



Kalyan Corraya being taken out of a Dhaka court yesterday. He is accused of running over Zia Islam, chief photojournalist of the Prothom Alo, with his car on Panthapath Monday night. Zia is now in hospital.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

## Actor Kalyan

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Zia was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) and shifted to Apollo Hospitals on Tuesday afternoon. He underwent a major surgery on that day and was kept under observation for 48 hours.

Quoting doctors at the hospital, a senior correspondent of Prothom Alo yesterday said Zia's condition was stable and one of his eyes was "responding". Temperature of his body and blood pressure were normal.

During yesterday's court hearing, Kalyan's lawyer Mohammad Faruk said his client's car collided with a truck around 12:30am Tuesday in Farmgate area, injuring his friend. Kalyan with his friend went to the DMCH. He was not involved in hitting Zia by his car.

At that time, plaintiff's lawyer Asharf-ul-Alam said Kalyan did not submit any evidence before the court that he had an accident or became a victim of an accident in Farmgate area. The question is why did he go to the ICU of DMCH on that night?

He even failed to submit any evidence that he went to visit any of his friends at the hospital on that night. To know those things, it is needed to take Kalyan on remand, the lawyer said.

The court also scrutinised treatment-related documents of the complainant and said it was proved that the accused had gone to the incident place.

## Islami Bank

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Arastoo Khan, a former bureaucrat and representative of Armada Spinning Mills Limited that owns 2 percent stakes in Islami Bank, was elected chairman of the bank.

On January 8, Arastoo told a press conference that the bank would now follow "merit-based recruitment".

The bank is open to all. If people of other religions are willing to work at the bank, they can sit for recruitment tests, he had said.

"We will hire them if they are meritorious and qualified."

According to yesterday's statement, Islami Bank Bangladesh Ltd shall continue its sharia principles and fundamental values. "It will apply zero tolerance policy regarding compliance of Islamic sharia."

Employee salary structure will be revised in comparison with other banks, the statement also said.

It said the board of directors agreed that no employee shall be terminated.

At the January 8 press conference, the bank's newly-elected vice chairman Syed Ahsanul Alam said the reshuffle in the bank board was aimed at freeing the first generation bank from the perception that it practised "political Islam".

He said the previous board had problems relating to "set up" and "mindset". "Political Islam" was practised within the organisation and there was an attempt to cash in on Islam.

"The question is not whether the previous boards were good or bad ... they were good, but they had to face criticism ... they were not respected. That's why the changes were brought," he said at the briefing.

The bank's new board is comprised of 16 members. Seven of them come from some little-known companies that own more than 14 percent stakes in the bank.

Islami Bank is now the largest bank in the country with a deposit of Tk 68,000 crore and an advance of Tk 65,000 crore.

## For Russia, US election meddling claims strip Trump win of lustre

REUTERS, Moscow

The Kremlin says US intelligence agency allegations it ran an influence campaign to help President-elect Donald Trump win the White House are false. But if US spies are right, Moscow may wish it hadn't bothered to meddle in the first place.

The belief, widely held in the West, that the Kremlin helped discredit Democratic rival Hillary Clinton by orchestrating embarrassing media leaks, has relegated US-Russia relations to a post-Cold War low and stoked fears Russia will try to subvert French and German elections this year.

And true or not, the bipartisan view that Russia tried to help Trump, supported by a classified US intelligence report, may make it harder, not easier, for Trump to make common cause with President Vladimir Putin, something both men say they want.

In the latest wrinkle, US officials said on Tuesday that Trump has been presented with claims that Russia had compromising information about him. The accusations are uncorroborated and denied by the Kremlin.

"There was initial delight in Russia when Trump won and there was more delight after Trump picked Rex Tillerson as secretary of state," said Alexei Makarkin, deputy director at the Moscow-based Center for Political Technologies.

"There is significantly less delight now."

Former Exxon-Mobil CEO Tillerson, Trump's pick for America's top diplomat, is seen as a friend of Russia. His firm has been thwarted from carrying out a huge project in the Russian Arctic by economic sanctions imposed by the outgoing Obama administration to punish Moscow for

## 'Sufia's school

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With the nearest high school 6km away along sometimes impassable roads, the new institution is desperately needed. Bhatapara is an area of disadvantage with an upazila-wide literacy rate of just 32 percent, according to a Brac official. Many leave school early.

