul Islam Nayan of Kurigram for kidnapping his wife Joshna Akhtar Manisha and looting valuables worth Tk 6 lakh from his house, said advocate Fakhrul Islam, general secretary of Kurigram Bar association.

Nayan surrendered before the court on January 1. Manisha, 31, on that day told the court that she married Nayan after divorcing Emdadul. The divorce papers were placed before the court, said Manisha's counsel Enamul Haque Chowdhury Chad.

The court sent Nayan to jail and

ordered police to send Manisha to the safe home in Rajshahi. Nayan later secured bail from the court.

Police on Tuesday produced Manisha before the court. The magistrate freed Manisha but police tried to detain her on the court premises.

As her lawyer advocate Touhidul Islam Rasel protested the incident, cops assaulted him and took him to Kurigram Sadar Police Station in the afternoon, according to lawyers.

Incensed at the police action, lawyers boycotted court proceedings and demanded immediate released of Rasel. Police later freed Touhidul.

The abstention from court proceedings by lawyers continued yesterday. Members of the district Bar held a protest rally in the court area.

Murshedul Karim Mohammad Ishtesham, officer-in-charge of Kurigram Sadar Police Station, said the incident was a misunderstanding.

Kurigram Public Prosecutor Abraham Lincoln said the decision of the police administration has been positive. The lawyers will discuss their next course of action in a meeting tonight (last night), he added.

Khaleda wants to be in prison: PM

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order, Khaleda had disrespected it. "She [Khaleda] won't abide by the court order and won't appear before the court... These are tarnishing the image of the court, and as a result none will abide by the court in future, and the country will go in that direction," she added.

About the no-show of the BNP chief in the court yesterday, she said she had heard from Khaleda's lawyers that Khaleda lacked security and that was why

she did not go to court.

Hasina said it was most unfortunate that security would have to be given to the person "who is killing people and hurling petrol bombs". She said the trial of these killings would be done as per the law.

She said the BNP chief now thinks that jail is a safe place for her to avoid public wrath generated by "her killing of innocent people and hampering education of 15 lakh SSC examinees".

"She [Khaleda] feels that jail is the safest place for her, and wants to see herself arrested and sent to Nazimuddin Road [where the central jail is located]," Hasina said.

Terming Khaleda a leader of militants, the prime minister said her only job is to kill people through arson, and harm the country's economy and show off militant power.

Hasina said the BNP-Jamaat's ongoing movement had no backing of the

people and noted that she had talked to some former MPs of BNP and they informed her that they did not support the destructive activities, including killing and bomb attacks by the BNP-Jamaat.

She said Khaleda also tried her best to cause harm to the readymade garment sector. These incidents tarnish the image of Bangladesh, and that the government had been competently tackling the situation, she added.

Of a 'crazy' man, 2.5 katha land

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His family had deserted it a good six years ago. But repeated requests from his family, ominous threats from a neighbour, a raging sun, torrential rain, numbing cold -- nothing could move him so much as an inch from the place where he was born and brought up.

Regarded "crazy" by all, Jewel was remained mentally challenged for the most part of his life. So may be he is not even aware that his actions have staved off several attempts to grab this land over the past few years! May be he has never understood the value of this land in terms of money. Or may be a birth-place is not just a place to him; may be it has rather an aura of sanctity in his world.

When this correspondent paid him a visit on SK Das Lane, Jewel was

having dinner in a room that had no roof and was reduced to skeletons of walls partly demolished. While he was eating, his cousin Shafiq Alam was standing by the side of his makeshift bed, which was nothing more than a few bed sheets covering a pile of bricks!

Jewel doesn't speak much. But when he does, his mumbling produces sounds that don't make much sense.

"What brings me here is this forsaken and crazy Jewel," said Shafiq.

When Jewel's mother was alive, she brought him meals thrice a day. After she died, Jewel's elder sister Mahmuda has taken over, Shafiq told this correspondent.

Jewel's family had engaged a real estate company to replace their tired house with an apartment building in 2009. The company, accord-

ingly, put up a boundary wall and demolished most parts of the house to initiate construction work, but Jewel did not leave.

After that the next door neighbour came up with the story that one of his predecessors had bought this land from Jewel's great grandfathers. On top of filing a case, he secured a stay order from the High Court on any construction work in the land.

The neighbour exercised all his clout to scare the "crazy" man away but all the same, jewel clung on to this place.

