

KHALEDA'S NIKO CASE HC to decide about court in mid-June

Decision on cognisance of Jatrabari arson charges on June 28

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court will deliver its decision in mid of June on whether the trial proceedings of Niko corruption case against BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia will run at the lower court.

The HC yesterday concluded hearing on a seven-year-old writ petition filed by Khaleda challenging the legality of filing of the case.

Both Appellate and High Court Divisions of the Supreme Court will go into an annual vacation between June 1 and 14.

The HC did not specifically say whether it will give verdict on Khaleda's petitions on June 14, her lawyer Raghieb Rauf Chowdhury told The Daily Star.

The Anti-Corruption Commission filed the graft case with Tejgaon Police Station on December 9, 2007, accusing Khaleda and several others of abusing power while she was the prime minister to award a gas exploration and extraction deal to the Canadian company, Niko.

Our court correspondent adds, a Dhaka court yesterday set June 28 to decide whether the charges brought against BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and 37 others in two cases filed over Jatrabari arson will be accepted.

The court will also pass an order on the same date whether arrest warrants against Khaleda and 30 others will be issued.

Charges have already been pressed against the accused for burning alive a person and injuring 30 others for firebombing a bus in Jatrabari on January 23.

The charge sheets said Khaleda masterminded the arson and showed her along with 30 other fugitives because they had not secured bail in these two cases.

Others are already in jail.

A day after the January 23 arson, Jatrabari police filed two cases against 68 BNP and Jamaat leaders.

On May 6, Basir Ahmed, a DB sub-inspector submitted two charge sheets to the

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Cars up for rent at Mukatgan, a park near the General Post Office (GPO) of Gulistan, which used be an open space for the local residents and a venue for public gatherings two decades ago. Owners of car rental businesses acknowledge that they have been illegally occupying the park but said they have nowhere else to go. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO:
RASHED SHUMON

Cars more important than people?



HELEMUL ALAM

Rows of minibuses and cars are now seen parked on what used to be a place where large gatherings were held and children ran about. Since the time of the Pakistani rule, Mukatgan Park, on the western side of the General Post Office, had been a source of fresh air for people in the area who could take walks and exercise there.

However, now the 0.835 acre of land is used to run car rental businesses.

In the 1980s, during the tenure of HM Ershad, the land was used for gatherings and rallies, said sources at the city corporation. Rajdhani Unnayan Karttripakkha (Rajuk) had

handed over the park to the city corporation back then.

After Ershad's fall in 1990, car rental business owners grabbed the area and parked their vehicles there depriving different socio-political organisations and residents of the park.

The park gradually began losing its identity as over time, a concrete structure, housing an office of Dhaka Microbus Car Owners' Association and an aquarium shop, was built on the park. Some tin-roof structures and makeshift tea stalls were also set up.

In 1998, a semi-concrete mosque, Mukatgan Jam-e-Masjid, and a public toilet were also built on the piece of land. The mosque is run under the

How many parks does Dhaka city need? According to rules, it should be 92, one for each ward. But we have only 54, with several of them having ceased to exist and many threatened. At least 10 parks have been replaced with a community centre, kitchen market, mosque, rickshaw garage or truck parking lot, mostly by the city corporation itself. This is the picture when an urban expert, Prof Nazrul Islam, says every 10,000 city residents need an open space of four acres -- park or playground -- for healthy development of children and prevention of diseases related to physical activities. The Daily Star reports how and why we are squeezing our breathing spaces in our metropolis where 15 million people cram in. The 11th report of the series is published today.



management of the association.

Moreover, due to a lack of care and management, the park land is in a horrible state.

The microbus owners and workers were evicted several times before, but they keep com-

ing back, said an official at the estate department of the city corporation.

Meher Hossain Khan, general secretary of Dhaka Microbus Car Owners' Association, said they want a parking space for their

vehicles.

"We do not want to stay here illegally. They have evicted us many times and this hurts our business, however, we have no choice but to come back," he said.

He said they keep around 60 minibuses parked on the piece of land.

Rahman, a vendor of Gulistan who lived in the area in the 1960s, said children used to play in the park, while the elderly sat under trees and chatted about their daily lives, but this is not the case anymore.

Newly elected Mayor of Dhaka South City Corporation Sayeed Khokon said they would take necessary steps to free the park after visiting it soon.



Dr Rahmatullah's 1st anniversary of death to be observed today

CITY DESK

The first death anniversary of Dr M Rahmatullah, former director of UN ESCAP, Bangkok, Thailand, will be observed today.

