

# GATCO GRAFT TRIAL Khaleda not happy with arrangement of seating in court

JNU CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia expressed strong dissatisfaction with her seating arrangement at the court during the hearing in the Gatco graft case yesterday.

At the Special Judge Court-3 of Dhaka, Khaleda told that she could not see the honourable judge from her seat.

Judge Abu Syed Diljar Hossain also issued arrest warrants for two other accused in the case -- BNP leader AKM Mosharraf Hossain and Ismail Hossain Simon, son of late shipping minister Col (ret'd) Akbar Hossain.

The two, who are on bail, did not appear before the court yesterday. Their lawyers filed two time petitions with the court, but those were rejected.

Khaleda was taken to the court in a wheelchair around 12:40pm. She was separated from the other accused present in the court by a waist-high wall.

The BNP chief said, "I cannot see you [judge]. Seat me in the dock if

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ROHINGYA RELOCATION  
United Nations  
envoy visits  
Bhashan Char

AFP, Dhaka

The UN special rapporteur on the human rights situation in Myanmar yesterday visited Bhashan Char where Dhaka aims to move Rohingya refugees despite worries it would be vulnerable to extreme weather.

Some 750,000 Rohingyas flooded into Bangladesh in late 2017 after an offensive by Myanmar military that the United Nations has said could have amounted to genocide, joining 250,000 already there.

Bangladesh is spending \$280 million transforming Bhashan Char, a muddy silt islet that only emerged from the sea two decades ago, into a camp for some of the refugees.

Some of the Rohingya themselves, living in overcrowded and squalid camps in Cox's Bazar, have expressed unease about moving, while the UN has insisted that any relocation must be voluntary.

Yanghee Lee, the UN rapporteur, visited the island by a helicopter accompanied by Bangladesh foreign ministry officials and was due to inspect the shelters and facilities being built there.

Lee, on a visit also taking in Myanmar's other neighbour Thailand, issued no statement but she is due to give a news conference in Dhaka today, the UN said.

Bangladesh Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen this week said Dhaka was not hiding anything in the island and they would take all interested diplomats once construction work is

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One-phase Ijtema

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The state minister said, "There had been a quarrel between the two factions for long. However, representatives from both factions sat in a meeting on Wednesday. Now, there is no dispute between them."

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal on Wednesday said the Ijtema will be held in February in Tongi as the two factions of Tablighi Jamaat reached an understanding over organising the grand congregation.

The Ijtema's first phase was initially scheduled to be held from January 11 to 13 and the second one from January 18 to 20.

However, a rift developed among the Tablighi members -- well known for humble behaviour and preaching peace -- over the nomination of Indian Islamic scholar Maulana Saad Kandhalvi as the Ameer.

Last month, an elderly man was killed and over 200 others injured in a fierce fight between the two factions over this year's schedule for the Ijtema in Tongi.

The government then postponed the congregation after the two factions announced separate schedules.

Maulana Saad was supposed to administer the Akheri Munajat (concluding prayers) of last year's Ijtema as he did the previous three years. But he had to return home without doing so in the face of stiff opposition from a faction of the Tablighi Jamaat men, mostly students and teachers of Qawmi madrasas of Bangladesh.

The protesters claimed that Saad made "controversial comments about the Quran and Sunnah" in India.

Responding to a query from a journalist, the home minister said a decision was taken that Maulana Saad would not join the Ijtema this year.



A boat loaded with vegetables plies the dark murky waters of the Buriganga near old Dhaka's Sir Salimullah Medical College yesterday. Every day, traders bring fresh vegetables from the adjacent areas of the capital and sell them in the city markets.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## Cooperation is crucial

FROM PAGE 1

The prime minister came up with the remarks while addressing the inaugural ceremony of the 4th session of the Regional Consultative Group (RCG) on Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination for Asia and the Pacific at hotel InterContinental Dhaka.

Earlier, she inaugurated the three-day international conference.

Some 150 representatives from 26 RCG member countries participated in the conference arranged aiming to strengthen emergency coordination at national and regional level and exchange experience on disaster management to face man-made and natural disasters. The Group was formed in 2014 for Asia and Pacific region.

