

Ruckus at first day's hearing

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the HC order.

He told the apex court that the trial of the BNP chairperson, now serving her five-year jail term in the Zia Orphanage Trust Corruption case, was held in the fairest manner.

At this, the lawyers shouted "no, no, no".

The attorney general then said Khaleda had been suffering from different diseases and therefore she needed to take rest. He said Khaleda was taking rest in jail custody.

At one stage, Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain was forced to say that his court could not continue the hearing if the commotion did not stop.

The four-member bench of the Appellate Division of the SC, headed by the chief justice, concluded hearing for the day.

In another development, a Narail court yesterday rejected the bail petition filed by Khaleda in a case filed for her "derogatory remarks" on the number of Liberation War martyrs, reports UNB.

The government and the ACC had filed two petitions with the court against the HC bail order in the Zia Orphanage Trust Corruption case.

Yesterday, both Anti-Corruption Commission lawyer Khurshid Alam Khan and the AG completed placing their arguments, praying to the SC to cancel the HC bail order.

Khaleda's lawyer AJ Mohammad Ali began placing his arguments in support of the bail order. He is expected to continue today.

During yesterday's hearing, Khurshid said Khaleda could not be granted bail in the case due to the gravity of the offences she had committed in dealing with the Zia Orphanage Trust.

Also, Khaleda had "misused" her bail granted by a lower court during the case's trial as she went abroad without taking permission from the

court, he argued.

The lawyer said Khaleda also did not submit any medical documents in support of her claim that she was sick.

He claimed that the HC committed "serious illegality" by granting Khaleda bail without taking those issues into consideration.

The AG told the court that Khaleda committed the offences, cited in the Zia Orphanage Trust graft case documents, as a head of the government and therefore, she could not be given bail in the case.

He said the HC could grant bail to a convict if it found that the hearing on the appeal against the conviction would take time.

But the paper book on the appeal filed by Khaleda with the HC against the lower court conviction had already been prepared and the HC could now hear the appeal itself, he said.

If the HC acquitted Khaleda after hearing the appeal, there would be no objection, he said, adding that the SC did not need to grant the bail now.

When the attorney general said the trial of Khaleda in the case was held in the fairest manner, Zainul Abedin, a BNP leader and a lawyer for the BNP chief, told the court that the attorney general as the top law officer of the state could not make such an argument.

At one point, the group of lawyers, present in the courtroom, started shouting.

The chief justice then asked the lawyers to allow the attorney general to complete his arguments.

Advocate AJ Mohammad Ali then placed his argument in favour of the HC order that granted the BNP chief bail.

He said the attorney general had no scope to place arguments under the Anti-Corruption Commission Act on the appeal against the HC order.

In reply, the AG said he had the right to place arguments as the government

was a party in the case.

Mohammad Ali said the BNP chairperson had been convicted and sentenced to imprisonment so that she could not contest the parliamentary elections.

It has been shown to the whole world that Khaleda is a corrupt person and she has been punished for graft. Such things have been done to remove her from politics, he said.

Mohammad Ali said the Supreme Court of foreign countries does not interfere in High Court orders.

The defence lawyer told the apex court that this court had upheld the HC order that had granted bail to former lawmaker Mashiur Rahman who had been convicted and sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment in another corruption case.

PETITION REJECTED

Senior Judicial Magistrate Nayan Boral of Narail Cognisance Court yesterday rejected Khaleda's bail petition in a case filed for her "derogatory remarks" on the Liberation War martyrs after her lawyer moved the petition before the court, UNB reports.

On April 16, the court fixed May 8 for hearing the bail appeal.

On August 23, 2016, the court issued an arrest warrant for the BNP chief in the case.

On July 25 last, a court summoned Khaleda over the issue.

On December 21, 2015, Khaleda at a discussion at the Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh, raised questions about the actual number of Liberation War martyrs, saying, "There're controversies over how many were martyred in the Liberation War. There're also many books and documents on the controversies."