"I used to walk miles barefoot to attend high school," says local resident, health worker Lookman Ahmed. "I really struggled to graduate." He says the new school will bring considerable relief to Bhatapara's students.

According to Brac area manager Abdus Salam, the school will occupy 100 decimals, with 20 decimals dedicated to buildings while the remainder will constitute playgrounds. "The school will cater to students from seven villages," says Salam. "Our target is 500 enrolments per year, with an expectation of 300 students in the first year."

Academic activities are currently slated to commence in 2018. "We had a plan to start classes this January but due to the preparation needed to establish a school we've postponed the start of classes to next year," explains Salam.

Nonetheless, as the new institution moves closer to reality, villagers are understandably excited. "Sufia left the village for her family," says neighbour Angur Miah. "Now her death has brought new hope to the whole village. Our children will easily complete their secondary education thanks to Sufia's school."

"The government has not approved any public high school to run up to Secondary School Certificate level,"

its actions in Ukraine.

Makarkin said Trump and his circle would now be accused of being Kremlin stooges every time they pushed for detente with Russia, with senior Republicans likely to warn that any rapprochement would hand political capital to the Democrats.

Putin, who has repeatedly praised Trump's political skills, is hoping his incoming US counterpart will ease or annul the sanctions, stay out of Russia's domestic affairs, and maybe even team up with the Kremlin in the Middle East.

But the furore over hacking and allegations of wider Russian interference have triggered pressure from Democrats and Trump's fellow Republicans in Congress for tougher, not weaker, anti-Russian measures.

That has amplified Congressional calls for an independent bipartisan investigation into Russian dirty tricks and prompted President Barack Obama to expel 35 suspected Russian spies, denting early Russian optimism about a Trump presidency.

When the announcement that Trump had won the Nov. 8 presidential election was made in Russia's parliament by Vyacheslav Nikonov, the grandson of Stalin's foreign minister, lawmakers erupted in applause. In Moscow, Clinton was widely seen as being anti-Russian.

Two months later, the mood has soured.

"The new hacking allegations against Russia are clearly timed to coincide with the handover of power in the United States," Alexei Pushkov, a senator who sits on the upper house of parliament's defence and security committee, said.

"The aim is to force Trump into enmity with Russia."

## Indian police rescue 6,000 turtles in 'largest' haul

AFP, New Delhi

Indian police said yesterday they had recovered more than 6,000 freshwater turtles weighing over four tonnes from poachers who planned to smuggle them to Southeast Asia, in the country's largest-ever wildlife haul.

The 6,430 flapshell turtles were discovered stuffed into 140 jute bags in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh on Tuesday.

"Wildlife authorities confirmed that this is the largest haul in the country's wildlife history, both in terms of number and weight -- 4.4 tonnes," Arvind Chaturvedi, head of the state's Special Task Force that rescued the turtles, told AFP.

Indian flapshell turtles are not particularly rare but are a protected species under the Wildlife Protection Act.

Chaturvedi said police had arrested the "kingpin" and were likely to make further arrests.

He said the poachers had filled half a truck with the turtles to take them to the eastern city of Kolkata, from where they were to be transported illegally to China, Hong Kong, Myanmar, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia and Bangladesh.

Their meat is considered an aphrodisiac while the bones are powdered for use in traditional medicine and soups.

Rachna Tiwari of the US-based Turtle Survival Alliance (TSA) said smugglers can earn up to 1,000 rupees (\$15) per flapshell turtle, while a bigger softshell -- whose meat is considered a delicacy -- is sold for up to 8,000 rupees.

## Egypt court freezes more NGO assets

AFP, Cairo

An Egyptian court froze the assets of two NGOs and their founders yesterday, in a controversial probe into civil society groups that has been criticised by the United Nations.

The court ordered a freeze on the assets of Nazra for Feminist Studies and its founder Mozn Hassan, and Mohamed Zarea and his Arab Penal Reform Organisation.

The court is investigating civil society groups on suspicion of receiving illegal foreign funding.

Yesterday's decision comes months after an Egyptian court froze the assets of five other human rights defenders and three non-governmental organisations over similar accusations.