He worked extensively on the Asian Highway and connectivity among Saarc countries to promote regional economic growth.

Also a senior fellow at the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), he died on May 28 in 2014 at the age of 74, says a press release.

He was a former planning commission member too.

Rahmatullah, a highly respected member of the community, also led the Gulshan Park development initiatives and established it as a cornerstone for the Gulshan community.

A doa mahfil will be held at his residence (House-11, Road-62, Gulshan-2) after the Asr prayers today.

His family has requested all his well-wishers to pray for the departed soul.

SSC, equivalent exam results tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The results of the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) and equivalent examinations will be published tomorrow simultaneously across the country.

Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid will hand over a copy of the results to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her office at 10:00am on that day.

Nahid will formally announce the results at a press conference in his ministry at 1:00pm.

The examinees will get their results from the respective centres, websites of their respective boards and mobiles through SMS from 2:00pm.

The results will also be

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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina attends the Generals' Conference of Bangladesh Army in the Army Headquarters at Dhaka Cantonment yesterday.

PHOTO:
PMO

Modernisation of army to continue PM tells conference of generals at Dhaka Cantonment

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday reiterated her resolve to provide everything necessary to continue modernisation of Bangladesh Army.

She hoped that the army officials would discharge their duties in confidence of their leadership, mutual trust, and above all maintaining discipline.

"Epochal development has been unleashed in the infrastructural sector of Bangladesh Army over the last two tenures of our government (1996-2001 and 2009-2014) but still there is a need for further reorganising Bangladesh Army in the current era of ICT. The pace of infrastructural devel-

opment of army will continue during this 3rd tenure (2014-)," she said.

The prime minister was speaking at the Generals' Conference of Bangladesh Army at the Army Headquarters in Dhaka Cantonment.

Hasina said her government was actively considering setting up another infantry division of army on the banks of the Padma river in the country's southern region.

This was the first such conference between the army leadership and the premier in 2015.

She believes the army will supervise the Padma bridge construction work with utmost sincerity.

The prime minister, also in charge

of the defence ministry, said the implementation of the Forces Goal 2030 for Bangladesh Army had advanced much, with addition of modern arms, ammunition and communication equipment that have increased its battle strength manifold.

Listing other steps, she said the procurement deal of 6 MI-171 helicopters, 330 Armoured Personnel Carriers (APCs) and 10 armoured recovery vehicles under the \$ 1 billion military loan protocol with Russia was complete, and the army would get the first instalment at the end of 2016.

Besides, the process is underway to upgrade some 174 T-59 tanks while

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CONSTRUCTION PIT RISKING SUNDARBAN HOTEL

New area caves in

Large swathe of footpath gone; a lane of Panthapath also blocked off; army likely to be called in for help

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Less than a day after the southern wall of a foundation pit adjoining the capital's Sundarban Hotel collapsed, the eastern and northern walls followed last evening, taking down the entire length of the footpath, two humongous billboards, and a tree.

The landslide, which occurred in three phases within 30 minutes from 8:45pm, prompted closure of Panthapath Road's southern lane, while CR Dutta Road, on the east of the pit dug for construction of 12-storey National Bank Limited Twin Tower, was shut to traffic and people on Wednesday morning, immediately after the first slide.

Mayor of Dhaka North City Corporation Annisul Huq, who visited the scene again, told reporters early today that the authorities would contact large construction firms and call in army for dumping sandbags quickly so as to prevent further slides.

The failure of the piling, part of the system to protect the 50-foot deep pit's edge, caused a portion of the six-storey hotel's foundation soil, boundary wall, a stretch of footpath,

some makeshift shops and an electric pole to cave in while 50 guests were evacuated.

"Restoring the hotel's stability is our priority," Annisul Huq told The Daily Star yesterday afternoon.

"It will require five lakh cubic feet or 2,500 truckloads of sand to be dumped in the portion of the foundation ditch where shore protection failed," he said.

But only one lakh cubic feet of sand could be dumped so far since Wednesday noon, he said, adding that the process was taking time due to a lack of trucks, traffic jam and inaccessibility.

Fearing deterioration, the mayor earlier said, "We have written to the ministry this afternoon requiring army intervention and the ministry may urgently request the army to mobilise if any emergency arises."

Brig Gen Ali Ahmed Khan, director general of Fire Service and Civil Defence, also blamed inaccessibility for the slow progress.

That rains could make the situation unmanageable was also apprehended by Prof Mehedi Ahmed Ansary of the civil

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