















Confusion reigns over Salim's JS fate

HC upholds his graft sentence, but no judgment clarifies which court's sentence can cost him his seat

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

verdict upholding vears' convicted politicians,

whose appeals are still pending with this court and the Appellate Division. On March 9, an HC bench affirmed a lower court's verdict that convicted and sentenced the ruling Awami League lawmaker to 10 years in prison

regime in 2007. Following the announcement of

According to Article 66 (2)(d), "A person shall be disqualified for election as, or for being, a member of parliament who has been, on conviction for a criminal offence involving moral turpitude, sentenced to imprisonment for a term of not less than two years, unless a period of five

This applies to sentences by any court, Khurshid said, adding that the Jatiya Sangsad Speaker can take necessary steps to cancel the parliament membership of Haji Salim

This provision means someone like Salim, who was initially sentenced to 13 years in prison on two charges -- 10 years for graft and three more years for concealing information -- in 2008, would not be able to contest parliamentary elections or hold the office of a member of parliament

The HC bench on March 9 acquitted him of the charge of concealing information.

Haji Salim's lawyer Sayed Ahmed Raza, however, said his client would move an appeal before the Appellate

membership will stay as the issue will be finally settled by the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court," he

which court's verdict -- that of the the Jatiya Sangsad membership of a convicted lawmaker.

conviction is settled by the apex court,

imprisonment in 2008, as his appeal against the judgement remained pending with the HC.

Awami League leaders MK Alamgir and Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury were also convicted by lower courts, but their

parliamentary memberships were not cancelled as their appeals are pending with the appeals court, he added.

Meanwhile, ACC counsel Khurshid Alam Khan told this correspondent that only eight appeals, including that of Haji Salim, out of 27 have been disposed of by the HC in around six years after the apex court overturned acquittals of the accused in corruption cases filed during the rule of the military-backed caretaker

Between January 2014 and June 2015, the Appellate Division had scrapped the HC acquittals of 35 people, mostly politicians and their family members, and ordered the HC to expeditiously hold re-hearings of their appeals against convictions handed down by the lower courts.

Among them, former AL Relief and Disaster Management Minister Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya and former BNP lawmaker Monjurul Ahsan Munshi were acquitted by the HC on rehearing of their appeals.

Former BNP lawmaker Hafiz Ibrahim's three years' imprisonment was upheld by the HC on rehearing his appeal and he has already served his jail sentence.

Hafiz Ibrahim's lawyer Sabbir Hamza Chowdhury told The Daily Star that his client had been declared qualified for contesting the last parliamentary election.

In November 2017, the HC commuted jail terms for former BNP minister Nazmul Huda from seven to four years and ruled that his wife Sigma Huda's three years' jail sentence would be considered as served out because she had earlier served time in

The HC upheld a lower court verdict that sentenced BNP leader and former state minister for civil aviation Mir Mohammad Nasiruddin to 13 years and his son Mir Helal Uddin to three years in jail.

Nazmul Huda, Mir Nasir, and Mir Helal are now on bail granted by the apex court as they surrendered Malik told this correspondent that to the trial court in line with the HC verdicts.

The other accused whose acquittals were cancelled by the top court include former BNP state minister Amanullah Aman and his wife Sabera Aman, former AL lawmaker Joynal Abedin Hazari, Hafiz Ibrahim's wife Mafruza Sultana, former AL lawmaker Mockbul Hossain (now deceased) and his wife Fatema Tahera Khanam, former commissioner of customs Jahurul Haque and his wife Afia Haque, and former Islami Oikya Jote lawmaker Mufti Shahidul Islam (now deceased), according to ACC lawyer



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and President of the Maldives Ibrahim Mohamed Solih talk during a meeting at the Prime Minister's Office in the capital yesterday. Solih left Dhaka last night ending his two-day visit to Bangladesh.

PHOTO: **PID**

Biman to fly Dhaka-Male

Ibrahim Solih at the Prime Minister's

During his talks with the Bangladesh PM, Solih announced that they would protect the rights of the Bangladeshi migrants working in the Maldives and that they were being covered under the Covid-19 vaccination campaign free of

"We have a very cordial relationship with the Maldives. We have achieved a lot during the visit of the president," Momen said.

