

Singapore teen in anti-Lee video walks free after sentencing

AFP, Singapore

The Singaporean teenager behind online attacks on former premier Lee Kuan Yew was given a four-week jail term Monday but freed in view of time served since being accused of offending Christians and posting an obscene image.

Amos Yee, 16, was jailed for three weeks for wounding religious feelings in an expletive-laden YouTube video comparing Lee Kuan Yew to Jesus, which was posted after the independence leader's death in March.

He also received a one-week jail term for posting an obscene drawing of Lee and former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher.

District Court judge Jasvender Kaur backdated the sentence to June 2, when Yee was already in remand, saying the offences "were not serious in nature but not trivial either".

Yee, who was earlier shackled on his hands and feet in court, looked dazed and frightened as he left the court. He did not speak to reporters.

Yee's lawyer Alfred Dodwell told reporters his client wants to appeal the conviction.

Yee had faced an extended period behind bars. The maximum penalty for wounding racial or religious feelings is three years.

Go to grassroots

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anti-government movement only after reorganising the party. But she did not mention any timeframe about launching the movement.

Khaleda said she already started reorganising the party. The new structure of the party would be evident after the release of party acting secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam from jail, she added.

A meeting source said he hoped that the party's central council would be held by the end of this year.

Briefing reporters after the meeting, BNP standing committee member Nazrul Islam Khan said Khaleda Zia demanded the immediate release of BNP leaders and activists, including Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir.

Mentioning about the deaths of party leaders Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu and Mosleuddin behind bars, Khaleda demanded the government ensure proper treatment of the jailed party men.

KHALEDA BLASTS ERSHAD
The BNP chief yesterday blasted Jatiya Party chief HM Ershad for dishonouring women in the Jatiya Sangshad.

"Women are being dishonoured by the self-declared opposition party in parliament," Khaleda told an iftar programme hosted by Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh at city a hotel.

She said this referring to the incident of Prime Minister's Special Envoy HM Ershad terming women showpiece in the Jatiya Sangshad.

She called upon the people to get united for the greater interest of the country's development and democracy.

"If a free, fair, and inclusive general election is held, the country would move forward," she said.

Taking part in the discussion on the national budget, Ershad on June 29 said, "We repeatedly say that our prime minister is a woman, Speaker is a woman, the deputy leader of the house and the opposition leader -- all are women. But they are showpieces. It's not the same outside."

Meanwhile, BNP spokesperson Asaduzzaman Ripon yesterday at press conference at the party's Nayapaltn central office claimed that his party men had no links with the acts of violence and subversive activities carried out during the anti-government movement.

He criticised the inspector general of police (IGP) over his comment on the violence. "There is certainly some genuine logic and observation behind the BNP chairperson's allegation against the police. But the police chief's statement countering her remarks is completely unexpected and unbecoming to a cop."

Khaleda on Saturday at an iftar party said, "Police had set fire to and hurled petrol bombs at buses. They themselves admitted to doing it.... Our three-month long movement wouldn't have stopped, had police not killed people by hurling firebombs and torching buses."

IGP AKM Shahidul Haque on the following day said, "You [reporters] gather information from everywhere. Did you get any such information? This is a baseless allegation."

COLLEGE ADMISSION Second merit list published

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday published the second merit list of students aspiring to get admitted to colleges.

"A total of 10,726 new students out of 62,850 students who got dropped from the first merit list have been selected for admission in class XI," Prof Abu Bakar Siddique, chairman of Dhaka Education Board, told The Daily Star.

The list, published in the website www.xiclassadmission.gov.bd, also included names of another 6,921 students who had applied for changing their colleges, he said.

Siddique, also the chief of Inter-education Board Coordination Subcommittee, said a number of students were dropped from the first merit list as they did not mention the five preferred colleges in their applications.

Admission of the students on the second list will take place today and tomorrow, he added.

The students who did not get a position in the second merit list can apply on July 9 and 10 with their choices for different colleges, the chairman said.

After deferring dates of the result thrice, the education ministry published the first merit list with names of over 10.93 lakh students for admission in class XI on June 28 midnight.

But students and guardians faced troubles in the admission process, with many complaining of various mistakes in the list. Also, many colleges did not get the list in time.

Survey begins

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prevent outsiders or any quarters from creating any trouble over the ownership of land during the interim period, said foreign ministry sources.

Deputy Commissioner of Kurigram Khan Mohammad Nurul Amin launched the survey in the Indian enclave of Dashiarchhara in Phulbari upazila of the district.

Enumerators found that people do not want to go to India as they have a socio-economic bonding with Bangladesh.

