

# Release Khaleda

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she would decide on it after her release," he said.

Hours later, Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader blasted Fakhru for voicing "too much concern" over Khaleda's health, and said the government will do everything necessary.

"Khaleda Zia will be sent abroad if doctors think so. Everything will be done for her treatment," Quader, also road transport and bridges minister, told reporters at the party president's Dhanmondi office.

Khaleda will not be mistreated in prison. The government will take necessary steps if she falls sick in jail, he added.

Earlier at the press briefing, the BNP secretary general said Khaleda secured bail from the High Court through due legal process, but unfortunately the bail was not made effective.

All sorts of attempts are being made to keep her behind bars, he alleged.

Replying to a query whether the party wants Khaleda's release on parole, Fakhru said, "We did not mention anything about her release on parole... We want her release... she deserves it. She has already got bail."

Despite repeated attempts, this newspaper couldn't reach the central jail authorities for comment on Khaleda's health. Text messages were sent to the mobile phones of the jail superintendent, the jailer and the inspector general (prison), but they did not reply.

On February 8, a special court in Dhaka sentenced Khaleda to five years' rigorous imprisonment in the Zia Orphanage Trust corruption case. The 73-year-old former prime minister was taken to the old central jail minutes after the verdict had been delivered.

# UN losing

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system that this organization represents is the right way forward, is the answer," he said.

His remarks were directed in part at the United States where President Donald Trump has cut funding to the world body and his new national security adviser John Bolton has expressed skepticism about the UN's work.

Feltman described the United Nations as a "force multiplier" in addressing issues including terrorism and climate change that concern US national interests and those of other countries.

"We need to show that we can be effective," he said in a farewell press conference.

Feltman, who oversaw UN efforts to end conflicts worldwide, said Syria "remains the most tragic example of the failures of the international community to address a peace-and-security, humanitarian and human rights catastrophe."

Now in its eighth year, the war in Syria has killed more than 350,000 people with no breakthrough in sight for diplomatic efforts that have been undermined by divisions in the Security Council.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres in December dispatched Feltman to North Korea to push for dialogue as fears of a nuclear war gripped the region.

It was the highest-level UN visit to Pyongyang in six years, a mission undertaken with Trump's approval.

Despite signs that the United States is opting for diplomacy on North Korea, Feltman said it was "important to manage expectations."

"The issues are extremely complicated," he warned, adding that summit meetings between North and South Korean leaders as well as between Trump and Kim Jong Un would be the "start of the process".

Feltman will be replaced by another American, Rosemary DiCarlo, who becomes the first woman to hold the top post.

# Illegal dockyards

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As the dockyards grabbed a good chunk of the river, the channel of the river route has been shrunk, for which accidents often occur, he observed.

The BIWTA has however started the eviction drive finally and asked the rest of the dockyards to move downstream to clear the channel, the official said.

"We will remove all the dockyards gradually," he added.

As it is a matter of huge amount of money, they did not demolish any under-construction ships yesterday but asked the owners to shift immediately, he said.

Arif said they are excavating sands from the tops of the artificial shoal and would later clear the river channel through dredging.

Mohammad Ratan, a resident of Mirerbagh, said illegal structures of the dockyards were demolished during the last army-backed caretaker government.

But those structures were set up again after a certain time, he added.

Mahub Alam Talukdar, owner of Talukdar Dockyard, claims they set up dockyards on their private land.

President of Dhaka Shipbuilders Group Nazmul Haque also claims that they are not running the dockyards illegally or by grabbing the river.

If there were any problems, the authorities should call them and identify the illegal points, he said.

When his attention was drawn to the river boundary where it is clear that the dockyards were set up on the riverbed, Nazmul claimed the boundary pillars were set up incorrectly.

# Eight killed in suicide attack in eastern Libya

AFP, Benghazi

At least eight people, including civilians, were killed late Thursday in a suicide car bombing of a security barricade in the east of Libya, the second such attack in less than a month, local security and hospital sources said.

A suicide attacker exploded his vehicle at a barricade manned by forces loyal to Libyan strongman Khalifa Haftar near the city of Ajdabiya some 840 kilometres (520 miles) from Tripoli, general Fawzi al-Mansouri, a top officer in the local security forces, told AFP.

Eight other people were injured. "Five people died on arriving at the hospital shortly after the attack," a source at the city's public hospital told AFP.

The three other victims died later of their injuries, the source who requested anonymity said.

