

ARSON CASE
Khaleda will surrender to court, ask for bail tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia will surrender before a Dhaka court tomorrow to seek bail in a case filed over an arson attack on a passenger bus in the capital's Jatrabari in January last year, confirmed Sanaulah Mia, one of her lawyers, to The Daily Star.
On March 30, the court issued arrest warrants against Khaleda and 27 others in the case.
Judge Kamrul Hossain Mollah of the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court passed the order after accepting charges against 38 people.
The order came after the investigation officer showed Khaleda and 27 others fugitives and appealed to the court to issue arrest warrants against them.



Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid takes a look into an exam room from the hallway of Shiddheshwari Girls College in the capital, while the Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) examinations were underway yesterday. Breaking a long tradition, the minister stayed away from entering the room to leave the examinees with a much needed quiet.

PHOTO: BANGLAR CHOKH

Nahid stays careful not to disturb HSC examinees

Plans shortening of exam period

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Taking into account past criticism and the state of mind of the candidates, Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid for the first time avoided entering the exam halls during the Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) and equivalent examinations that began yesterday.
It had been a long tradition that the education minister would visit a centre on the first day of any public exam, while packs of photojournalists, TV camera crew, officials, and teachers would follow him into the halls, disturbing the quiet the examinees need.
Nahid yesterday visited Shiddheshwari Girls College in the capital around 10:00am, and walked down the hallways to see the environment and inquired the principal about the exams.
"The presence of so many people in the hall affects the examinees," he told reporters outside the venue.
Over 1,218,628 students from 8,533 educational institutions have registered to sit for the over two-month long tests under eight general boards, one madrasa board, and one technical board.
The examinations will end on June 9, while practical tests will be held from June 11 to June 20.
Nahid said visiting exam halls was an "age-old practice" for ministers as they wanted to see how things were progressing.
"But if I come in with 50 people, they [the examinees] would naturally feel disturbed," he said.
The minister said the number of media houses in the country was not so high before, but there were many now.
He said his ministry was working to reduce the duration of the examinations, but to do so they needed cooperation from all including parents.

"We don't want to hold the exam for an extended period of time. In my view, it should be completed within five to six days," he said, giving his experience as a candidate of matriculation examinations.
Holding exams for a long time is a waste of time of the students, and it allows the coaching centres to do business, he alleged.
Meanwhile, 39 examinees at Abdul Mannan Mohila College Centre under Shariakandi upazila in Bogra allegedly got multiple choice questions (MCQ) of the old syllabus of 2015, reports our Bogra correspondent.
In Sherpur, candidates at Sherpur Government Girls' College faced difficulties due to a power outage caused by rain.
ABSENCE, EXPULSION
A total of 12,887 candidates were absent yesterday, while 43 were expelled for resorting to unfair means.
The highest number of absentees was from Dhaka board, with 2,211 examinees staying away, while Sylhet board had the lowest number of absentees -- 337, according to the Bangladesh Inter-Board Co-ordination Sub-Committee.
Among the expelled students, 32 were from the technical board, eight from the madrasa board, and one each from Dinajpur, Rajshahi and Jessore boards.

Barisal river gypsies still neglected

Ostracisation, local admin's disregard compounding miseries; attention urgent

SUSHANTA GHOSH, Barisal
Though discrimination against any community living in today's heterogeneous society is more or less subtle, less frequently expressed in public and widely seen as unacceptable, that against the river gypsies living in different areas of Barisal Sadar and Babuganj upazilas is still common and frequently overt.
Ostracism by the mainstream communities and marginalisation by the local administration add to the miseries and ignorance of many members of the group, who do not even know how old they are or how to count. All they know is fishing, which they live on.
These people numbering around 5,000 are used to living in floating boats in the upazilas'

Sandha, Arial Kha and and Sugandhya rivers.
Sukkurjanbibi, a member of the community, said, "I can only remember that I was born before the Liberation War, but I cannot exactly say how old I am."
Asked how old she was, Hajera Begum, another woman, was just laughing without any reply.
Asked again how they were spending time, she replied, "through fishing in the rivers."
Complaints from these people include: services being refused; harassment by the mainstream communities and negligence by the local administration.
"We cannot school our kids as the school environment is not as conducive for our children as for many others. They [gipsy children] know nothing but fishing," said

Jasim Sarder, a leader of the community.
Being unable to bury their deads as they have no lands of their own or cannot afford the costs of burying at public graveyards far away from their living areas, the gypsies set the corpses adrift in the rivers, said Abdur Rashid Talukder of the community.
Despite some of them being issued national identification cards, they do not vote in elections as they are unaware of their rights and also there is no concerted effort from the government to encourage them to vote.
Moreover, many others remain excluded from population censuses while their children are yet to get their births registered.



Women and children of the Manta community of river gypsies hanging around a boat at the shore of Kalabadar River in Barisal's Laharhat. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: ARIFUR RAHMAN

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Sitting from left, Jury board member Nawazish Ali Khan, Liberation War Museum Trustee Dr Sarwar Ali, Jatiya Sangsad Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, Dhaka University Vice Chancellor AAMS Arefin Siddique, Maj (ret) ASM Shamsul Arefin and another trustee, Ziauddin Tariq Ali, at a ceremony Liberation War Museum organised in the capital's Bangladesh National Museum to present "Bazlur Rahman Smritipadak 2015" to Ejaz Ahmed Milon, standing left, staff reporter of Gazipur-based newspaper Daily Ganomukh, and Moumita Jannat, standing right, staff reporter of Maasranga Television, for reports on the Liberation War.

PHOTO: STAR

Educate youths about Liberation War

JS Speaker Shirin Sharmin urges journos while handing over Bazlur Rahman Smritipadak 2015 to two reporters

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Jatiya Sangsad Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury yesterday urged journalists to be fearless and sincere and write more to educate the coming generations about the Liberation War's spirit.
She was addressing a ceremony Liberation War Museum organised in the capital's Bangladesh National Museum where Ejaz Ahmed Milon, staff reporter of Gazipur-based newspaper Daily Ganomukh and Moumita Jannat, staff reporter of Maasranga Television, were presented "Bazlur Rahman Smritipadak 2015" for reports on the Liberation War.
Husband of Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury, editor of daily Sangbad and a valiant freedom fighter, Bazlur passed away in 2008.
Shirin said Bazlur nurtured the spirit, was one of the Liberation War's organisers and fought for the independent nation's recognition. "He practiced honest and dauntless journalism throughout his life...His writings will inspire new generations towards objective journalism," she said.
Congratulating the awardees, she said, "I believe they will engage themselves in producing more news on the Liberation War."
Milon wrote 22 investigative reports on martyrs, published from March to April, 2015 and Jannat produced an investigative

SEE PAGE 5 COL 4

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UNION PARISHAD ELECTIONS 2016

Last two phases were carnival of occupation: Menon

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Alleging that recent union parishad (UP) polls witnessed ballot box stuffing on a massive scale, Workers' Party of Bangladesh President Rashed Khan Menon yesterday apprehended that

people would lose trust on the Election Commission (EC) and electoral system if the trend continued.
He was talking to journalists after leading a three-member delegation to the party at a meeting with Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Kazi Rakibuddin

Ahmad at the EC Secretariat.
Elections to 725 UPs on March 22 in the first phase and to 639 on March 31 in the second were marred by widespread violence and irregularities, according to media reports.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

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