Working in Bashpatai enclave inside Kolaghat union of Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila, Indian enumerator Harish Chandra Barmon said, "I didn't find a resident who wants to become an Indian national. We are collecting signatures and fingerprints of the enclave people."

Talking to The Daily Star, many people expressed their desire to become Bangladeshi citizens.

"All the enclave residents, regardless of Muslims and Hindus, want to get Bangladeshi citizenship," said 45-year-old Nazrul Islam of Bashpatai enclave.

People have been living on this soil since their birth and have become used to the Bangladeshi culture, he added. "We won't be able to adopt a new culture at this stage of our life."

Aminul Islam, 55, of the same enclave said they are now engaged in different jobs to earn their living. "What kind of work would we do there [India]? We have to live here to earn our bread and butter."

Ranjit Chandra Das, 46, said they built relations with the local people through marriages. "We have married off our sisters and daughters here. How would we leave them now?"

Enumerators said they were conducting the survey following the

records of the joint census in 2011. "We are registering people who were born after 2011, and dropping the names of those who died after 2011," said Jahangir Alam, a Bangladeshi enumerator working in the Indian enclave of Bashpatai.

"Apart from going door to door, we are also asking people about their choice of country they want to live in," he added.

Members of law enforcement agencies and village police accompanied the survey teams.

In Kurigram, a control room was set up at the deputy commissioner's office for conducting the survey on 12 Indian enclaves inside the district.

Sohel Maruf, executive magistrate of Kurigram, said the enclave resident would have to decide on their citizenship before the survey ended.

In Panchagarh, 18 camps were set up for running the survey-related activities in 36 enclaves inside the district.

Golam Mostafa, general secretary of the Bangladesh unit of the India-Bangladesh Enclave Exchange Coordination Committee, demanded the authorities bring back the enclave people who went to different districts of the two countries in search of jobs.

There will be no existence of the enclaves after July 31 midnight as the governments of India and Bangladesh will finalise the list of citizens by then.

The Indian parliament unanimously passed a constitution amendment bill in May to pave the way for implementing the LBA. The protocol for exchange of enclaves was signed between the two countries during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Dhaka last month.

Our correspondents in Lalmonirhat, Kurigram and Thakurgaon contributed to this report.

National award for rag pickers!

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three associations involved in innovation of best practices, he added.

Stating that rag pickers are helping to some extent in handling waste, the minister pitched for setting up of a credible agency like Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) that can guide municipal bodies to take measures to address waste management in a scientific way.

"At present, agencies that handle solid waste are working on contractual basis and this has failed miserably. Handling waste cannot always be a

profitable business. We have suggested that the urban ministry build a credible agency like DMRC that can give scientific guidance," he said.

The minister also mentioned that there are adequate funds for waste management. "What is lacking is scientific guidance to handle different kinds of waste," he said.

Expressing concern over the large quantity of untreated waste and sewage in the country, Javadekar said that current rules have been revised to ensure every village of over 5,000 population has a waste treatment plant.

The country generates 62 million tonnes of waste annually. "This is expected to increase to 165 million tonnes by 2030 and 450 million tonnes by 2050," he said, adding that the worrying fact is that 68 percent of waste and sewage is not treated in the country at present.

He said the new draft norms on waste management, which aim to put in place a strong mechanism to address concerns related to different kinds of waste, would be implemented from August-end after seeking public comments.

Austria files EU complaint against UK nuclear plant

AFP, Vienna

Austria has filed a legal challenge at the European Court of Justice against EU-granted state subsidies for a new nuclear power plant in Britain, government officials confirmed yesterday.

"Subsidies are there to support modern technologies that lie in the general interest of all EU member states. This is not the case with nuclear power," Chancellor Werner Faymann said in a statement.

Austria argues that the Hinkley Point C project is in breach of European law and risks distorting the energy market.

The announcement comes just days after an alliance of 10 German and Austrian energy companies also filed a legal challenge at the ECJ against Hinkley Point.

Under the disputed deal, Britain would help fund the construction of two new reactors in southwest England.

As part of the agreement, the British government would guarantee an elevated 35-year fixed electricity rate to French energy group EDF, which would be in charge of the building of the plant.

Police, Rab contradict

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More than a month after the assault, the IGP on May 17 released photographs of eight alleged molesters, identified from the footage of CCTV cameras installed in TSC area on the Dhaka University campus. The police boss also announced Tk 1 lakh bounty on each for information leading to their arrest.

Late last month, DMP Spokesperson Monirul Islam told this correspondent that they quizzed seven persons who looked like those seen on the footage attacking women, but later released them as they turned out to be the "wrong guys".