The Maldives president, his wife Madam Fazna Åhmed, Maldivian Foreign Minister Abdullah Shahid and Economic Development Minister Fayyaz Ismail arrived in Dhaka on Wednesday to join the twin celebrations of Mujib Borsho and golden jubilee of Bangladesh's independence.

Solih also attended a dinner hosted by President Abdul Hamid before leaving for Malé last night.

four MoUs on the Establishment of Joint Commission for Comprehensive Cooperation; Establishment Bilateral Foreign Office Consultations; Cooperation in the Field of Fisheries and Pelagic Fishing; and Cultural

pave the way for further strengthening

the relations between the two countries," he said.

The minister said presently, the trade between the two countries is very limited but there are huge scopes. Bangladesh can export food, vegetables as well as medicines to the Maldives. Besides, the two countries can also cooperate with each other in the sectors of tourism and marine fisheries.

RMG, leather, IT services and processed food can be very important items of export, officials said.

Abdulla Shahid said Bangladesh is a land of enormous resources, but the problem is lack of connectivity.

economic activities, more connectivity is a welcome declaration," he said.

The Maldives is home to some 100,000 Bangladeshi migrants, but many of them are undocumented. Asked about it, Shahid said his country was doing everything to ensure their protection so that none can take any undue advantage of their irregular

Bangladesh requested the Maldives rapid regularisation of the migrant workers there and expressed its readiness to meet further need for skilled human resources in the Maldives.

Abdulla Shahid said the Maldives will change.

investments.

extending continued support towards development of human resources in the Maldives in a variety of fields, and offer training to the Maldivian peacekeepers in Bangladesh.

to the Maldives foreign minister's candidature for the UNGA presidency in 2021.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina accepted President Solih's invitation to pay a visit to the Maldives at a mutual convenience.

commended Solih Hasina's leadership and success and the vision of transforming Bangladesh into a

support Bangladesh on the question of the Rohingya justice and repatriation in the international forums. Also, both the countries will work together on climate

According to a joint communique, the two governments agreed to regularly hold commerce secretary-level meetings to address bilateral tradé issues in detail. Both the sides agreed to expedite the finalisation of the proposed Agreement on Customs Cooperation and the signing of the Agreement on Avoidance Double Taxation and protect Bangladesh reiterated its policy of

Bangladesh confirmed its support

developed country by 2041.

Act before it's too late

The last time the country recorded a higher positivity rate was on December 13, 2020, 10.63 percent of samples tested positive for coronavirus. Prof Rahman stressed on increasing

the daily testing capacity. "Unless we increase the number

of tests to one or two lakh, we will never know the level of transmission. With inadequate tests, a lockdown or any other measures will hardly work," said Rahman, adding that testing helps mitigation efforts as with the requisite knowledge to examine the characteristics, prevalence and spread of any disease.

According to the DGHS, RT-PCR labs across the country have the capacity to test around 50,000 samples every day.

The rise of infections has also coincided in a decline in numbers of people getting vaccinated. A total of 1,07,433 people were vaccinated yesterday, raising the total number of people vaccinated to 46,87,824.

During the first and second weeks of the countrywide vaccination campaign that started on February 7, an average of 1.5 lakh people took the vaccines daily. Amid the growing alarm, Health Minister Zahid Maleque yesterday

urged people to maintain health safety guidelines. Fearing the fresh surge transmission, likely linked to the two highly transmissible strains of the virus originating in the UK and South Africa, the DGHS has recently gave a 12-point

suggestion to the government, including a complete lockdown. The health minister, however, said all the government agencies will take

it," said Zahid Maleque.

He said lockdown would be the last resort for the government if people continue to defy health guidelines.

"In the beginning, we knew nothing about coronavirus. Now we know how to fight it, but we are not maintaining the health safety guidelines... If health safety guidelines are maintained, there will be no need of lockdown. We have suggested, now the government [highups] will decide," the minister said.