"We may not be able to prevent natural disasters but can reduce the extent of damages through prudent initiatives. In Bangladesh, we're giving the highest importance to mitigation programmes," Hasina said.

Noting that casualties from natural disasters has sharply declined in

Bangladesh due to various measures taken by the government, she said, "Bangladesh is now known as a role model of disaster management in the world and moving towards building resilience."

Hasina said Bangladesh had been able to reduce casualties in incidents of natural disasters in recent times by taking various measures such as improvement in early warning system, dissemination of information, establishment of cyclone shelters and active engagement of dedicated Cyclone Preparedness Program (CPP) volunteers for preparedness and response activities.

Mentioning that Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had initiated the CPP in 1972, Hasina said it was one of the first community-based disaster preparedness programmes in the world. "Now we're replicating the CPP model for other disasters."

Hasina said Bangladesh contributes little to climate change, but it is one of

the worst-affected countries by the impacts of global climate change due to its geographical location, which is highly prone to natural disasters such as cyclone, flood, landslide and earthquake.

She said the relevance of Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination was increasing in the face of increased number of large-scale emergencies in the region. "We're advancing towards national resilience guided by our vision 2021 and 2041 to contribute to global commitments and targets. Our national humanitarian architecture is quite supportive for Civil-Military Coordination," she added.

Providing humanitarian assistance, construction of infrastructure, maintain law and order for the 1.1 million forcibly displaced Myanmar citizens are exemplary works of civil-military coordinated response, she further said.

Mentioning that sustainable development is directly linked to climate change, Hasina said her government

has recently adopted Delta Plan 2100, which will provide Bangladesh with the sustainable development pathway for the next 100 years.

She said Bangladesh is working on institutional improvement of humanitarian response mechanism. "We've taken initiatives to establish the Emergency Operation Centre (EOC) for effective and timely response as well as smooth coordination of any emergency operation."

Talking about man-made disasters, the prime minister said, "We can't ignore the man-made disasters like traffic accidents, building fire, building and bridge collapse, terrorist attacks etc. We've to undertake appropriate measures to stop these disasters."

State Minister for Disaster Management and Relief Dr Enamur Rahaman and Chief of Army Staff General Aziz Ahmed, among others, spoke on the occasion. Disasters Management and Relief Secretary Md Shah Kamal delivered the welcome speech.

## Eligibility crisis

FROM PAGE 1

Rezwanul Huq Chowdhury, president of the pro-Awami League student body Chhatra League, got admission in DU in 2008-09 academic session while General Secretary Golam Rabbani in 2007-08.

Sanjeet Chandra Das, president of Chhatra League DU unit, got admission in 2009-10 academic session. General Secretary of the body Saddam Hossain got in 2011-12.

All of them are students at the Department of Law.

Of the four leaders, Saddam may get a chance to run as he had study gaps and is in honours third year now.

Al-Mehedi Talukder, president of pro-BNP Chhatra Dal, got admission in the Department of Accounting and Information Systems in 2002-03 while General Secretary Abul Bashir Siddique got in Pali and Buddhists Studies Department in 2003-04 session.

Rajib Ahsan, president of Chhatra Dal DU unit, entered the university's Bangla department in 1995-96 session while General Secretary Akramul Hasan got admission in accounting the following session.

None of the four leaders will be allowed to run.

GM Zilani Shuvo, president of Bangladesh Chhatra Union, the student body affiliated to the Communist Party of Bangladesh, got admission in Dhaka Polytechnic Institute in 2009-10 session while General Secretary Liton Nandi got enrolled in the

FUNCTIONS OF DUCSU
<b>CENTRAL UNION</b>
Maintaining a common room for indoor games and keeping dailies and periodicals there
Publishing journals, magazines or papers annually and organising debate, recitation and essay competitions
Creating leadership qualities among students
Holding inter-university debate competitions and cultural programmes
<b>HALL UNIONS</b>
Organising debates and public lectures
Maintaining a common room for reading activities and indoor games
Organising sports, cultural programmes, staging theatrical performances and publishing annual journals.
Organising social work and religious functions
Taking up other initiatives assigned or approved by the respective hall provost

Institute of Education and Research of DU in 2007-08.

