



Khaleda can be allowed to stay out 6 more months

Law ministry recommends

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

On previous conditions, the suspension of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's jail sentence can be extended by six more months, opined the Law Minister Anisul Huq yesterday.

Speaking to The Daily Star, he said, "I have given my opinion on the application that sought further extension of the suspension of Khaleda Zia's jail sentence."

"In the file, I said it can be extended for six months on previous conditions."

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Drivers on Mirpur Road, near Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College and Hospital, get out of their vehicles to stretch their legs after sitting for long in gridlocks. For the second consecutive day yesterday, Dhaka roads witnessed intense traffic jams as secondary schools have resumed classes in full-swing.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Torrid traffic continues

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

For the second straight day, the capital appeared to have witnessed its pre-pandemic form as seemingly interminable traffic jams grounded movement to a crawl yesterday, causing immense public suffering.

A two-hour long road block at Nilkhet intersection in the morning by first-year students of seven government colleges affiliated to Dhaka University and a workers' union election at Mohakhali Bus Terminal added to the problem, said traffic police.

After two years of pandemic-induced closures and limited-scale operation, classes at secondary and pre-primary schools and kindergartens resumed full-fledged in-person classes on March 15.

That means that in-person classes are being conducted at all levels of education after two years, which led to a sharp increase of cars on the road as parents rushed to schools to drop or pick up their kids.

Traffic snarl-ups were seen in various parts of the city including Mirpur Road, Dhanmondi, Mohammadpur, Mirpur, Farmgate, Green Road, Mouchak, Mohakhali, Gulshan, Tejgaon, and Airport Road.

Around 6:30pm, a fire broke out in Merul Badda and two fire engines were dispatched from Baridhara area. Despite activating the siren and honking horns, the engines could only reach the spot 42 minutes later. The journey usually takes 10 minutes, said Shahadat Hossain, duty officer of fire service control room.

"The fire was a small one and no one was hurt, but such a delay would have been disastrous if the fire was a major one," he said.

Salah Khatun Rima, a first-year honours student of Begum Badrunnesa Government Girls' College, left her Kochukhet residence at 6:40am but could not make it to

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India restores all valid visas

Bangladeshis can now seek tourists visas too; flights to resume on Mar 27

RASHIDUL HASAN

India yesterday restored all currently valid regular (paper) visas, in a development that will be much cheered by Bangladeshis, who account for the highest number of tourist arrivals.

Since March 2020, a valid regular (paper) tourist visa with a validity of five years had remained suspended, according to the officials.

Those can be used now, and Bangladeshi nationals can also apply for fresh tourist visas for up to five years, reports our Delhi correspondent.

But those on a tourist visa cannot enter India through land borders or riverine routes.

In another sign of the return to normalcy after more than two years of disruption to international travel brought on by the global coronavirus pandemic, regular commercial flight operation between the two neighbouring countries will resume from March 27.

At present, two Bangladeshi carriers and five Indian airlines are operating on a limited capacity under the air bubble agreement, causing the airfares to spiral more than four times.

Before the pandemic began, a return ticket to Kolkata, a less-than-30-minute flight from Dhaka, was about Tk 10,000. Now, it is Tk 42,000 to Tk 45,000.

"This is illogical," said Shujan Mahmud, chief executive officer of Bhaishob Media, who needs to fly to Kolkata as soon as possible for his ailing wife's treatment.

Unable to afford the Tk 90,000 needed for the two of them to fly to Kolkata and the cheaper modes of travel by bus or train not available, Mahmud has pushed back

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Bangladesh, KSA to work on security

Commit to beef up trade amid shift in geopolitical landscape

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia have agreed to work together on boosting security cooperation in their respective regions and beyond as the geopolitical landscape is shifting following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

In their first ever political consultation yesterday, the two nations also committed to strengthening trade and economic partnership. Saudi Arabia committed to ensuring stable oil prices and its smooth supply amid concerns over rising prices due to the war in Ukraine.

Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud said he was very optimistic about the future of both countries and that they were fully aligned with their vision.

"We believe very much not only in working together to contribute to the stability of our respective regions but also for the global community to work together within the multilateral system. Most importantly, we explored how we can expand our partnership," he told reporters after the consultation.

Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud, who arrived in Dhaka on Tuesday evening for a visit of less than 20 hours, called on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the Gono Bhaban and then met Bangladesh Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen before the formal political consultation at the Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel.



Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud

Saudi Arabia, which recognised Bangladesh in 1976, is home to over two million Bangladeshis. Bangladesh also imports the majority of its fuel from the Kingdom. An important member of the Organization for Islamic Cooperation, Saudi Arabia strongly supported the Rohingya cause in the international forums.

In 2015, Bangladesh joined a Saudi Arabia-based 34-state Islamic military coalition to combat terrorism. In different times, Bangladesh strongly condemned the Houthi militias' drone attacks targeting parts of Saudi Arabia.

Diplomatic sources say as Saudi Arabia diversifies its economy and Bangladesh is emerging as a South Asian economic powerhouse with rapid industrialisation, the two countries are boosting political and security relationship, apart from trade and investment.

At the consultation, both sides expressed satisfaction at the close alignment of positions in all major global issues regarding stability, security, and in upholding the UN Charter. They agreed to continue this collaboration in the future.

"In various international forums, we will support each other. We have discussed these issues. It is time to follow and implement those," Foreign Minister Momen said.

Prince Faisal assured the Bangladesh side of all

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Ancient tombs found at Notre Dame cathedral



AFP, Paris

Several tombs and a leaden sarcophagus likely dating from the 14th century have been uncovered by archaeologists at Notre-Dame cathedral in Paris following its devastating 2019 fire.

The burial sites "of remarkable scientific quality" were unearthed during preparatory work for rebuilding the ancient church's spire at the central spot where the transept crosses the nave, the culture ministry announced late Monday.

Among the tombs was the "completely preserved, human-shaped sarcophagus made of lead".

It is thought the coffin was made for a senior dignitary in the 1300s -- the century following the cathedral's construction.

As well as the tombs, elements of painted sculptures were found just beneath the current floor level of the cathedral, identified as parts

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