

Fastest trial in dist involving death sentence PP on Sinha murder case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Never in its 37-year history, the Cox's Bazar court has held such a speedy trial that ended with death sentences, according to the public prosecutor.

From the date of the incident till the date of the verdict over the murder of Major (retired) Sinha Md Rashed Khan, it took 33 working days over a period of seventeen months.

To add to this, this timely delivery of justice happened in a case challenging a "gunfight" death, the first of its kind, making it even more noteworthy.

Farid Uddin, the public prosecutor, said the case documents were being sent to the High Court for the approval of the verdict.

The plaintiff's lawyer Mohammed Jahangir told the newspaper, "The hearing on death references will be held within seven days upon receiving the documents from Cox's Bazar court. The lawyers of the convicts can participate in the hearing if they want."

"The convicts, who were awarded death penalty, will have to file an appeal with the higher court within seven days whereas the life term awardees have to file an appeal with the higher court within the next 60 days."

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13,154 more test positive for Covid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The health directorate reported that 31 people died of Covid-19 in the 24 hours ending at 8:00am yesterday.

In the same 24 hours, 13,154 people tested positive for the virus, according to a press release from the Directorate General of Health Services.

With the latest count, the total number of fatalities due to Covid-19 rose to 28,425 and the total confirmed cases to 18,11,987.

The DGHS has also reported a positivity rate of 29.17 after testing 45,093 samples.

In the 24 hours, 2721 Covid-19 patients recovered from their illness.

Of the deceased yesterday, 15 were male and 16 female. All of them died in hospitals.

As of yesterday noon, around 2,500 Covid-19 patients were having treatment in hospitals, mostly in Dhaka metropolitan areas, the DGHS said.

Fueled by the Omicron variant, the country has been witnessing a wave of Covid-19 cases since early January.

Both the number of infection and the positivity rate have skyrocketed, but the number of hospital admission has remained low compared to previous waves.



BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia waves to party leaders while coming out of Evercare Hospital in the capital last night. She returned to her Gulshan home after receiving treatment at the hospital for 80 days.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

CURBING AIR POLLUTION

HC blasts govt for its failures

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday blasted the government authorities concerned for their failure in taking effective measures to control air pollution in Dhaka and its surrounding areas despite its repeated directives.

"Public health is at serious risk due to air pollution. The situation is not improving although this court has issued several directives to this effect. In this situation, the court cannot sit idle," the bench of Justice Md Ashfaqul Islam and Justice Md Iqbal Kabir said while hearing a writ petition.

The bench directed the director general of the Department of Environment and deputy commissioners of Dhaka, Manikganj, Munshiganj, Narsingdi, and Narayanganj to be in the virtual hearing on February 15.

The HC also asked them to submit before it separate lists of illegal brick kilns on that day.

The bench delivered the order

while hearing the petition moved by lawyer Manzill Murshid on behalf of Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh. The petitioner also presented newspaper reports on the present air pollution level and operation of illegal brick kilns, seeking necessary directives to this

"The situation is not improving although this court has delivered several directives to this effect. In this situation the court cannot sit idle."

effect. The lawyer told the HC that the authorities have failed to take effective steps to control air pollution in the capital and its surrounding areas although this court issued directives eight times in this case.

On February 4 last year, the HC had asked the director general of the Fire Service and Civil Defence

Department to take necessary steps to spray water from its vehicles on an urgent basis at the entrances to the capital, including Gabtoli, Jatrabari, Purbachal, Keraniganj and Tongi.

The fire service and civil defence will do this beside their primary duty of dousing fires, the HC said.

The managing director of Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority has been ordered to take measures to supply sufficient water to the Dhaka city corporation authorities for spraying it on the city streets.

The court also asked the Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) and Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) to spray water on the streets in such a way so that it falls on the small trees planted of the central reservations and air pollution reduces.

Lawyers Amatul Karim Swapna, Md Shahjahan, Sayed Ahmed Raza and Md Muniruzzaman stood for DOE, DNCC, DSCC and fire service respectively during the hearing.

Sri Lanka arrests 21 Indians after clash with navy

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's navy yesterday said it had arrested 21 Indian fishermen after a confrontation with two trawlers poaching in the island's territorial waters.

A fast attack craft was damaged in the clashes on Monday night, the navy said in a statement, without giving further details.

"As the Indian trawlers were attempting to evade naval units with their aggressive manoeuvres, they also caused damages to the SLN Fast Attack Craft," the statement said.