President and general secretary of the union's DU unit -- Fayeze Ullah and Rajib Das -- will be able to run. They got admission in the university in 2010-11 and 2013-14 sessions.

Samajtantrik Chhatra Front President Imran Habib is an alumnus of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) while General Secretary Nasir Uddin Nasir completed post-graduation at DU in 2008-09 session.

President of Samajtantrik Chhatra Front's DU unit Alamagir Hossain Sujan is currently doing his M Phil in International Relations at the university.

General Secretary Rajib Gandhi Roy is a current student of Drawing and Painting department at the Faculty of Fine Arts.

Neither Alamgir nor Rajib is eligible to contest the polls as the Ducsu constitution prohibits them from doing so. Those pursuing bachelors, M Phil and PhD in fine arts can be voters only, not candidates.

President of Chhatra Front (Marxist) Masud Rana is a student of Jagannath University and General Secretary Rashed Shahriar is a student of DU who got in in 2006-07 session.

President of the front's DU unit

Pragati Bormon Toma has completed post-graduation while General Secretary Salman Siddique is pursuing post-graduation and thus would get a chance to run.

Golam Mostafa, president of Bangladesh Chhatra Federation, student front of Ganosamhati Andolon, is a student of Rajshahi University. General Secretary Jahid Sujan completed graduation from Government Tolaram College in 2016 and enrolled in the Department of Printing and Publication Studies at DU in 2017-18 session. Since it's a private programme, he would not be a voter.

President of the Federation's DU unit Umme Habiba Benojir got admitted to the Social Welfare department in 2010-11 session. Acting General Secretary Ashraful Haque Ishtiaq, a current student of law who started in 2013-14 session, can contest the polls.

Some of the leaders suggested amending certain sections of the constitution.

"Since no Ducsu polls took place in the last 28 years, the authorities should announce academic sessions. Leaders belonging to that timeframe only would be considered eligible then," said Chhatra League leader Sanjeet, expressing his desire to run.

Chhatra Federation's Umme Habiba echoed his views.

## Dream comes true next year

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different from those during construction period," he said, adding, "It was found in some places [that] the clay layer is located 62 metres above that assumed in the design."

However, the matter for all the piers had been resolved.

Now the main difficulty was to take and install the spans on the piers, he said, adding it had been taking a month to install each of the spans, with three days taken only to take them to the pier.

"It would take many days if it takes one month for installing each span. So we asked them (contractor) to speed up the work," he said.

"We even asked him (president of contractor firm) for additional mobilisation, if necessary, so that at least two spans can be installed in each month."

He however, said there were difficulties -- decreased water level or strong currents -- in carrying the span from the dock and installing it on the pier.

On an optimistic note though, he said while it had taken eight weeks to take the first span of Jamuna Bridge to the pier, it took only six days to take the last span of the bridge.

"Because workers gradually master the work," said Jamilur, who heads the local expert panel of Jamuna Bridge.

A bridge division official said the Chinese construction company last year sought to extend the deadline to the first half of 2021.

But the government asked them to complete the work within June 2020 and if needed, to mobilise more equipment, including additional

barges.

"During meetings [with contractor firm] we said 2021 does not exist. We don't want to talk about going beyond 2020," Jamilur said.

The government signed a deal with China Major Bridge Engineering Construction Company Ltd in June, 2014 for the construction of the bridge.

The work of the main bridge was supposed to be completed by December last year.

Afterwards, the planning ministry extended the deadline of the project to December 2019, a ministry official told The Daily Star.

"It is not necessary to take approval from ECNEC [Executive Committee of the National Economic Council] if the date has to be changed for the first time, without increasing expendi-

ture," he said wishing anonymity.

Before the extension of the deadline, the ministry took a report of the Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Division (IMED) into consideration, he said.

A team of IMED prepared the report after visiting the bridge site and evaluating other necessary documents. They recommended extending the deadline by one year.