Contacted later at night, the state minister said soon after the incident some people were arrested although they were not among the eight identified by the police from the footage.

"What I said [in parliament] is that police arrested several people immediately after the assault and police are now hunting eight people they identified," he told this correspondent by phone.

Despite numerous eyewitness accounts, police had initially denied that women were molested and groped by some organised gangs of rowdy men, but eventually admitted it.

During the assault, police even allegedly released several suspected perpetrators who were caught and handed by some

youths over to the police.

An internal investigation later found three cops failed to do their job during the assault. The probe committee recommended action against them, but the authorities are still sitting on the recommendations.

Cops claim

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findings have been shared with them, Monirul said.

On this development, Avijit's father Prof Ajay Roy said, "I have been hearing similar claims since March. I doubt if they have any intention to catch the perpetrators at all."

Expressing dismay at the fact that law enforcers failed to arrest any of the killers, he said, "I do not take their claims very seriously anymore. There is a difference between what they actually do and what they claim to do."

Avijit's wife Bonya Ahmed in a recent interview with the BBC also expressed similar sentiments.

"The investigators from Bangladesh never contacted me except on one occasion immediately after the murder," she said.

Avijit was hacked to death on February 26 on the Dhaka University campus while Bonya too was severely injured.

Contempt petition filed

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the tribunal registrar's officer.

The petitioners are freedom fighters Manoranjan Ghoshal, Ajar Ali and Sheikh Nazrul Islam, and Gonojagoron Manch organisers Kamal Pasha Chowdhury and FM Shahin.

Shameem Aziz said the tribunal-2 on June 10 found Zafrullah guilty of contempt of court and punished him for the offence.

After coming out from the court that day, Zafrullah made some comments before the media, Aziz said, adding: "We found his comments tantamount to contempt of court. That's why the petitioners filed the petition to initiate contempt proceeding against him."

Zafrullah had told reporters: "Today's contempt of court verdict is the proof of mental illness of the three judges. It proves mental illness of three justices. Ensuring justice is not possible if the judges can't tolerate criticism. When they can't tolerate criticism and lack rationality, they hide themselves under cover of law."

Zafrullah, also a freedom fighter, challenged the tribunal's order and the Supreme Court on June 16 stayed the tribunal's verdict following his petition. The matter is still pending before the apex court.

Zafrullah had already faced contempt proceedings twice for his comments on the tribunals. For the first time, he faced contempt charges before the International Crimes Tribunal-1 for his comment in a TV talk show, but the court pardoned him with a warning.

On June 10, the tribunal-2 found Zafrullah guilty of contempt of court and imprisoned him at the courtroom for an hour for criticising punishment of Bangladesh-based UK journalist David Bergman.

The court also ordered him to pay Tk 5,000 in fine within seven days, in default of which he would have to serve one month in prison.

The tribunal said the statement Zafrullah and 49 others issued over Bergman's punishment was "contemptuous" and punished him for repeat-

ing the offence.

The tribunal, however, acquitted 22 eminent citizens with a caution as they "were not well aware of the consequence of their action" and as they regretted their action, one they had committed for the first time.

The court had earlier exonerated 26 signatories from the charge as they apologised unconditionally, while another signatory -- Khushi Kabir -- withdrew her name from the statement.

On December 2 last year, the tribunal-2 found Bergman, editor (special reports) of English daily New Age, guilty of contempt for writing two blog posts in January 2013 on the verdict of war crimes convict Abul Kalam Azad. He was sentenced to imprisonment "till rising of the court" that day and was also fined Tk 5,000.

On December 20, the daily Prothom Alo ran a report headlined "50 people express concern over Bergman's punishment," which stated that the order would restrict freedom of expression.

Bugged by beggars

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asking for alms.

The new-to-begging from Satkhira used to be a rickshaw puller and was hesitant in doing what every one looked down upon. In his first attempt, he got into a bus but stepped off it almost instantly.

"If you are ashamed you can't do it. Try to apply the techniques ... you will see how money comes," the experienced man was imparting wisdom to the other.

The experienced one, also hailing from Satkhira, said the number of beggars doubled since Ramadan began.

Before rushing off towards a rickshaw passenger, beggar Mazid Akand of Barisal told The Daily Star, "A woman who lives in Boubazar and begs at an intersection brought me here."

The beggars are everywhere; in front of shopping malls, railway and bus stations, mosques, restaurants, offices, hospitals, shops, graveyards, roadside markets and even in residential areas.

They use words of religion in the holy month and wish wellbeing of the people they are asking the money from; they would say anything to get your attention and make you "emotional" to get the cash.