Meanwhile, Jewel's family got the stay order cancelled in 2011. The Daily Star has gone through the court documents that confirm that Jewel's family has owned this property for over a century now. The grabber's appeal to review the cancellation of the stay

order was also turned down.

But threats continued to be meted over the phone. Nothing changed even after Jewel's siblings filed half a dozen general diaries and cases against the neighbour. So Jewel's family finally gave up on the land.

Bowing to such pressures, however, is another alien idea in Jewel's world. May be it explains why he has continued to stay at the place which, it is fair to assume, is deeply entwined with his whole being.

Mahmuda, however, finds the whole affair highly ironic. Jewel's rootlessness in this place had not even been considered before his family members gave this land to a real estate company.

"Now he's the one protecting the land, keeping the grabbers away," she said.

Chinese, Indian envoys hold meeting

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

New Chinese Ambassador to Dhaka Ma Mingqiang yesterday had a meeting with Indian High Commissioner Pankaj Saran.

The diplomatic circle in Dhaka considers the meeting held at the Indian envoy's residence around 10:30am critical in the current context of local politics.

Details of the 90-minute-long meeting could not be known immediately, but it is learned that the envoys of the two influential countries discussed the ongoing political situation.

Sources said they discussed the latest developments of a diplomatic move of 16 envoys to reduce the gap between the two major parties and forge a consensus between them.

The sources added the Indian and Chinese diplomats renewed their respective countries' position not to interfere into the internal matters of any country and expressed the hope that people of Bangladesh would resolve their problems peacefully soon.

The two envoys also expressed concern at the escalation of political violence, which has caused many deaths, casualties and destruction of public property.

Asked about the meeting, a spokesman of the Chinese embassy told The Daily Star that it was a courtesy call. A diplomat of the Indian High Commission also said, "It was a routine courtesy call by the Chinese ambassador."

The Chinese ambassador presented his credentials to President Abdul Hamid on February 2.

Khaleda 'fugitive'

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seeking to know the execution status of the arrest orders.

Opposing the petition, ACC counsel Mosharraf Hossain Kajol argued that there was no point in raising the issue before the court since it's the duty of the police to execute the court order. The judge did not say anything about it.

"The arrest warrants against Khaleda Zia remain in force and it will take effect. Either she herself has to come to the court or the authorities will arrest and bring her," Kajol told journalists later.

NEW PLEA BY KHALEDA'S COUNSELS

Unlike previous hearings, counsels for Khaleda yesterday pleaded to the court to allow them to represent her during the case proceedings.

In response, the judge said the counsels had never made any such prayer since the trial proceedings began.

Opposing the prayer, Kajol said Khaleda's counsels earlier petitioned to represent Tarique Rahman in the case, but they never did so for the BNP chief.

Khaleda has refrained from appearing before the court on 56 out of 63 dates for hearing of the two cases.

"Their intention is to delay the trial," Kajol argued during the hearing.

He also told the court that the law did not allow anybody to file any petition to the court on behalf of a fugitive accused.

ROW OVER PETITIONS

During the hearing yesterday, Khaleda's lawyer Mohammad Ali questioned the neutrality of the court, and said, "The court issued the arrest warrants being biased."

In response, Judge Abu Ahmed said making such comments was contemptuous.

The judge also interrupted Mohammad Ali when the latter was

giving references to different rulings of the higher courts to back the defence plea for withdrawal of the arrest warrants.

Then Mohammad Ali said he was a senior lawyer of the Supreme Court's Appellate Division. Even the apex court judges would not interrupt him during his submissions, he said.

Mahbubuddin Khokon, secretary of the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) and a counsel for Khaleda, took his cue and told the judge: "I will inform the apex court about you."

ACC lawyer Kajol then stood up from his chair and asked Khokon not to put pressure on the court.

At one stage when Ali was repeatedly telling the judge that the latter has to "know and learn" the necessity of the higher court's rulings, Judge Abu Ahmed said: "It's not a class room. I feel insulted in presence of a huge audience."

Later in the afternoon, counsels for the BNP chief held a press conference at the SCBA office, and demanded withdrawal of the arrest warrants for Khaleda.

SCBA President Khandaker Mahbub Hossain, also a lawyer for Khaleda, said the judge issued the arrest warrants "illegally and unethically".

The court did not issue any show-cause notice to her bail guarantor before cancelling the bail and issuing the arrest warrants, he said.

On Khaleda's petitions, the SCBA president said the judge could have either accepted or rejected the pleas, but instead he kept those in the case files, which was surprising.