About mass gatherings in social events, the minister said, "At least 20 lakh people visited Cox's Bazar, Bandarban and Rangamati in the last 15 days. Nobody wore masks. [People] are participating in marriage ceremony

on tours. Be patient [for] a bit more. If [you] stay alive, [you] will be able to go on tours.

Bangladesh to ensure people are maintaining health

We are witnessing a sudden rise of coronavirus infections in the month of March again. Already around 16,000 people got infected in the month at an average of 1,000 daily, whereas the figure was only 11,061 in February," said Benazir Ahmed, Inspector General of Police (IGP), yesterday.

Due to the sudden rise of Covid-19, police will undertake a nationwide special awareness programme from March 21 so that every people of the country take preventive steps, said the police chief.

Police will continue the awareness with the slogan "habit of wearing mask, Covid-free Bangladesh". The IGP disclosed the steps taken by

police to prevent the ongoing surgeof coronavirus while addressing reporters at Bangladesh Police Auditorium in Rajarbagh. He said "everyone has to follow strict

hygiene rules. Masks should be worn, hands should be washed repeatedly with soap. Hand sanitisers should be kept if necessary.' Replying to a query about forcing

people to wear masks, the police chief said, "We do not want to say that right now. We want to inspire people to wear masks with motivation and awareness. "Moreover, why should we need to

be encouraged to wear a mask? I hope people will wear masks for themselves and their families out of a sense of responsibility," he said. Community police and beat police

will work to create awareness and free masks will be provided if needed, said the IGP. Asked about police allowing big

political events and gatherings, the IGP aid the issue of permission depends on the situation. "We have to strictly follow hygiene rules at every event even if given permission," he said.

Regarding the restrictions in kitchen markets, the police chief said it will depend on the situation and everything will be implemented in phases as required by circumstances.

Pollutants 10 times the limit in winter

potential at the hospitals' environment in Dhaka, Bangladesh".

According to a global report published on Wednesday, air quality of Bangladesh was the worst in the world, while its capital Dhaka was the second worst air polluted city last year. The study on the three health care

institutions was conducted by health care professionals and academicians in two periods -- pre-monsoon and winter. It found that air quality remains worse during both the periods. example, the

concentration of PM 2.5 at the three healthcare institutions was $52.28\,\mu\text{g/m}3$ during pre-monsoon which is double than the NAAQS permissible limit. In winter, the average concentration

is around eight times higher than the AAQS permissible limit, the report said. The WHO's ambient air quality permissible standard is 25 µg/m3 while is $55 \mu g/m3$ for NAAQS.

of PM 2.5 was 222.53 µg/m3 which

Speaking to The Daily Star, Prof Abdus Salam, key author of the study and also a chemistry teacher at Dhaka University, said indoor air quality worsens due to various activities of the people and it indicates the unhygienic condition at hospitals.

To improve the indoor air quality at

concerned should focus on the overall hygiene situation and reduce crowding by patient's attendants at hospitals, he added.

air quality of hospitals in the country also said toxicity potential (TP) values at the three installations were 10 times higher than normal, which means the environment there could aggravate patients' health.

environment of a place. "Extremely high TP values indicated

potential severe health consequences of the healthcare professionals and patients in indoor hospitals environment," the report said.

showed higher particulate matter (PM) concentrations than other indoor sampling locations at the DMCH. The ward was most crowded and filthy among all the sites in the hospital, the study found.

It also said unhygienic environment and movement of people increased outdoor particulate concentrations inside the hospitals.

can improve the air quality inside the hospitals, adding that cooking inside the wards should be stopped.

Nazmul Haque said they were working on improving the environment inside

people's movement is big inside the hospital. We try to keep our hospital clean but it is not possible to keep it clean all the time especially when the hospital

Be-Nazir Ahmed, former director disease control) at the Directorate General of Health Services, said poor air quality inside a hospital indicates that there is high possibility of infection which is dangerous.

