

Fakhrul freed on bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP acting secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir was freed on bail from prison yesterday.

Fakhrul walked out of Kashimpur Central Jail in Gazipur around 7:50pm, Nasir Ahmed, jailer of the prison (part two), told The Daily Star last night.

He was welcomed by his family members, local BNP leaders and activists at the jail gate.

On Tuesday, the Supreme Court upheld the High Court orders that had granted bail to Fakhrul in three cases.

A four-member bench of the Appellate Division of the SC headed by Chief Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha passed "no order" on three government petitions filed on November 26, seeking a stay on the HC bail orders.

Following three bail petitions, the HC on November 24, granted bail to the BNP leader for three months in the cases filed for vandalising and torching vehicles in the capital on January 4, 5 and 6 this year.

Curtain falls

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prime minister; Annisul Huq, mayor of Dhaka North City Corporation; Syed Samad, executive chairman of Board of Investment; Pankaj Saran, Indian high commissioner to Bangladesh; and Abul Khair, chairman of Bengal Foundation. Professor Emeritus Anisuzzaman chaired the ceremony.

Irshad Khan brought yet another new sound to the Dhaka stage, something that has been a hallmark of this year's festival. His presentation of the Raga Darbari Kanada was a great experience.

Sameehan Kashalkar presented a khayal on Raga Jog, assisted by Pandit Suresh Talwalkar on tabla. The ever-smiling Shujaat Khan, son of legendary Ustad Vilayat Khan and a torchbearer of the Imdadkhani Gharana (which has its roots in Mymensingh), presented Raga Rageshri on the sitar.

But until past midnight, the enthusiastic audience kept pouring in to witness two of classical music's biggest names -- Ustad Rashid Khan (khayal vocals) and Pandit Hariprasad Chaurasia (flute).

It was a criminal conspiracy

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A six-member Appellate Division bench led by the then chief justice Md Muzammel Hossain upheld the judgment on April 30, 2013. Other judges of the bench are: Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha who now is the chief justice, Justice Md Abdul Wahhab Miah, Justice Nazmun Ara Sultana, Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain and Justice Muhammad Imman Ali.

The death row convicts are Risalder (ret'd) Muslemuddin, Dafadar (dismissed) Marfat Ali Shah and Dafadar (dismissed) Abdul Hashem Mridha.

Those who got life imprisonment are Lt Col (dismissed) Khondaker Abdur Rashid, Lt Col (relieved) Shariful Haq Dalim, Lt Col (ret'd) SHMB Noor Chowdhury, Lt Col (ret'd) AM Rashed Chowdhury, Maj (relieved) Ahmed Shariful Hossain, Capt (ret'd) Abdul Majed, Capt (relieved) Kismat Hasem and Capt (relieved) Nazmul Hossain.

All the convicts are on the run.

The full judgment was written by Justice Nazmun Ara Sultana and it was agreed by the then chief justice and three other judges.

Though Justice Sinha endorsed her view that the accused hatched a conspiracy to kill the Awami League leaders, he gave different opinion on some part of the verdict.

He wrote, "There are uncontroverted evidence on record in support of the prosecution case that the killing squad came from the Bangabhaban and after executing the killing, they returned back again to Bangabhaban, a judge of the apex court said in his part of the judgment."

"The accused persons couldn't have implemented the killing unless very high handed powerful State machineries were involved in the conspiracy," Justice Sinha said.

Justice Nazmun Ara Sultana, in the judgment wrote, "In this present case, from the evidence narrated above, we, in agreement with the learned Counsel for the State-appellant, find that there are sufficient evidence to prove that there was a criminal conspiracy to kill the 4 leaders inside jail."

The evidence provided by the first, the second, the third and the seventeenth prosecution witnesses, whom the court found trustworthy, have proved sufficiently that before the accused -- Risalder Muslem Uddin and others assailants -- came to the jail, several telephone calls from Major Rashid and others from Bangabhaban were made to the inspector general (prisons), the judgment says.