"There were civilians among the dead and injured," Mansouri said, adding that no one has yet claimed responsibility.

A suicide attack which injured three people on March 9 south of Ajdabiya was claimed by the Islamic State group.

Despite the loss of its Sirte bastion in northern Libya in December 2016, IS remains active in the center and south of the country.

The oil-rich North African country has been wracked by chaos since a 2011 uprising that toppled and killed long-time dictator Moamer Gaddafi.

Two authorities -- the Tripoli-based unity government and a rival administration in the east -- are vying for control of Libya.

Haftar, who opposes a UN-backed unity government based in Tripoli, announced the "liberation" of the eastern city of Benghazi last July after a three-year campaign.

# All 4 dreams end

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our university," he said. Shahin's father died two years ago and his elder brother paid for his education, his uncle Shafiqul said.

"Shahin used to say he would support the family after getting a job," he said.

Hafiz's father, who is a landless farmer in Naogaon's Manda area, told reporters at the DMCH that he had been struggling to support Hafiz's education and dreaming of better days.

Dipto's brother Narayan from Magura said Dipto used to earn by tutoring younger students. He occasionally sent money to the family.

The family members of the victims and their fellow students demanded the building owner and the people involved in the illegal gas connection be punished.

They also said the victims' families should be compensated for their loss.

Moshihur Rahman, deputy managing director of Titas Gas Distribution and Transmission Company Ltd in Mymensingh, yesterday admitted that the gas connection to the building was illegal, reports our Mymensingh correspondent.

Asked why no action was taken, he said the company had manpower shortage and could not monitor the

illegal connections frequently.

The building owner did not have permission for gas connection and he had installed the gas pipes on his own, the official added.

Monjur Ahmed, who was the company's manager in Bhaluka, got transferred two days after the explosion amid allegations of being negligent to his duty.

"We will take legal action against the house owner after a proper investigation into the incident," Moshihur said.

No case was lodged by the company so far.

SA Newazi, additional superintendent of police in Mymensingh, said primary investigation revealed that the building was constructed without following the building codes.

A team of Kuet teachers visited the spot yesterday, police said. Mamun-or-Rashid, officer-in-charge of Bhaluka Police Station, said a case accusing the building owner Abdur Razzaq Dhali of causing death by negligence was filed on Sunday night.

He added that the owner had gone into hiding after the incident.

Two probe bodies were formed by police and district administration on Sunday to investigate the explosion.

# Police yet to identify them

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supporting Bibi Mariam, were brandishing firearms. Locals said one of the gun-wielding men, who was wearing a black shirt and jeans, was Mahmudur Rashid Babu.

Mahmudur's Facebook profile, according to locals, shows that he is a member of BCL and he campaigned for Bibi Mariam.

Another gun-toting young man, wearing a white and blue T-shirt and jeans, according to locals, is BCL activist Rakib Haidar.

Locals said his Facebook page showed that he supported Bibi Mariam.

Neither Mahmudur nor Rakib could be reached for comments.

Nurul Azim Rony, general secretary of Chittagong unit of BCL, said, "We learned the names of those, who brandished firearms during the election. Organisational actions will be taken in this regard after holding a meeting with top BCL leaders."

Kamrul Hasan, assistant commis-

sioner of Chittagong Metropolitan Police, told The Daily Star that police would arrest them and recover any illegal firearms found in their possession.

**RESULTS: AL 29, BNP 12**  
AL-backed candidates won in most of the 133 union parishad polls held on Thursday.

Announcing results of 53 union parishads, AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader at a press briefing at Sheikh Hasina's Dhanmondi office yesterday said AL candidates won in 29 unions and BNP candidates in 12.

Seven party dissidents and five independent candidates won in the rest of unions, he said.

In the elections to four municipalities, AL won in three and BNP in one, he added.

Quader blamed AL's internal feud for defeat in some union parishads. "We had discussed the issue of internal feud in the party's secretary level meeting," he said.

# 7 killed, many hurt

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were killed in Osmaninagar upazila of Sylhet.

Sabia, of Balaganj upazila, was at her relative's house in Dashed village and died as a tin hit her throat, said Mohammad Shahidullah, officer-in-charge of Osmaninagar Police Station.

Aklu Miah, a member of Umarpur union parishad in Osmaninagar, said Hasan fell into a pond during the storm and drowned.