The United Nations had said it was "extremely concerned" by the September decision to freeze the assets of the activists and NGOs, which stoked fears of an intensified crackdown on civil society.

In November, parliament approved a bill regulating NGOs that critics said would place further restrictions on the groups' operations.

The investigation, which began in 2011, caused a diplomatic rift between Washington and Cairo after police closed down several foreign NGOs and sought to arrest their American staff.

## Take back Rohingyas

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insurgent group to use its territory against any of its neighbours," the press secretary quoted Hasina as saying.

Expressing satisfaction over the existing ties between the two countries, she said Bangladesh values its relations with the neighbours. "I'll do whatever is necessary for further strengthening the ties with Myanmar," she added.

Highlighting Bangladesh's stunning socioeconomic development, the PM said Myanmar can learn from its experience in this regard.

She invited Aung San Suu Kyi to visit Bangladesh.

The Myanmar state minister laid emphasis on setting up a border liaison office. He also stressed the need for exchanging information between the border forces of the two countries.

Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali, Principal Secretary to the PM Kamal Abdul Naser Chowdhury, Foreign Secretary M Shahidul Haque and Myanmar Ambassador in Dhaka U Myo Myint Than were present.

### MEETING WITH FM

Earlier in the afternoon, U Kyaw Tin had a bilateral meeting with Bangladesh foreign ministry officials at the State Guest House Padma.

Expressing deep concern at the continued influx of Rohingya Muslims from the Rakhine state, Dhaka at the meeting asked Naypyidaw to immediately halt the exodus of Rohingyas and repatriate all the Myanmar citizens staying in Bangladesh for years, reports our diplomatic correspondent.

Dhaka also expressed readiness to engage with Naypyidaw to discuss the process and modalities of repatriation to ensure a sustainable solution to the problem facing the Muslims in Rakhine.

U Kyaw Tin, also the special envoy of Aung San Suu Kyi, led a three-member Myanmar delegation to the meeting while the Bangladesh side was led by the foreign minister.

The Myanmar delegation stated that it would take back 2,415 citizens from Bangladesh, which is only a tiny fraction of the 300,000 Myanmar citizens who took refuge, but made no decision on the large number of unregistered Rohingyas living in Bangladesh for years, said meeting sources.

According to diplomatic sources, the Bangladesh delegation at the meet-

ing said at least 65,000 Myanmar citizens took shelter in Bangladesh since October 9 last year, which is in excess of over 300,000 Myanmar nationals staying in Bangladesh for years.

Dhaka also asked Naypyidaw to urgently address the "root cause" of the problem in Rakhine so that the Muslims there need not be desperate to seek shelter across the border.

Bangladesh made it clear that it is solely Myanmar's responsibility to resolve the Rohingya crisis and reiterated that it would cooperate with the neighbouring country for a longstanding or permanent solution to the Rohingya issue.

Sources said the Bangladesh side asked the Myanmar delegation to immediately stop persecution and ethnic cleansing in Rakhine to stop influx and restore confidence among the Rohingyas staying in Bangladesh so that they feel encouraged to return home.

The Myanmar delegation dismissed the allegations of abuses by security forces in Rakhine, but admitted that troops poured into northern Rakhine since insurgents believed to be from the mostly "stateless" Rohingya minority attacked border posts on October 9, killing nine police officers.

Foreign Secretary Md Shahidul Haque and other senior foreign ministry officials took part in the meeting.

Officials said the number of registered refugees in Nayapara and Kutupalong camps in Cox's Bazar now stands at around 33,000. Besides, over 300,000 undocumented Myanmar nationals have been living in slums and villages mostly throughout Cox's Bazar and its adjoining districts. The refugees at the camps had earlier declined to return home fearing persecution.

Undocumented Rohingyas were damaging the local environment, creating social problems. They were also impacting negatively on the Bangladeshi citizens' job markets abroad.

Rohingyas began fleeing the Buddhist-majority country in the late 1970s, although the biggest influx was in 1992 when an estimated 250,000 fled to Bangladesh. Most of them were repatriated following an agreement between the two countries under the supervision of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

## Extra-judicial actions

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have disappeared from January 2009 to July 2016," said a report of Asian Legal Resource Centre (ALRC) placed in August before the United Nations Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances.