Rashid informed the IG (prisons) over telephone that Muslem Uddin would go to the jail and told the IG to

allow him to talk to the four leaders. Rashid also later inquired if Muslem had reached the jail, it reads.

After Muslem and his accomplices arrived at the jail, Rashid and the then president Khandaker Moshtaque Ahmed -- being informed by the IG that Muslem Uddin wanted to kill the four leaders -- told the IG to allow Muslem "to do what he wanted to do".

"These evidence ... lead to the only inference that there was a criminal conspiracy to kill 4 leaders inside the jail," the verdict observed.

In October 2004, Dhaka Metropolitan Judge's court sentenced the three to death and handed down life term imprisonment to 12 others.

But, the High Court in August 2008, upheld the capital punishment of Muslemuddin but acquitted Marfat and Hashem. It also acquitted four life convicts. The HC did not say anything about the eight others who were given life imprisonment by the SC in 2013.

Ctg fertiliser suppliers strike

Demanding exemption from mandatory use of jute bags

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, CTG

Around 293 dealers in Chittagong yesterday stopped supplying fertiliser to retailers demanding exemption from the mandatory use of jute bags in packaging.

The decision came after mobile courts fined dealers for not using such bags in Netrakona, Mymensingh and Sambhuganj on Monday, said sources in the Chittagong unit of Bangladesh Fertiliser Association.

The authorities of the factories themselves pack fertiliser in plastic bags instead of jute ones, said Mahbulul Alam Khan, general secretary of Chittagong unit of the association, which has around 7,000 dealers and around 50,000 sub-dealers countrywide.

The Chittagong dealers also stopped taking fertiliser from Triple Super Phosphate Complex, Chittagong Urea Fertiliser Limited, Di-Ammonium Phosphate 1 and 2, Karnaphuli Fertiliser Company Ltd and BADC Godown of Port Colony and Dewanhat.

"Our central committee has conveyed the problem to the agriculture ministry. We will continue the shut-down until any solution comes from it," said Mahbul.

Md Nurunnabi, assistant coordinating officer of state-run factory, TSP Complex, said the chemical fertiliser might be damaged by air if it was packed in jute bags instead of plastic ones.

Common database of militants needed for effective action

Workshop for SPs told

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Police Headquarters yesterday held a workshop for superintendents of police of 32 militancy-prone districts to sensitise them to militancy issues.

The workshop was organised against a backdrop of recent attacks on foreigners, Shia community gatherings, free-thinking bloggers and even police. Detectives believe most of the attacks were carried out by the operatives of banned militant outfit Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh and Ansarulaha Bangla Team.

Participants emphasised that a common database of militants is needed for more effective and coordinated action.

Range Deputy Inspector Generals and top officials of different police units attended the programme which was addressed by Inspector General of Police AKM Shahidul Hoque.

The participating SPs and DIGs were asked to ensure that Special Taskforce Groups which were formed in all districts around a month ago, would monitor militancy related cases and keep constant watch on militants of the respective districts, meeting sources said.

Police officials also stressed the need for increasing vigilance on madrasas and collecting information about floating people in densely populated industrial areas around the capital.

An SP mentioned that not all policemen have enough knowledge and information dealing with militancy issues, so the day-long workshop was helpful enough as participants shared their information and experiences.

Clone scientist

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But cattle are only the beginning of chief executive Xu Xiaochun's ambitions. In the factory pipeline are also thoroughbred racehorses, as well as pet and police dogs, specialised in searching and sniffing.

Boyalife is already working with its South Korean partner Sooam and the Chinese Academy of Sciences to improve primate cloning capacity to create better test animals for disease research.

And it is a short biological step from monkeys to humans -- potentially raising a host of moral and ethical controversies.

"The technology is already there," Xu said. "If this is allowed, I don't think there are other companies better than Boyalife that make better technology."

The firm does not currently engage in human cloning activities, Xu said, adding that it has to be "self-restrained" because of possible adverse reaction.

But social values can change, he pointed out, citing changing views of homosexuality and suggesting that in time humans could have more choices about their own reproduction.

"Unfortunately, currently, the only way to have a child is to have it be half its mum, half its dad," he said.