The nor'wester lashed most of the upazilas of Sylhet, but Osmaninagar was the worst affected.

The storm also damaged a tin-roofed mosque outside Sylhet Divisional Cricket Stadium, injuring five people, said Farhad Chowdhury Shamim, a councillor of Sylhet City Corporation.

In Magura, farmer Akram Hossain, 35, was injured as he was hit by hail while working in a field in Sadar upazila yesterday afternoon. He died on the way to a hospital.

In Jessore, Laijul Islam, 17, died after being electrocuted as a live electric wire fell on him in Abhaynagar upazila, said Anisur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Abhaynagar Police Station.

The nor'wester hit Sadar, Birganj, Parbatipur and Nawabganj upazilas of Dinajpur and Badarganj, Gangachara and Pirganj upazilas of Rangpur. Many tin-roofed houses were damaged.

Tofazzal Hossain, a senior observer at Dinajpur Met Office, said the nor'wester was the first in the district this year.

Abdul Mazid, of Munshipara village in Parbatipur, said, "I have never seen such a hailstorm in my life."

A large number of paddy, wheat and maize fields were affected in Gangachara, Badarganj and Pirganj upazilas of Rangpur.

Officials of Department of Agricultural Extension in the district said they were assessing the loss caused by the storm.

In Thakurgaon, hailstorm lashed villages in Ranishankoil, Haripur, Baliadang and Sadar upazilas, damaging croplands and houses.

In Panchagarh, moderate rain with hailstorm damaged wheat, maize, watermelon, tomato and vegetables fields in Sadar and Boda upazilas.

In Lalmonirhat, storm hit Patgram, Hatibandha and Aditmari upazilas. The storm also uprooted electric poles, causing power supply disruption for hours.

"Storm has damaged maize and Boro paddy on my eight bighas of land," said Mazidul Islam, 56, a farmer at Safirhat village in Patgram upazila.

*Our correspondents from Dinajpur, Thakurgaon, Lalmonirhat, Sylhet, Magura and Benapole contributed to this report.*

# Desperate

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which commercial banks have to deposit in the central bank. The purpose of this reserve is to ensure that banks do not run out of cash.

Nazrul said that another meeting would be held at the Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel tomorrow where the finance minister and BB Governor Fazle Kabir will attend.

The CRR issue will be discussed in details in the meeting, he said, requesting journalists not to write negative reports about banks.

Muhith admitted discussing various issues with private bankers. "The government does not want to create any hindrance to the ongoing momentum of the country's economy. Our target is to achieve a 7.5 percent GDP growth this fiscal year and 7.8 percent next year," he said.

Economic Relations Division Secretary Kazi Shofiqul Azam, Bank and Financial Institutions Division Secretary Yunusur Rahman, Islami Bank Bangladesh Chairman Arastoo Khan, IFIC Bank Chairman Salman F Rahman, Premier Bank Chairman HBM Iqbal, among others, were present at the meeting.

Private banks have been facing liquidity crunch since the beginning of this year due to withdrawal of funds by a number of depositors, including government agencies, a BB official said.

A series of loan scams in Farmers and some other banks created a dent in depositors' confidence in private banks, which subsequently led to the liquidity crisis.

Most government agencies are now reluctant to deposit their money in private banks, thinking that they are fundamentally weak.

Some government agencies have already withdrawn a significant amount of their deposits from private banks, the BB official said.

The situation emerged after Farmers Bank failed to repay more than Tk 852 crore of deposits to its clients.

Between November 2017 and February this year, the BB received complaints from 14 government agencies, four businesses and 21 individuals about the Farmers Bank's refusal to repay the sums.

# Myanmar

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position for her called state counselor -- allowing Suu Kyi to rule "above" the president.

That makes it vital for her to have a reliable proxy in office, especially as she manages the delicate power-sharing arrangement with the military, which ruled the country for almost half a century and remains enormously influential.

In his first address to parliament, the famously straight-talking Win Myint said he would focus on the rule of law, national reconciliation and "amending the constitution to build a democratic federal union".

The three issues are touchstones of Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) party.

But talk of amendments to Myanmar's 2008 constitution is likely to rise heckles among Myanmar's still-powerful generals.

The army has ceded some power to the civilian administration, but retains 25 percent of parliamentary seats and total control of security affairs under the charter.

Win Myint also said he would work to "protect human rights", a thorny subject in a country accused of ethnic cleansing by the UN against its Rohingya Muslim population.