Of the disappeared people, 38 bodies were found abandoned at different places; 132 were later produced before courts or surfaced alive. Whereabouts of 117 persons remain unknown.

Three people disappeared in 2009. The number rose to 53 in 2013 and 65 in 2015. From January to July last year, 52 people had disappeared, the report mentioned.

According to rights body Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK) the number is even higher. Between 2013 and 2016, families of 308 people alleged that law enforcers abducted their loved ones.

Of them, 68 were abducted in 2013, 88 in 2014, 55 in 2015 and 97 last year.

The UN also believes that some cases of disappearances remain unreported.

The Awami League had pledged to stop extrajudicial killings in its election manifesto before the 2009 general elections but such killings did not stop.

According to ASK, a total of 195 people were killed in what law enforcers claimed in "gunfights, crossfires and encounters" or while in custody last year. The number was 192 in 2015 and 128 in 2014.

The issue of extrajudicial killings was not in the AL's 2014 election manifesto.

### MILITANCY

The government and law enforcement agencies drew flak in the last couple of years for failing to rein in targeted attacks on freethinkers, foreigners, writers, bloggers, Hindu clerics, Christian priests and people of other religious faiths, Lalon lovers, and LGBT activists.

The menace started in Dhaka but soon bloggers were killed in other places with law enforcers struggling to identify the militants and bring them to book.

Such attacks and killings continued until the country's worst ever militant strike at a Gulshan café in July last year that left 20 hostages, mostly foreigners, dead. When the nation was still reeling from the shock, militants attacked the country's largest Eid congregation at Sholakia in Kishoreganj.

In the following months, law enforcers conducted successful pre-emptive strikes in which 35 militants were either killed or arrested.

The militants killed during such operations in Kalyanpur, Narayanganj, Gazipur, Rupnagar, Azimpur, Savar and Ashkona include alleged "Neo JMB" chief coordinator and Gulshan café attack mastermind Bangladeshi-Canadian Tamim Ahmed Chowdhury, and Major (ret'd) Jahid alias Murad, who allegedly trained the five café attackers and several others.

The success quickly helped gain public confidence in law enforcers and

the government as well.

However, the law enforcers' initiative in anti-militancy campaigns and de-radicalisation programmes were not up to the mark.

### OPPRESSION ON MINORITIES

The AL's election manifestos in 2014 and 2009 contained promises of upholding rights of minority communities. But the pledges seemed to be rhetoric as there were several attacks on religious and ethnic minorities.

ASK cited nine reported killings of Hindus and Christians for their faiths in its human rights situation report last year. A total of 391 Hindu properties and temples were vandalised last year, marking a considerable rise from 317 in 2015.

Footage, published by an international media outlet recently, showed policemen in uniform setting fire to Santal houses in Gaibandha. This shocked many who said the incident was the worst example of persecution of minorities in recent years.

### LAW ENFORCERS UNDER POLITICAL INFLUENCE?

The government in its election manifestos in 2009 and 2014 promised to keep law enforcement agencies free from political influence. But the reality was different with policemen often seen swooping on leaders and activists of opposition parties even when they staged peaceful demonstrations.

When the AL held programmes or processions blocking roads and making people suffer in jams, police assisted the ruling party men.

A number of incidents of policemen harassing people revealed the high-handed attitudes of the force. Some policemen of Mohamadpur Police Station detained a Bangladesh Bank official and threatened to frame him in cases if he didn't bribe them a hefty sum.

This was evident in a sentence allegedly uttered by a policeman when he was assaulting a Dhaka South City Corporation officer. The victim quoted him, "Machher raja Ilish aar desher raja police [hilsa is the king of all fish and police is the king of the country]."

### POLITICAL VIOLENCE

Law and order marked a huge slide for 91 days from January 5 to April 5 in 2015 when BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia announced a nationwide non-stop blockade aiming to topple the government.

During the long spell of violence, at least 95 people were killed and about 1,500 were injured. Most of them were people not affiliated with any political party. There was hardly a single day when innocent people were not burnt to death or injured in arson attacks on public transports.

Before the January 5, 2014, polls, the BNP and its ally Jamaat-e-Islami unleashed violence never seen before in the country demanding a non-partisan government during elections.

In December 2013 alone, at least 80 were killed and over 850 wounded in arson attacks and clashes.