"Maybe in the future you have three choices instead of one," he went on. "You either have fifty-fifty, or you have a choice of having the genetics 100 percent from Daddy or 100 percent from Mummy. This is only a choice."

Xu, 44, went to university in Canada and the US, and has previously worked for US pharmaceutical giant Pfizer, and in drug development.

Offenders

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Moniruzzaman Kabir to examine whether there was any element in the petition upon which the court could order the police to conduct further investigation into the case.

The court adjourned the hearing on the petition until 3:00pm on December 6.

Selina Islam, wife of Narayanganj city panel mayor Nazrul Islam who was among the seven victims abducted and killed in April last year, recently submitted the petition, saying that five people's names were included in the first information report (FIR) but were dropped from the charge sheet.

The five are Yasin Miah, Aminul Haque, Hasmat Ali, Iqbal Hossain and Anwar Hossain.

During yesterday's hearing, Abdul Baset Majumder prayed to the HC to direct the police to conduct a further investigation into the case and take principal accused Nur Hossain, who had been brought back to the country from India, on remand for interrogation.

Seven people, including Nazrul and senior lawyer Chandan Sarker, were abducted from the Dhaka-Narayanganj Link Road on April 27, 2014. Their bodies were found floating in the Shitalakha river a few days later.

On November 9 this year, Narayanganj District and Sessions Judge Syed Enayet Hossain rejected a petition filed by Selina seeking review of the dismissal of a no confidence petition and acceptance of the charge sheet by another judge on July 8.

Bangladesh one notch up

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back, however, lags behind regional peers -- Myanmar, Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bhutan and Sri Lanka in South Asia. It is only ahead of Afghanistan.

This year's edition of the information society report was launched on the first day of the World Telecommunication/ICT Indicators Symposium 2015 in Hiroshima, Japan.

The report features key ICT data and benchmarking tools used to place the rankings in the ICT Development Index.

The cost and affordability of ICT services were determining factors for information and communication technology uptake, the ITU said.

Despite a consistent drop in prices of the services in recent times, a relatively high price of ICT services, particularly for broadband services, remains a major barrier to ICT use, as per the report.

There have been substantial improvements in the affordability of broadband services since 2012, but services still are too expensive for many people in developing countries, it added.

One of the key findings is that the least developed countries (LDCs) are making progress with their connectivity initiatives, said ITU Director Brahima Sanou in the report.

However, only 6.7 percent of households in LDCs are having internet access this year while the figure is 40 percent worldwide and more than 86 percent in developed nations.

Developing countries still lag behind developed countries in terms of access to ICTs. LDCs are particularly disadvantaged.

Digital divides are found within as well as between countries, particularly between urban and rural areas.

A significant digital divide persists between men and women in many countries, the report said, adding 46 percent of men and 41 percent of women globally use internet.

ICTs are critically important for the development of people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented information society and for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

South Korea tops the rankings as it did in 2010.

Climate action

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"And yet despite all that, the main message I've got is, I actually think we're going to solve this thing."

He said market forces had to be at the centre of efforts to reduce global warming.

"I have long believed the most elegant way to drive innovation and reduce carbon emissions is to put a price on it," he said.

Turning to plans for a UN climate pact, Obama said it was crucial for the deal to incorporate regular and transparent reviews of progress in curbing greenhouse gas emissions.

"If we have these periodic reviews built in, what I believe will happen is that by sending that signal to researchers and scientists and investors and entrepreneurs and venture funds, we'll actually start hitting the targets faster than we expected," he said.

"We can be even more ambitious. The thing about human ingenuity is, it responds when it gets a strong signal of what needs to be done."

Obama accepted it was difficult to create political momentum for action, particularly in the United States, where many opposition Republicans reject the scientific consensus on the risks from carbon emissions.

"Climate change... is a problem that by definition is just about the hardest thing for any political system to absorb."

"People don't feel it immediately so there's not a lot of constituency pressure on politicians to do something about it right away. It kind of creeps up on you."

But he said he was "optimistic".