Reacting to Khaleda's remarks, one Raihan Farooque Imam of Naragati filed a case with the Cognisance Court on December that year.

Mahathir faces

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hardest, have been foremost in voters' minds. Yet the perennial race card in Malaysian politics — that an opposition victory would pave the way for ethnic minority Chinese to dominate the country politically — is still a powerful subterranean force.

"The more fundamental primal underpinnings of Malaysian politics remain," said Ibrahim Suffian, co-founder of the Merdeka Center for Opinion Research. "The overt campaign talks about issues of the economy and cost of living, but underneath that there is a continuing discussion about who is best suited to maintain the interests of the majority Malay Muslim population."

Merdeka Center's opinion survey shows Najib Razak's ruling coalition losing ground in peninsular Malaysia, although it could still win the election today.

According to the survey, Malaysia's ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition would win 37.3 percent of the popular vote in peninsular Malaysia, down from 40.3 percent the firm had predicted last week.

The opposition alliance's support fell to 43.4 percent, it showed.

Najib's coalition will win 100 of the 222 seats in parliament, with contests in 37 constituencies too close to call, the survey showed, while the opposition alliance will win 83 seats.

Barisan Nasional won 133 seats in the 2013 polls, reported Reuters.

PICK MAHATHIR: ANWAR

In a pre-election statement, Najib savaged Mahathir as a self-confessed "dictator." He said a vote for the opposition jeopardizes Malaysia's strong economic growth and that the leaders of the opposition's dominant Chinese-based party were deceiving voters by "camouflaging" themselves behind Malays.

The opposition has been reinvigorated by Mahathir after fracturing in 2015 when its most charismatic figure, Anwar Ibrahim, was imprisoned on charges of sodomy in a case he and his supporters said was manufactured by the government to crush the opposition. Anwar, a former prime minister who was sacked by Mahathir in 1998 and then imprisoned for alleged sodomy and corruption after leading protests against his government, helped smooth Mahathir's acceptance by opposition parties by publicly reconciling with him.

"I urge you all to join the people's movement to demand for change," Anwar said in a statement late on Monday from a hospital in Kuala Lumpur, the capital, where he is recovering from a shoulder operation.

Remarkably robust at 92 years old, Mahathir is welcomed rapturously at opposition rallies and provokes roars of laughter as he mocks Najib as a greedy kleptocrat who would try to buy his way into heaven but would be sent to hell.

But the opposition is without an overt attraction for religiously minded

voters after an Islamic-based party split from the alliance in 2015, at a time when religious conservatism is gaining ground among Malaysia's Muslims. And loyalty to the National Front remains deeply rooted in the countryside, reported AP.

"I really think those people talking bad about Najib and IMDB are only talking nonsense, they're really just jealous and not doing any good. That's all I see," said Mohamad Muda, a 69-year-old fisherman from Pekan in Pahang state.

"People can go to the Haj sponsored by IMDB, every year. So I see that as a benefit," he said. "To go to Haj, I can't afford it without this sponsorship."

The government has also pulled out all the stops to ensure it prevails.

Opponents said electoral boundary changes rushed through parliament last month favour the National Front by shifting likely opposition voters into seats where the opposition already prevails. Malaysia's Human Rights Commission said the redrawing of boundaries was an "epic breach" of democracy. Rights groups said a recently passed law against "fake news" was intended to stifle criticism and debate.

Peter Mumford, an analyst with Eurasia Group, a political risk consultancy for investors, said the credibility of Malaysia's institutions has been "torn to pieces" by Najib's election tactics.

US exits Iran nuke deal

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White House address, branding the landmark 2015 accord that was endorsed by Britain, China, Germany, Russia and Barack Obama's previous US administration "defective at its core."