TARIQUE'S BAIL UPHOLD

During yesterday's hearing, Tarique Rahman's counsel Sanaullah Mia applied to the court for upholding his bail and allowing his lawyers to represent him in his absence.

The court entertained the petition.

Tarique, the elder son of Khaleda Zia, is an accused in the Zia Orphanage Trust graft case and has

been living in London since September 2008.

The court on February 25 asked Tarique's counsel to produce the accused before the court yesterday.

Sanaullah yesterday informed the court that Tarique was still sick.

All the seven witnesses in the orphanage trust case were present at the court.

Jubo League leader shot dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

A local leader of Jubo League, youth front of the ruling Awami League, was gunned down by unidentified criminals at Mirikpur Bazar under Sadar upazila of Laxmipur early yesterday.

Locals discovered the body of Arifur Rahman Farhad, 30, joint convener of Bangkhan Union unit of Jubo League, in a sawmill, and informed the police.

Nurul Amin Master said unidentified men called his son, Farhad, out of his home around 3:00 am.

Following information received from the locals in the morning, they rushed to the sawmill and found Farhad's body there.

On learning about the incident, Laxmipur police rushed to the spot and recovered the body.

Later they sent the body to Laxmipur Sadar Hospital morgue for an autopsy. Assistant Police Super Junayet Kawser visited the spot.

Replying to questions, the ASP told this correspondent that the body of the deceased bore at least seven bullet marks on his chest and back.

The suspects involved in the murder have primarily been identified, he said. However, the names of the suspects cannot be disclosed at this moment because of the continuing investigation, the ASP said, adding that police had already raided several areas to nab the perpetrators.

Kamaruzzaman

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executed war criminal Quader Mollah.

Kamaruzzaman, senior assistant secretary general of Jamaat-e-Islami, will decide whether he will seek presidential mercy after consulting his lawyers if his review petition is rejected, he said, quoting his client.

During the half hour meeting, the Jamaat leader claimed to be innocent, saying he was not involved in any wartime offences labelled against him, said Shishir.

Kamaruzzaman hoped he would get acquitted in the judgment on the review petition, the lawyer said, adding that his client was both mentally and physically well.

Four other counsels, who met the Jamaat leader, are Tajul Islam, Ehsan A Siddiq, Najibur Rahman and

Hunt

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While the Afghans still have an outside chance of qualification, they face New Zealand in their next game, and a loss will see their campaign come to an end. However, they will still want to end on a high and the fourth place of Pool A could be decided by the Afghans on the last day when they face England, given England beat Bangladesh.

As is the case with mathematics, any deviation could cause all calculations to go out of the window, so Bangladesh should be hoping to secure qualification based on their own merit. It won't be easy, not by any stretch of the imagination, but the Tigers are capable of beating England to secure a quarterfinal berth, especially if they defeat Scotland by a large margin and have the momentum with them.

As half the nation is in a restful slumber, the other half -- the ardent fans -- will be up screaming at their TV sets and pulling at their hair, all we can hope is that the world hears the Tigers roar at least twice before the knockout stages.

Motiur Rahman Akand.

The prison authorities read Kamaruzzaman's death warrant out to him on February 19, the day the International Crimes Tribunal-2 issued the warrant. The SC released the verdict's full text the previous day.

On November 3, last year, the SC upheld the May 9, 2013, death penalty handed down by the ICT-2 for crimes that Kamaruzzaman committed against humanity during the Liberation War.

The 63-year-old Jamaat leader was found guilty of mass killing, murder, abduction, torture, rape, persecution and abetment of torture in greater Mymensingh district in 1971.

Govt to purchase

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into Off-shore Patrol Vessels (OPVs) before purchasing them.

The proposal also said Bangladesh gained more sea area as the maritime boundary with India and Myanmar had been demarcated by an international court.

As the Coast Guard does not have any deep-sea ships to patrol the large swath of maritime boundary, the government has decided to buy or build eight OPVs, it said.

Of the six ships to be purchased for BSC, three are oil tankers valued at \$36.20 million per tanker and three bulk carriers valued at \$25.30 million per carrier, according to the shipping ministry proposal.

These ships are being procured under Chinese concessional loans financed by Chinese Exim Bank at 2 percent interest rate and under a repayment period of 20 years with a five-year grace period.

At present, BSC has a fleet of only eight ships, the average age of which are over 30 years, said the proposal.

No ship was added to the fleet since 1991 due to high prices.