"I think we're going to solve it. I think the issue is just going to be the pace and how much damage is done before we are able to fully apply the brakes."

Negotiators tasked with saving Earth's climate system embarked yesterday on an 11-day race to overcome decades-long disputes as experts pointed to a towering threat from coal.

A day after world leaders pledged to tame global warming, bureaucrats from 195 nations scrambled to shape a labyrinthine 54-page text into a blueprint that can be approved by December 11.

The goal -- endorsed ringingly by around 150 heads of state and government at the start of the talks on Monday -- is to commit every nation to a post-2020 pact to roll back emissions of carbon gases.

Scientists have long warned that time is short for weaning humanity off its dependence on burning fossil fuels, the backbone of the world's energy supply and biggest source of these heat-trapping emissions.

But, heaping pressure on negotiators, researchers for the respected group Climate Action Tracker said yesterday the clock was now ticking even faster than before.

If planned new coal-fired plants come online, they said, the added emissions would wreck hopes of meeting the UN target of curbing warming to two degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) from pre-Industrial Revolution levels.

Selection of single candidates

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top leaders in it, ignored the single candidate the grassroots had picked.

In Kushtia Sadar, the local unit proposed Haji Rabiul but Anwar Ali got the party ticket, sources said.

The nomination board at its meeting, chaired by Hasina, Monday night at the Gono Bhavan sorted the lists division-wise and finalised candidates for most of the municipalities.

From last night, AL started sending letters to municipality units mentioning the candidate chosen by Hasina.

Hasina would send another letter later on asking party men to give all-out support to party-nominated candidates and reiterating the tough action that would be taken against rebel candidates.

Sources said the nomination board selected candidates considering their popularity and devotion. Grassroots' choices, intelligence reports, and several surveys also played a role.

In many cases, ministers and MPs influenced grassroots to choose their

relatives and candidates loyal to them, ignoring veterans and dedicated party activists, party sources said.

Hasina in Monday's meeting identified a few such cases and rebuked an AL advisory council member and a joint secretary, meeting sources said. She also identified that all AL mayor aspirants in a district were relatives of an advisory council member.

Hasina also discovered that an AL joint secretary had influenced the grassroots to choose a mayor aspirant loyal to him. She dropped the name in favour of someone else.

She told the joint secretary that he has to promote everyone involved in the AL, not just the ones loyal to the joint secretary.

However, mayoral aspirants in many municipalities were firm on running in the polls even though they did not get party tickets.

Hasan Morshed Shanto, president of Khoksha upazila unit Jubo League of Kushtia, said he would run even if he was expelled from the party.

The Daily Star found that there were two AL mayor aspirants in 39 municipalities, three in 57 municipalities, five in 15 and more than five in 20 municipalities.

In many municipalities, aspirants failing to get party tickets staged demonstrations and accused local leaders of nepotism and bias.

Leaders and activists of Jaldhaka of Nilphamari on Monday blocked Domer-Dimla Road, accusing local leaders of ignoring dedicated party men.

Supporters of mayor aspirants, who got the grassroots' nod and those who did not, locked in clashes at Ramganj of Lakshimpur, Kachua of Chandpur, Dhunat of Bogra and Chatkhil of Noakhali.

Four mayoral aspirants of Kalapara municipality under Patuakhali accused local MP Mahabubur Rahman Talukder of influencing Awami Leaguers there to support incumbent mayor Rakibul Ahsan. The four at a press conference on Monday demanded Hasina's interference.

No need for separate

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expressed apprehensions that the media might be controlled in the name of registration under the online policy.

Council President and daily Samakal Editor Golam Sarwar said, "We think there is no need for further registration of the online portals of the already established newspapers, since publishers got registration of their newspapers after complying with different conditions."

"We are accountable for our online versions as per the act under which we got declaration," he added.

He also suggested bringing discipline in the online media rather than shackling it.

Prothom Alo Editor Motiur Rahman said registration of online media should not be done hurriedly before finalisation of the online policy and formation of the broadcasting commission. "Without doing these, I think taking any initiative is risky."