Trump -- who enjoys close ties with Iran's foes Saudi Arabia and Israel -- said he had consulted America's friends in the Middle East and concluded "that we cannot prevent an Iranian nuclear bomb under the decaying and rotten structure of the current agreement."

"America will not be held hostage to nuclear blackmail," Trump vowed. "We will not allow American cities to be threatened with destruction and we will not allow a regime that chants 'Death to America' to gain access to the most deadly weapons on Earth."

Trump's hawkish National Security Advisor John Bolton said that European firms would have a "wind down" period to cancel any investments made in Iran under the terms of the accord, after the world agreed to give Tehran sanctions relief in return for it scaling back its enrichment program and placing its nuclear industry under international inspection.

But there was no disguising the dismay in European capitals, whose diplomats see the deal as the best way of keeping tabs on Iran's ambitions while heading off the risk of a destabilising new arms race in the Middle East, where tensions are already soaring between Tehran and both Israel and the Gulf monarchies.

"France, Germany, and the UK regret the US decision to leave the JCPOA (Iran deal). The nuclear non-proliferation regime is at stake," France's President Emmanuel Macron wrote.

"We will work collectively on a broader framework, covering nuclear activity, the post-2025 period, ballistic activity, and stability in the Middle

East, notably Syria, Yemen, and Iraq," he added.

The European Union's chief diplomat Federica Mogherini, who helped oversee the talks with Iran that led to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, insisted the accord "is delivering on its goal which is guaranteeing that Iran doesn't develop nuclear weapons."

And she added: "the European Union is determined to preserve it."

In contrast, Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was overjoyed.

"Israel fully supports President Trump's bold decision today to reject the disastrous nuclear deal," Netanyahu said in a televised address.

Saudi Arabian state media said the kingdom "supports and welcomes" Trump's decision.

Iran's President Hassan Rouhani -- who some deal supporters see as a reforming moderate who will be undermined by any collapse in the deal -- was furious, accusing Trump of "psychological warfare" and vowing to take the matter up with the agreement's other signatories, including Washington's rivals Moscow and Beijing.

Meanwhile, former Obama administration officials warned that the decision puts the US on a collision course with Iran, distances the White House from its key allies and put US citizens held in Iran at risk.

Trump had had until May 12 to decide whether to continue to waive sanctions on Iran's central bank and its oil sector dealings, a key pillar of the 2015 agreement, but moved more quickly than expected and cancelled sanctions that were not yet up for review.

For months, critics have been warning ending the waivers would unravel the carefully constructed deal, plunge Iran's already struggling economy into crisis and expose the biggest transatlan-

tic rift since the Iraq War.

But some US officials close to Trump, as well as hawkish Washington lobbyists, argue that an Iranian economic collapse could lead to Tehran's Islamist regime falling -- and that this would be a good thing.

Ahead of Trump's verdict, diplomats shifted into damage limitation mode, hoping that beyond his inevitably harsh rhetoric, he stops short of immediately reimposing sanctions.

In Brussels, officials are already working on "blocking" measures that would protect EU citizens and companies from US prosecution.

"We are having conversations obviously and we are working on a number of proposals that could protect European companies and operators," a senior EU official told reporters.

Iran's growing military and political power in Yemen, Syria, Lebanon and Iraq worries the United States, Israel and US Arab allies such as Saudi Arabia.

Israel has traded blows with Iranian forces in Syria since February, stirring concern that major escalation could be looming.

Minutes before Trump's announcement, Israel said it had instructed local authorities in the Israeli-held Golan Heights to "unlock and ready (bomb) shelters" after identifying what the military described as "irregular activity of Iranian forces in Syria."

The military statement said its defense systems had been deployed "and IDF (Israel Defence Force) troops are on high alert for an attack."

Later, reports said Israeli air strike targeted a Syrian army position in the Kisweh area south of Damascus but caused no casualties, a commander in the regional alliance supporting Syrian President Bashar al-Assad told Reuters.