It also recommended enhancing manpower and equipment to ensure round-the-clock work, suggesting the work to be done in more than one shift.

The project fell behind schedule after the World Bank withdrew its \$1.2 billion loan in 2012 over allegations of corruption. The government denied the allegations and moved to build the bridge using its own funds.

## Bangladesh

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This year's report, released last week, is prepared on the basis of 68 variables. It has put special focus on entrepreneurial talent -- how it is being encouraged, nurtured and developed throughout the world and how this affects the relative competitiveness of different economies.

The theme of the GTCI's sixth edition is "Entrepreneurial Talent and Global Competitiveness".

According to this year's GTCI, Switzerland continues to top the index followed by Singapore and the US as in the previous year.

Yemen is at the bottom of the index at 125th, just below Congo and Burundi.

Bangladesh is positioned just after Ethiopia, and one notch above Nepal.

With a population of 164 million and GDP of almost \$250 billion, a majority of Bangladeshis belong to lower-middle income group, the report says.

Yet, the country ranked below several low-income countries including Rwanda, Tajikistan, Gambia, Senegal and Tanzania.

Among the South Asian countries, Bangladesh's position is not encouraging.

Except for Nepal, all the countries in the region are ranked above Bangladesh. India is ranked 80th, Sri Lanka 82nd, Pakistan 108th and Bhutan 83rd.

Talking to The Daily Star, Zahid Hussain, lead economist at the World Bank's Dhaka Office, said Bangladesh's poor ranking in the GTCI has to do with weaknesses in the policies and institutions affecting prospects for growth, security of property rights and availability of complementary resources.

"Because of the country's poor competitiveness on this front, we find it hard to retain our own high skilled and highly educated Bangladeshis, unlike China, South Korea and India, or to attract back citizens who have acquired high-tech human capital in advanced economies."

"We need to leapfrog in this area first by getting the basic rights, that is, creating an enabling environment, securing both physical and intellectual property and enhancing digital connectivity for entrepreneurship to prosper," he added.

The ranking is based on what the GTCI considers as four "pillars" called "enable" (reflecting a country's regulations and markets), "attract" (reflecting a country's capability to lure resources), "grow" (reflecting the ability to improve self-competence through education and training), and "retain" (reflecting an ability to maintain domestic and overseas talent).

The index indicates that Bangladesh has a lot to do to attract, grow and retain talent.

For instance, the country was placed 122nd with regard to attracting talent.

Similarly, it performed worse than many of its lower-middle income peers when it comes to growing talent. It was ranked three notches above the country at the bottom.

Bangladesh, however, did slightly well in terms of creating an environment that nurtures talent as it was ranked 102nd.

But when it comes to providing vocational and technical skills, it is ranked 116th.

Bangladesh showed a bit better performance in Global Knowledge Skills by securing the 103rd position.

The country's position in some of the sub-parameters is also not encouraging.

For example, Bangladesh is placed 78th in terms of the education system's relevance to the economy. But it is also poorly rated and is among the bottom 20 countries in terms of availability of scientists and innovation output.

The report highlighted that a handful of the workforce in the country is enrolled in the pension system, resulting in a rank of 107 in this parameter.

The country did fairly well in terms of ease of hiring (1st along with several other nations) and business-government relations (83rd), but did not do well in terms of government effectiveness (104th), corruption perception (109th) and political stability (112nd).

Bangladesh is also placed 75th with regard to the relation of pay to productivity.

The country performed worse in the environmental sector as it ranked 123rd. It has to work a lot to improve social protection where it was placed 121st.

It was ranked 122nd in terms of ease of doing business, one of the key components for attracting foreign direct investment.

When it comes to doing business, Bangladesh is the worst performer among the South Asian countries.

Bhutan is the best place for doing business in South Asia and even problematic Pakistan is in a better position than Bangladesh.

The country is also very weak in luring foreign direct investment and international students.

The report shows that the country's biggest challenge lies in improving its ability to attract, grow and retain talent.

Above all, there is a need to address its poor level of growth, and improve vocational training and technical skills.