Motiur Rahman, also a member of the Editors' Council, urged the government not to take any measures that affect online news portals or the existing newspapers and other mass media.

He also questioned if there is a need for formulating a new policy when

there were already many laws to regulate the media.

Editor and Publisher of The Daily Star Mahfuz Anam said the online media which have already flourished should be brought under a legal framework.

"I want to distinguish between the new online portals and the online editions of the approved and registered TVs, newspapers and news agencies. Online portals of those newspapers, televisions, and news agencies and weeklies which have already got declaration from the government should be kept out of the purview of the fresh registration. Rather a process should be initiated to have the new ones registered under the new online policy," he said.

"If you don't make this distinction, things will get unnecessarily complicated," said Anam, also general secretary of the council.

Talking about the draft, he said: "There is not a word here to give freedom to media."

TIB Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman suggested a review of the policy before its implementation. "There are many ambiguities in the draft policy which must be made clear."

He added he did not see any logic why the online editions of the already

registered media outlets should obtain a second registration.

Chairing the meeting, Information Minister Hasanul Haq Inu directed the officials concerned to bring necessary changes in the policy as per the council's recommendations.

"It is a primary discussion. You [officials] can restructure the policy as per the suggestions of the editors," he told the meeting.

Information Secretary Martuza Ahmed, IT expert Mustafa Jabbar, PIB Director General Shah Alamgir, and President of Bangladesh Online Media Association Joyonto Acharjee, among others, also spoke.

Developed

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Former president of Ireland and UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy on Climate Change Mary Robinson said, "People from across the developing world are leading the way to climate solutions. But the scale and international nature of climate change requires an unprecedented level of international solidarity and support."

The new financing will enable the GEF to respond to existing requests for support ranging from investments in new approaches to national adaptation planning, read the GEF release.

Germany decides

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Friday, with approval considered virtually guaranteed as Merkel's "grand coalition" government has an overwhelming majority.

Germany is to deploy by early January from the Incirlik air base in Turkey six Tornado aircraft fitted with surveillance technology that can take high-resolution photos and infrared images, even at night and in bad weather.

A German frigate will help protect the French aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle in the eastern Mediterranean, from which fighter jets are carrying out bombing runs, and the tanker aircraft could refuel them mid-air to extend their range.

The mandate will also cover the sending of up to 650 soldiers to Mali to provide some relief to France as it bears a large part of the burden in the global fight against the Islamic State jihadists.

Parliament will also be asked to approve provisions for emergency medical assistance for France in the case of "catastrophic events", and a still-to-be-determined amount of additional humanitarian aid for refugees and displaced people in Syria, Iraq and neighbouring countries.

Bangladesh offers

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Mongla and Chittagong ports for import of fuel and LPG (liquefied petroleum gas), said Bangladesh Ambassador to Nepal Mashfee Binte while speaking at an interaction organised by Reporters Club Nepal on Monday.

Nepal, however, has shown interest in importing aviation turbine fuel from Bangladesh, according to diplomatic sources.

The country has been facing acute shortage of petroleum products and cooking gas for the last two months due to the blockade of key trade points at Nepal-India border by the Madhesi ethnic group protesting the new constitution.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina renewed her offer of transit facility through Saidpur airport, Chittagong and Mongla ports for transportation of goods to Nepal when outgoing Nepalese Ambassador Hari Kumar Shrestha called on her on Sunday, a senior official at the foreign ministry

told The Daily Star.

Asked about Nepal's request for supply of aviation fuel, another official said Bangladesh was also positive regarding this issue.

He, however, declined to elaborate further.

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh ambassador to Nepal at the interaction said Nepalese cargo trucks could enter Bangladesh without any obstruction but Bangladeshi trucks were not easily allowed into Nepal.

She pointed out the need for an immediate motor vehicle agreement between the two countries.

"Since there is already a railway service extension up to Rohanpur, Singha Durbar and Radhikapur, Nepal can import and export goods by capitalising on this route," Mashfee said.

She also expressed her belief that the Nepal government would endorse Bangladesh's proposal to allow export of 208 items from Nepal to Bangladesh on zero tariff.