ICC seeks

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the territory of a state which is not a party to the statute directly into the territory of a state which is a party to the Statute," the filings says.

The pre-trial Chamber has sent the letter on Monday and sought Bangladesh's submission of observations, either publicly or confidentially, by June 11.

A senior official at the foreign ministry said the government received the letter yesterday and is taking the matter into consideration.

The letter read: "The Chamber hereby invites the competent authorities of Bangladesh to submit written observations, either publicly or confidentially, on the prosecutor's request no later than 11 June."

The written observations will be regarding three specific matters: (i) the circumstances surrounding the presence of members of the Rohingya people from Myanmar on the territory of Bangladesh; (ii) the possibility of the Court's exercise of territorial jurisdiction over the alleged deportation of members of the Rohingya people from Myanmar into Bangladesh; and (iii) any other matter in connection with the prosecutor's request that, in the opinion of the competent authorities of Bangladesh, would assist the Chamber in its determination of this request.

The Chamber ordered the registrar to notify this decision to the competent authorities of Bangladesh together with a copy of the prosecutor's request.

Reading the letter, the official said Bangladesh has been affected due to influx of Rohingyas from Myanmar and the chamber thinks it is right to seek Bangladesh's opinion.

On April 13, Myanmar responded in a statement from the ministry that oversees State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi's office.

The statement highlights the legal thorniness around the possible probe by arguing that Myanmar is not a party of the Rome Statute that countries must sign on to as ICC member states.

"Nowhere in the ICC Charter does it say that the Court has jurisdiction over States which have not accepted that jurisdiction," Myanmar's statement says.

A ruling affirming jurisdiction could pave the way for an investigation into the deportation of thousands of Rohingyas, though Myanmar is unlikely to cooperate.

Over 700,000 Rohingyas fled Myanmar's Rakhine state and came to Bangladesh following a military crackdown on August 25 last year.

2 militants

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on each of the convicts.

The death convicts are Shariful Islam alias Rahat alias Khalid alias Boss of Bagmara of Rajshahi, a student of English at RU, who is at large, and Maskawath Hasan Sakib alias Masud alias Abdullah, a student of Rangpur Polytechnic Institute, of Bogra.

Their direct involvement in the murder was proved beyond doubt, said the judge.

The other three convicts are Rahmatullah alias Shahin, a student of crop science at RU, Abdus Sattar and his son Ripon Ali.

They abetted the killers by providing them shelter and hiding their motorcycle and weapons used in the killing.

The tribunal judge while reading out the verdict for one hour and fifteen minutes explained how the convicts were found guilty from the confessional statements of four accused, testimony of witnesses and pieces of evidence.

The murder had no eyewitness, but it had two of total 27 prosecution witnesses who saw the killers wielding bloodstained weapons speeding away from the scene shouting 'Allahu Akbar'.

Some of the killers studied books and guides of Islamic State and Al Qaeda on how to kill people, make explosives and use firearms, the tribunal observed.

The murder of Prof Rezaul was a part of JMB's plan to kill anyone who would create an obstacle on its way to establishing Islamic rule in the country, the court added.

All the accused took part in the killing with the same intention but did not necessarily plan it sitting at one place, a common strategy of JMB, said the judge.

Prof Rezaul's son Riasat Imtiaz Sourav expressed satisfaction at the verdict.

"We have got justice," he said, adding, "We would have been happier if all the accused were handed down death penalty."

"We now want the arrest of the fugitive killer and execution of the verdict," said Rizwana Hasin Shotovi, the slain professor's daughter.

The accused present at the dock did not show any emotion hearing the verdict, but their family members broke down.

Defence counsel Mizanul Islam said they would challenge the verdict at the higher court.

The court premise was full of police,



Death convict Abdullah

journalists, teachers and students of English of the university before announcement of the verdict started at 12:45pm.

Prof Ridita Mizan of English said the students and teachers held movements on the campus for days demanding justice.