It did not say if there were casualties, but said the navy seized equipment used by the Indians for "bottom-trawling", a fishing method banned in Sri Lanka that snares maritime creatures on the ocean floor.

Indian fishermen are known to stray into Sri Lankan waters along the Palk Strait, a narrow strip of sea separating the two South Asian neighbours in the Indian Ocean.

Truck kills RU student

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As the news spread, several hundred students from different halls took to the streets, demonstrating against the authorities' apathy towards ensuring students' security during development activities.

The PRO said the incident would be properly investigated and the culprits brought to justice, adding that RU Vice-Chancellor Prof Golam Sabbir Sattar urged everyone to remain calm.

However, agitating students torched some five trucks and makeshift rooms at the construction site and did not let the authorities touch Himel's body.

When the university's proctor went to the spot to control the situation, they

chased him away. At 9:30pm, the students went to the VC's residence, held a demonstration and smashed his car.

Minutes later, the demonstrators barricaded the Dhaka-Rajshahi highway at the campus's Kajla gate and demanded proper investigation and punishment to the driver of the truck that killed Himel.

RU VC Golam Sabbir Sattar expressed his sorrow and said it was an unfortunate incident.

"All the fair demands of the students will be accepted. We will do whatever is necessary to provide justice for the killed student."

The demonstrators also demanded compensation and ensuring safety for students on campus.

People in for higher living expenses

FROM PAGE 1

Also, the government will have to increase rice procurement to save the farmers from incurring losses.

"That's why the government is considering hiking the price of the items," he said, adding that the final decision lies with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Different ministries are sending in requests for an additional subsidy -- and all are for hefty amounts -- to absorb the spiralling prices in the international markets.

The finance ministry is reviewing the proposals and will come up with a revised budget by March, according to another official.

It would not be possible for the government to allocate the subsidy that the ministries sought in their revised demand. But there will be some increase, they added.

For example, the power division in its proposal

sought Tk 25,000 crore in subsidy to meet the rising energy costs. The amount allocated for subsidy in this budget is about Tk 9,000 crore, of which Tk 5,000 crore has been spent by December.

Now, the finance ministry is considering allocating an additional Tk 2,000-Tk 3,000 crore in subsidy, said another finance ministry official.

On the other hand, the energy division sought Tk 32,000 crore in subsidy if they are to meet the liquefied natural gas (LNG) import bills unless the government increases the price.

While a subsidy of Tk 6,000 crore has been set aside for LNG in this fiscal year, the finance ministry may increase the amount of subsidy by an additional Tk 4,000 crore in the revised budget.

The government allocated Tk 9,000 crore in subsidy for fertiliser import this fiscal year. Of the amount, Tk 5,500

crore has already been spent.

Now, the agriculture ministry sought Tk 28,000 crore in subsidy if the government does not hike the price. It wants the amount to meet the rising fertiliser price, especially urea, in the international market.

A subsidy of Tk 5,500 crore out of the total allocation of Tk 9,000 has been provided to the agriculture ministry until December last year. The finance ministry is considering providing Tk 3,000 crore additionally for the farm sector.

Speaking about the subsidy, Agriculture Minister Abdur Razzaque said: "The government was worried about where such a huge subsidy would come from. If such a huge amount in subsidy is given, the other development activities will come to a standstill."

In a statement on January 29, he said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina

house to be safer."

The 76-year-old former premier was diagnosed with liver cirrhosis. According to her medical board, she needs to be taken to an advanced medical centre abroad for better treatment. Khaleda has long been suffering from arthritis, diabetes, as well as dental and eye problems.

She was admitted to the hospital on November 13 last year and moved to the

said she would not raise the price of fertiliser at the moment for the welfare of farmers and to continue the development of the agriculture sector.

A finance ministry official said the government may increase the price of fertiliser after the end of the Boro harvest in March.

"But the increase would not be much," he added.

The government may increase its allocation for incentive expenses for remittance in the revised budget to help the economy absorb the shock stemming from the pandemic. Another Tk 1,000 crore is likely to be allocated for this.

It had earmarked around Tk 3,000 crore in the original budget to pay incentives to the beneficiaries of remittance.

The government may also increase subsidies in the jute sector. About Tk 300 crore would be given to this sector in the revised budget, he added.

CCU the following day. Earlier on October 12, she was admitted to the hospital as her temperature started fluctuating.