The hospital authorities must identify the sources of dust. There is no alternative to cleanliness. There is a serious lack of cleaners at hospitals. We

to make the indoor environment clean, he added Indoor and outdoor air pollution

State of Global Air 2019.

indoor air pollution contributed to nearly five million deaths from stroke,

ATTACK ON NAVY OFFICER Erfan Salim gets bail

No legal bar left for his incarceration

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday granted bail to Erfan Salim, son of Dhaka-7 lawmaker Haji Md Salim, in a case filed over attacking a navy officer in the capital's Dhanmondi in October last

Hossain Selim and Justice Md Badruzzaman delivered the verdict after hearing a petition filed by Erfan seeking bail in the case. There is no legal bar for Erfan to

The bench of Justice Jahangir

walk out of jail following the HC judgment, his lawyer Sayed Ahmed Raza told The Daily Star. He said his client is accused in five

cases and he secured bail from the courts in three cases and police gave final reports exempting him from charges in the other two. Erfan will get released from a

Kashimpur jail after the copy of the HC verdict reached the jail, the lawyer On January 27 this year, the HC

bench issued a rule asking the state to explain as to why Erfan, now in jail, should not be granted bail in the Lt Wasif Ahmed Khan of Bangladesh

Navy filed the case with Dhanmondi Police Station on October 25, against Erfan, 37, and three others -- AB Siddique Dipu, 45, Md Zahid, 35, and Md Mizanur Rahman, 30, for attacking

A team of Rapid Action Battalion conducted a drive at Erfan's house in Old Dhaka and arrested him the same

Deputy Attorney General Md Bashir Ullah, who represented the state during hearing of the bail petition, told The Daily Star that the state will move an appeal before the Supreme Court's Appellate Division challenging the HC judgment.

5 lakh to sit for BCS

it mandatory for all candidates to wear masks and maintaining physical distance at exam halls. It also asked all job seekers to maintain physical distance while entering and leaving the exam centres.

PSC Chairman Sohorab Hossain old The Daily Star yesterday afternoon that everything was set for the exam.

"We will hold the exam amid strict adherence to Covid-19 health guidelines," he added.

The two-hour exam will start from 10:00am. Around 4.75 lakh candidates

applied for the exam after the 41st BCS circular was published in November 2019 to appoint 2,018 vacant posts in different cadres.

Among the 351 centres in seven divisions, there are many centres where 3,000-4,000 candidates will sit for the exam.

On Tuesday, the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) proposed that the government not reopen educational institutions and hold any public examinations, including BCS, in the wake of the rising number of Covid-19 patients.

In Tuesday's meeting at the Prime Minister's Office, the DGHS officials also suggested going for a complete lockdown to curb transmission.

The high-ups at the PMO, however, opined that the authorities concerned will make a decision on such issues and asked the DGHS to strengthen enforcement of health safety guideline and reopen the Covid-19 hospitals that were shut down earlier.

In this context, there has been discussion on social media about whether tomorrow's examinations would be held or not.

"We have only one day left before the exams. We have sent question papers and other logistics to different exam centres. Examinees have also come to the divisional cities. It is tough to stop the exam now,' Shahjahan Ali Mollah, a member of PSC, said Wednesday night.

In the last several days, the transmission of novel coronavirus had been gradually rising every day with experts fearing spread of the new strains of novel coronavirus, including those first detected in the UK and South Africa.

Ekushey Boi Mela

FROM PAGE 1

There are also four emergency shelters at the Suhrawardy Udyan. Alongside all the necessary health

precautions, there are strict security arrangements in the venue to prevent any unpleasant incidents. The traditional Amar Ekushey Boi Mela began informally in 1972 at the

Bangla Academy premises. However, the academy officially took the responsibility to arrange the fair every year since 1978.

imprisonment

The recent High Court for Haji Md Salim has sparked a debate over his parliamentary membership and the careers of several other

in a corruption case filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission during the rule of military-backed caretaker

the judgment, ACC lawyer Khurshid Alam Khan told The Daily Star that Salim could no longer remain an MP as per Article 66(2)(d) of the

years has elapsed since his release."

following the HC verdict.

until five years after serving his jail

Division of the Supreme Court, challenging the HC verdict. parliamentary client's