Some of course are not so subtle in their ways.

A beggar was repeatedly asking for money alms when a person was buying things at Mohammadpur Town Hall market. As he gave him Tk 10, five others surrounded him and asked for money. "I'll stop coming here to get away from you," the person told them angrily.

Some others encircled a woman

there and virtually forced her to give them Tk 100 and then got locked in an altercation themselves over the share.

Several beggars were seen chasing a woman near Labaid Hospital after she stepped on to the street from a shopping mall. She had to run into an ATM booth for protection. The guard at the booth eventually chased the beggars away.

Rowshan Ara, the woman, said, "Even though they are physically fit, they seek alms ... It's annoying. The government should take steps to stop this nuisance."

A witness to the incident said, "They [the beggars] demand money as if we owe them."

Kulsum of Jamalpur has been begging at Hatirpool and Shahbagh intersection for years. She works at the intersection for 7-10 days a month and then she leaves for home.

But during Ramadan, she doesn't miss a day.

This year, she brought her daughter along to improve earnings. "My earnings have nearly doubled. And, my daughter will get fitra and zakat money, and clothes from people," she said.

A local fruit vendor said Kulsum earns over Tk 1,500 a day. "Her husband is a chicken trader in Jamalpur but she begs to make money easily," he said.

A minor boy with a plastic pot was rolling on a crowded footpath in front of the Bashundhara city shopping mall. Nobody would question his inability to walk. He was getting quite a lot uttering a sentence in Arabic.

But the fact is, a few days ago, he was seen begging and walking with a crutch.

When a vendor recognising him asked him what had happened to the crutch, the boy outright denied he ever had one.

Closing his tea stall for a month, Shahadat came to Dhaka three days ago from Manikganj. Even though he was physically sound, he pretended to be crippled at Science Lab intersection.

"I am not a typical beggar. I come to earn extra money," he said, adding that like him many from Manikganj do the same. They stay at a nearby mosque at night.

Almost every city intersection has 5-10 beggars. They keep knocking on the windows of cars until they get what they want.

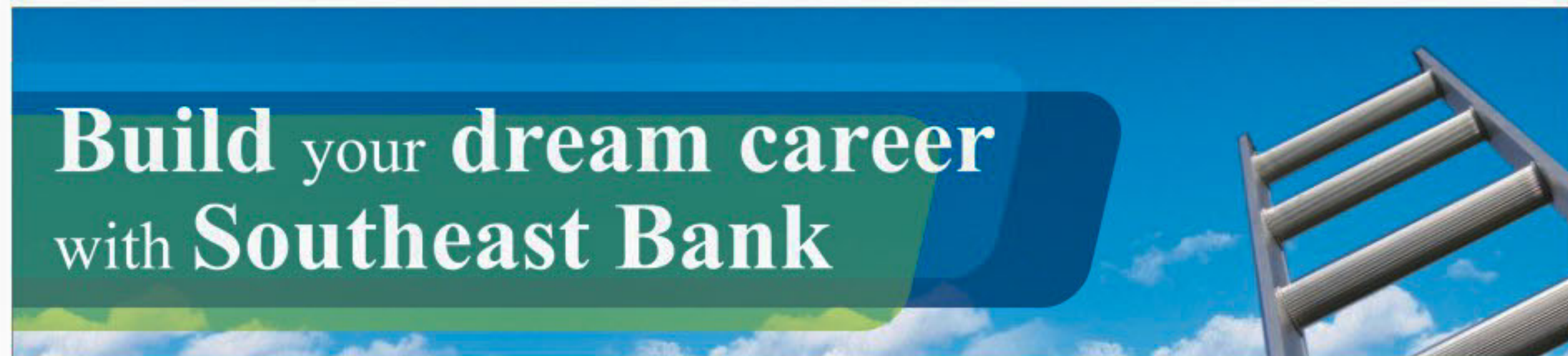
"Sometimes it feels like they will break the window if not paid," said Selina Akhter, who was frightened seeing a beggar putting his hand through the window at Khamarbari yesterday.

Some physically challenged beggars move on very low push carts or self-driven carts at busy intersection, disrupting traffic movement and putting people at risk.

Although the menace is getting worse, there is no effective mechanism to stop this.

Some steps were taken in the past to discourage begging, rehabilitate beggars or flush them out of the city but nothing worked. Police displayed signboards prohibiting begging at Sheraton and Gulshan-1 intersections but many beggars were seen there.

Joint Secretary of Social Welfare Ministry MM Sultan Mahmud said the government took some beggars to a rehabilitation centre in Mymensingh but most of them escaped only to return to Dhaka.



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