A violent military crackdown has forced some 700,000 Rohingya -- a long-persecuted stateless minority -- over the border into Bangladesh since August.

The army insists the campaign was a legitimate response to Rohingya militant attacks against border-guard police posts.

Win Myint is part of Suu Kyi's inner circle -- the pair campaigned together during the 1988 democracy protests against the then-junta, a movement that was violently suppressed.

For his role Win Myint, alongside many others, was taken political prisoner.

Suu Kyi is still widely regarded as a pro-democracy heroine in Myanmar even though her reputation lies in tatters globally for failing to speak up on behalf of the country's Rohingya Muslims.

# Jubo League man

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Mustakim around 8:45am in Hili border area in Dinajpur when the accused was trying to flee to India.

The SP, who led the drive, said DB and Dinajpur police assisted them in arresting Mustakim.

In primary investigation, it has been found that Mustakim is involved with attacking Shahjahan, the SP said, adding that Mustakim stands accused in four other cases, including one for murder, filed with different police stations.

# It only adds insult

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constitute rape under the Penal Code 1860 and the Prevention of Cruelty to Women Act 2000. Besides, the father had also given a confessional statement.

If the victim is an adult or married and if the medical report cites "she is habituated" as in the case mentioned above, the harassment only increases in court.

**LEGAL AID AGENCIES' MOVE AGAINST THE TEST**  
The two-finger test, well-practiced in Bangladesh to determine rape, had been designed with a medieval mindset of the patriarchal society and it has been proved to be illogical and non-scientific, said Lelin Choudhury, a preventive medicine specialist and a member of Doctors for Health and Environment.

While conducting the test, a medical officer uses his or her index and middle fingers to check if the hymen of the victim is intact or torn, the laxity of her vagina and if there are signs of injuries on the vaginal wall.

This test may fail to ascertain if a victim, who is or had been sexually active, was subjected to forceful intercourse i.e. rape or not. Some women may not have a hymen since birth and some may lose it in sports or accidents, Lelin said.

However, courts rely heavily on the outcome of the test in delivering judgments, according to a 2015 study commissioned by the National Human Rights Commission.

Ali Akbar, who has been working as public prosecutor at the special tribunal-2, Dhaka, for the last eight years, said almost all the judgments were based on medical evidence.

"Not even 10 percent of the cases see conviction," he said, adding it was because either the test result was inconclusive or no evidence of rape was produced.

When several NGOs challenged the examination process in 2013, the Supreme Court directed the government to form a committee to formulate guidelines for treating and examining victims of rape.

The guidelines submitted later had a suggestion that the test would be applied if necessary, without defining special cases. The NGOs, including BLAST and Ain O Salish Kendra, opposed this and submitted a review of the guidelines with suggestions from five forensic experts, said Sharmin Akter, senior staff lawyer of BLAST.

The experts stated that the test is not necessary in rape cases, she said, adding that the World Health Organization (WHO) is also against the test in examination of rape victims.

Nearly five years after the move, the issue still awaits a decision from the court.

Meanwhile, the flawed practice continues. Rebeka, a mother of two children, claimed to have been raped on an October night in 2000 on her way back home. She said the accused gagged her before raping her.

In the judgment delivered on May 13, 2007, the High Court said, "The [Medical] Board failed to ascertain whether she was raped or not... such medical evidence has weakened the prosecution case."

In another verdict in June 2009, the

HC drew the attention to the absence of proof of rape in the medical reports and non-examination of the apparels of the 17-year-old victim who used to work as maid in the house of the accused.

It declared the 2004 conviction of the accused by the Nari-O-Shishu Nirjatan Daman Tribunal, Naogaon improper and unjust. And the girl was said to be of "easy virtue".

This label of "easy virtue" was used in dismissing 60 percent of the cases recorded by the Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust between 2000 and 2010, in which the defence used the evidence act to bend the trial in favour of the accused, according to a study by the legal aid organisation.

**SEALING THE CRACKS**  
The trial of all the cases mentioned above didn't see any forensic evidence collection other than the two-finger test or virginity test of the victims, while all the courts involved pointed out non-collection of samples of evidence or non-examination [chemical] of the samples like attires of the victims at the time of the incidents.

DNA tests of victims and accused should be made mandatory in rape cases because even if it is proved that a girl or woman has been raped, it is more important to prove who committed the rape, said Kawser Ahmed, a Supreme Court lawyer who was one of the two writers of the NHRC study.