Eminent legal expert Dr Shahdeen there is no judgment vet clarifying trial court, the appeal court (HC), or the final court (Appellate Division) -- should be considered for cancelling

However, it is normal practice in the country that parliamentary membership of a person does not get scrapped until the issue of his or her

Shahdeen Malik said Haji Salim continued being a lawmaker after the lower court handed him 13 years'

Charge sheet Mollah of Detective Branch of police, the investigation officer, filed the charge sheet with the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court of

This was the second charge sheet to

be filed against Kajol, who is accused

Dhaka on March 14.

in three cases under the Digital Security Act, all of which were filed by ruling party members. They had filed the cases with Kamrangirchar, Hazaribagh, and Shere-Bangla police stations. The charge sheet submitted yesterday was that of the case filed with Kamrangirchar police station, while the charge sheet

of the case lodged with the Hazaribagh station was given on February 4. The charge sheet stated that Kajol published fake news on his Facebook account regarding the arrest and alleged crimes of expelled Jubo Mahila

League leader Shamima Nur Papia.

It said that at the time when Kajol

circulated false information on his Facebook, Jubo Mahila League leader Shamima Nur Papia was arrested, expelled, and the district Jubo Mahila League committee was dissolved. The charge sheet alleged that Kajol made a Facebook post, saying that

Sumaiya Chowdhury Bonya was one

of Papia's accomplices "in her illegal

business of women and drugs". Following the post, Bonya, a member of the central committee of Bangladesh Jubo Mahila League, a body of the ruling Awami League, lodged the case with Kamrangirchar Police Station on March 11 last year.

He sent vulgar texts and pornography to various Facebook IDs, the charge sheet alleged. Kajol also uploaded indecent,

defamatory, and objectionable

information about the complainant's husband Asaduzzaman Nahid, the investigation officer claimed in the

charge sheet. The photojournalist was also charged with uploading indecent, defamatory, objectionable, and fake information about Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan, AL General Secretary and Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader and several other ministers, AL leaders, lawmaker Amir Hossain Amu, other lawmakers, Jubo Mahila League President Nazma Akhter, its General

Secretary Apu Ukil, and several other female leaders and activists. Kajol faced 53 days of enforced disappearance and spent seven months in prison. He had disappeared on March 10 that year and was "found" by the Border Guard Bangladesh roaming around the Benapole border after 53

He then landed in jail in a case lodged under the DSA by lawmaker Saifuzzaman Shikhor and two Jubo Mahila League activists over a Facebook post. The lower court concerned kept denying him bail for seven months

until the High Court on November

24 granted him bail in one case and

days of his enforced disappearance.

ordered the investigation officer and the Cyber Tribunal to submit reports in two other cases. Finally, the HC on December 17 granted him bail in two other cases after Kajol's lawyer pointed out that the probes had to be concluded within

75 days of filing of the cases, and the

investigators had failed to do so.

However, investigators are yet to submit the probe report in another case filed against Kajol with Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station recorded under the DSA in March last year.

"If we have strong connectivity, trade can grow greatly. We welcome two million tourists every year. It is a high-end consumption market. For

Momen said the two countries signed

Exchange Programme for 2022-25. "These instruments are expected to

collaboratively decide on the lockdown.

"While we want [that] the economy of the country remains stable, we also want [that] the transmission does not rise... But we [health ministry] cannot decide on lockdown. All the government agencies will decide collaboratively on

without wearing masks. He also urged people to be patient. "It is not the right time for going

IGP FOR STRICTER ENFORCEMENT Meanwhile, yesterday said they will intensify efforts guidelines.

government hospitals, the authorities

The first-of-its-kind study on indoor

The TP indicates the overall

The children's surgery ward site

Prof Salam said proper ventilation

Contacted, DMCH Director Brig Gen the hospital. "The hospital is overcrowded and

is overcrowded," he told The Daily Star.

have to engage more cleaners in keeping the hospitals clean.' Modern equipment should be used

led to 1.23 lakh deaths in Bangladesh in 2017, according to a study titled The Long-term exposure to outdoor and

diabetes, heart attack, lung cancer and chronic lung disease in 2017.