Khaleda landed in jail on February 8, 2018 in a corruption case. Amid the coronavirus pandemic, she was freed temporarily on certain conditions on March 25 last year.

The term of her release has been extended four times so far.

No embargo on Bangladesh

US Congressman Meeks says

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

US Congressman and Chair of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs Gregory W Meeks will visit Bangladesh this year to observe the human rights situation and other issues.

He said the US will not impose any embargo on Bangladesh as per the demands of any lobbyist.

Meeks said this at a fundraising luncheon function in the US on Monday, according to a statement of Bangladesh embassy in Washington yesterday.

Man dies in Ctg ship-breaking yard

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A man has died in a ship-breaking yard in Dakshin Sonaichhari area of Chattogram's Sitakundu upazila early yesterday, allegedly being hit by an iron rod.

The victim is Mohammad Ariful Hossain Sujon, 29, a worker of the ship-breaking yard that is owned by Kabir Steel Re-Rolling Mills (KSRM).

Abdullah Al Sakib Mubarrat, deputy inspector general of Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments, Chattogram, said, "Ariful suddenly felt sick, vomited and fell down."

KSRM Manager Mohammad Tajuddin said, "It is a wrong information that Ariful died after being hit by iron bar."

40 BNP men sent to jail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Some 40 leaders and activists, including BNP Central Cooperative Affairs Secretary GK Gaus, have been sent to jail in Habiganj on Tuesday.

Habiganj District and Sessions Judge denied their bail and sent them to jail in their presence in connection with a police assault case.

According to court sources, the leaders and activists received a six-week anticipatory bail from the high court on January 5.

Habiganj BNP Joint Convener Enamul Selim is also among the 40 leaders and activists, said Anisur Rahman, inspector of Habiganj court.

46 gold bars recovered in Ctg airport

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Customs Intelligence and Investigation Directorate recovered 46 gold bars, worth around Tk 3 crore, from a wheel of an abandoned vehicle in GSE area of Shah Amanat International Airport Wednesday.

However, none was arrested in this connection. CIID's Additional Director General (ADG) Basir Ahmed said, "Tipped-off, CIID officials raided a workshop of the airport and recovered the 46 gold bars."

"The gold bars were lying abandoned in that condition so that none could be detained," he said.

RT-PCR prices

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The health ministry set the current price on May 6 last year, reducing the previous maximum rate by only Tk 500, even though the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) sought a reduction of Tk 1,500.

The DGHS last month recommended that the PCR test should not cost more than Tk 2,000 and those travelling abroad should be able to get it for Tk 1,600.

The ministry has yet to make a decision in this regard, said Farid Hossain Mian, director of hospitals and clinics at the DGHS.

A high official of the health ministry requesting not to be named said officials were working on the matter and a decision would be announced soon.

Compared to the cost of testing in India and the drop in prices of kits in the global market, the rate proposed by the DGHS is still high, experts said.

The Delhi government on January 20 set the maximum charge for a PCR test in private facilities at Rs 300, down from Rs 500.

The tests are widely

accepted across the globe because of its reliability and accuracy. Around 50 companies dominate the global market for the testing kit while 23 companies have permission to sell it in Bangladesh.

"The testing fees should be updated in line with the price of the kit," Prof Nazrul Islam, member of the National Technical Advisory Committee on Covid-19, told The Daily Star on Monday.

A PCR test at government facilities costs as low as Tk 100. But whenever there is a spike in new cases, the facilities take longer to process the result. So, the people who need their Covid test reports soon have no choice but to go to any of the 99 private labs which charge more for tests.

An average of 20,000 tests were done in the private facilities in the last seven days, according to the DGHS data.

Aminal Islam, lab in-charge and chief molecular biologist at Ashiyon Medical College Hospital, said the DGHS's recommendation to lower the test fees should be implemented.

Impose arms embargo

FROM PAGE 12

Tom Andrews released a video, which features the voices of some of those in Myanmar who have suffered greatly and are taking action to defend their country. He implored States to take a more robust course of international action "before it's too late".

"Now is not the time for more rhetoric, it is time for meaningful action," the UN expert said. "The international community

must take strong, meaningful steps to cut the junta's access to weapons, funds and legitimacy."

"The fact that one year has elapsed with no Security Council Resolution imposing a comprehensive arms embargo -- as arms continue to flow to the junta and kill innocent people -- is unacceptable."

He said, "The people of Myanmar deserve better from the United Nations."