The report suggests conducting physical examination of the accused person, which is absent as of now in the country, in proving his culpability.

In some cases, marks of injury on the accused person caused by the victim's struggle may be seen linked to the rape.

A medical tool called speculum can be used to see injuries inside the female genital area, Lelin said.

But rights activists vehemently oppose hinting to a victim's previous sexual life in the medical report.

"Rape is not a question of morality or character of the victim. It is a crime... Therefore the victim's character is irrelevant just as it is in a case of murder," said Sara Hossain, executive director of BLAST.

While forensic tests do their part, according to the NHRC study the investigative authority should meticulously collect "alternative evidence that may be used in a court in cases where medical evidence is not available."

# Indira Gandhi

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Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi pledged her and her people's support for the fight for democracy and freedom of Bangladesh in parliament.

Portraying a picture of Dhaka, Archer Blood, the then US Consulate General in Dhaka, reported that an estimated 4-6,000 people "lost their lives as a result of military action" since martial law began on March 25.

He also indicated that the West Pakistani objective "to hit hard and terrorise the population" has been fairly successful.

The entire Jessore city was freed. And so was Dinajpur.

Source: Liberation War Museum, The Daily Star archive and Bangladesh Genocide Archive

# Massive hunt

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interviews with Iraqi military personnel, the inspectors learned that the Iraqi leader never even discussed starting production with anyone. And he clearly lost interest in biological weapons.

The ISG and the UN inspectors together spent \$1 billion and visited 1,700 sites in search of WMD and yet nothing turned up.

**THE WHOLE BASIS OF THE INVASION WAS A HOAX**  
Charles Duelfer, the head of the ISG, in his report, wrote: "I still do not expect that militarily significant WMD stocks are hidden in Iraq. ISG found no direct evidence that Iraq, after 1996, had plans for a new BW (biological warfare) programme or was conducting BW-specific work for military purposes. There appears to be a complete absence of discussion or even interest in BW at the presidential level."

If so, then how had Bush and Blair been seeing Saddam's WMD all along their war preparation? In his foreword, Duelfer tried to explain the imagined WMD as set assumptions of the western mind.

"Western thought is filled with assumptions. Like the operating system of our computers, we have logic and assumptions that are virtually built in. We have been applying them successfully so long in our own frame of reference that we forget they are present and shape our thinking and conclusions," he wrote.

Then he attributed the creation of the WMD myth to "...distant technical analysts mistakenly identified evidence and drew incorrect conclusions."

The ISG conducted its massive hunt with experts from the USA, United Kingdom and Australia who gathered and analysed data to prepare a report on Iraq's WMD program. Several participants were former United Nations inspectors with long experience in Iraq.

A large facility housing more than 900 staff members in Qatar recorded, summarised, and translated documents. When the report was written, this facility had about 36 million pages

that had been scanned into a database. Roughly a third of these had been examined by a linguist and a gist was prepared. They, together with a 190-member linguistic team, rummaged through millions of documents and helped interrogate the so-called High Value Detainees.

Two laboratories, one British and one American, analysed materials suspected of being related to WMD. Samples included nerve agent rounds, mustard shells, and a wide range of dangerous chemical substances.

The ISG included several former UN inspectors and Iraqi WMD experts with over a decade of experience with the Iraqi WMD programs.

While the ISG went on with its mission, the British intelligence MI6 chief John Scarlett tried to influence the investigation by suggesting inclusion of "irrelevant" information.

The Mail on Sunday reported that Scarlett had tried to "insert untruths" into the final ISG report about Iraq that it had or was trying to develop smallpox based bioweapons and that Saddam had mobile biological weapons laboratories. This effort was rejected by ISG.

However, after the ISG report revealed the lies of the US and UK governments, both Bush and Blair insisted the findings justified their war.

The White House in October 2004 said the report showed Saddam's intent and capability of producing WMD. However, Democrats used the report to criticise Bush alleging he misled the US citizens.

A top Democrat senator, who sits in the Armed Services Committee, said: "We did not go to war because Saddam had future intentions to obtain WMD."

On the other side of the Atlantic, Blair said although the report showed no evidence of WMD but it said Saddam had a plan to develop it.

The UN arms inspector Hans Blix, who had long ago concluded there was no WMD, again spoke after the ISG report and told AP that he hoped Bush and Blair would now admit Iraq invasion was a mistake.