"Prof Rezaul was such a nice personality who would not only teach but also guide us like a guardian. He shaped many of our lives and his murder was a loss for the university," said Prof Ridita.

Prof Rezaul, also well known as Mukul, was stabbed to death in Shalbagan area while he was on his way to the university on April 23, 2016.

According to charge sheet, his student Shariful targeted him for the murder, responsibility of which was claimed by the Islamic State.

Earlier on November 3, 2016, detectives pressed charges against eight JMB members for killing the professor as part of their countrywide murders of freethinkers, bloggers and believers of different faiths.

Three of the eight have already been killed in police raid and "gunfights".

Khairul Islam Payal alias Badhan was killed during a raid on Holey Artisan Bakery in Dhaka on July 1, 2016. The other two -- Nazrul Islam alias Bike Hasan and Tareque Hasan Milu alias Osman -- were killed in "gunfights" in Rajshahi and Bogra.

Badhan, Nazrul, Osman and Sakib directly took part in the killing, while Shariful and four others abetted them.

Investigated enough

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offenders and those responsible," Aung Hlaing claimed.

He said some organisations went to Myanmar and tried "to do what they wanted to do" and this could have far-reaching impacts on the country. "For us, we have investigated enough already. But it is actually not up to the army to let the UNSC investigate human rights abuses. Only the government has the authority to do that."

The army chief's comments came at the end of a four-day mission to Bangladesh and Myanmar by the UNSC team. During its trip to Bangladesh on April 28-30, the delegation met some Rohingya refugees who had fled Rakhine amid a brutal military crackdown on them.

The refugees told the UNSC team tales of systematic atrocities, sexual violence, rape, and killing by members of the security forces, adding, they wanted to return but did not feel it safe.

About the Myanmar army chief's assertion that the Rakhine case was an internal affair, Kelley Currie, deputy permanent representative of the US to UN, said this was clearly not so since 700,000 people had to escape to another country.

The situation demands that the UNSC take action as the case has become an international affair and an issue which could affect international security and peace, he added.

Permanent Representative of Kazakhstan Kairat Umarov said many refugees told stories of how they were raped. "For us, it was difficult to know how to believe it," he said, adding that the UN envoys wanted Myanmar to agree to the investigation.

"There were a total of 1,116 rape cases in 2016. Army personnel were involved in 16 of those cases and the army punished all of the perpetrators with 20-year prison sentences. Even though there were 1,422 reported cases of rape in 2017, army personnel were involved in just 17 cases, and the convicted assailants were again sentenced in prison terms of 20 years," Gen Min Aung Hlaing said.

He added the army would not have launched its offensive if armed men had not attacked police bases and local people. "A total of 72 local people were killed in attacks by Bangalees between 2012 and 2018 and 13 others were wounded," he said, using the military's preferred term for the Rohingyas, implying they are interlopers from Bangladesh.

Gen Aung Hlaing further said there were several reasons why the refugees were afraid to return. Some had fled to Bangladesh as they were involved in the attacks on the police bases and army units or had killed local Buddhists, he claimed.

Besides, the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), which had orchestrated the attacks on the security forces, did not want them to return. The ARSA, which the Myanmar army calls a terrorist group, had threatened to kill those who would come back, he said.

Violence first broke out in Rakhine in

2012. It worsened in 2016 when armed men attacked several police bases, killing security officers and looting many guns. The ARSA attacked again last year, but when the army launched a counter offensive, the attackers ran away without achieving their goals, he added.

Permanent envoy of Peru to the UNSC Gustavo Meza Cuadra Velasquez asked about Tatmadaw's plans for the security of the refugees after their return.

Anatolio Ndong Mba, permanent representative to the UNSC from Equatorial New Guinea, raised the issue of planting landmines by the Tatmadaw so that refugees cannot safely return.

Permanent Representative Karen Pierce from Britain asked how many soldiers were sent to the conflict region regarding the incident that occurred on August 25, 2017.

Deputy Permanent Representative from China Wu Haitao said they were waiting for progress in rapid and effective implementation of the repatriation issue. He expressed the hope of rapid return of refugees through bilateral cooperation between the two countries.

Dmitry Polyanskiy, deputy permanent representative of Russia, said the senior general might have known descriptions in international media as such accusation creates anxieties for them. He expressed his desire to know how to solve such accusations in a transparent manner. He also raised the issue of Myanmar's deployment of more number of strength at the border.

In response to the questions and discussions of the representatives, the senior general said it was estimated that those who attacked the security troops and villages last year were between 6,000 and 10,000 of strength.

He claimed the Tatmadaw deployed its strength between 1,000 and 2,000.

"There are claims that the Tatmadaw have been committing crimes across the country. We have investigated all the allegations and punished all the perpetrators," the army chief said.

On repatriation of refugees, he said, "We said we are ready for repatriation as of January 23, 2018. However, Bangladesh is very slow in response. We are ready to start repatriation according to the bilateral agreement."

On security deployment, the army chief said, "Bangladesh is worried that we have made military preparations, but we did not. I assume that Bangladesh said it because of excessive concerns."

'CHINA RESISTS UK PUSH AT UNSC'

China was resisting a British push at the UNSC for a statement calling on Myanmar to try those responsible for attacks on the Rohingya, according to a draft seen by AFP yesterday.

Back from a visit to Myanmar and Bangladesh last week, the Security Council was holding negotiations on a statement that would spell out how to address the crisis from the forced exodus of 700,000 Rohingyas from Myanmar.

Britain last week circulated a text that stressed the importance of "credi-

ble and transparent investigations" of human rights violations and urged Myanmar to hold those responsible for the violence to account.

China, a supporter of Myanmar's former ruling junta, on Monday put forward an amended statement that dropped all mention of investigations or accountability, reports AFP.

China's draft statement stresses "the need to address the root causes of the issue" and calls for investment in Rakhine to "achieve stability through development".

Diplomats said Britain, backed by France and the USA, had rejected the proposed changes by China and negotiations were continuing.

The UNSC had adopted a statement in November that called on Myanmar to rein in its military, but there has been no resolution, a stronger measure that China would likely block as one of the veto-wielding permanent members.

Myanmar has rejected accusations from the UN, Britain, France and the USA of ethnic cleansing.

Bus owners

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The HC also directed the bus owners to submit a report after complying with the order to this court by June 25.

The court said it would fix the next date for paying the remaining Tk 50 lakh after receiving the compliance report.

The bench of Justice Salma Masud Chowdhury and Justice AKM Zahirul Hoque passed the order while hearing a rule issued by the bench on April 4 regarding the matter.

Jahanara and Rajib's two brothers Mehedi Hasan Bappy, 13, and Abdullah Hridoy, 11, both madrasa students, were present in the court.

Rajib's aunt told the court that she has helped raise Rajib's brothers and will continue to do so in the future.

After two weeks in coma, Rajib, a third-year student of Government Titumir College, died at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) on April 17.

Rajib lost his right hand after it got stuck between two speeding buses of BRTC and Sajan Paribahan which were trying to overtake each other in Bangla Motor area in Dhaka on April 3.

Profusely bleeding, he was taken to Samorita Hospital in Panthapath. He was at the post-operative Intensive Care Unit (ICU) on the day of the accident.

Following a writ petition filed by Supreme Court lawyer, Barrister Ruhul Quddus Kazal, the HC, on April 4, also issued a rule asking the government and the bus owners to explain why they should not be directed to give Tk one crore to Rajib Hossain in compensation.

In the rule, the court ordered the authorities concerned from the government to show causes as to why they should not be directed to strictly enforce the relevant laws and rules for free movement of passengers, and also asked the authorities to explain why they should not be ordered to amend the laws and formulate new rules for preventing such road accidents in future.