



Khaleda gets permanent bail in Cumilla arson case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court has granted permanent bail to BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia in the Cumilla arson case.

The bench of Justice Jahangir Hossain Selim and Justice SM Mozibur Rahman passed the order after hearing a rule on Monday.

Police filed the case with Chaudhagram Police Station on January 24, 2015, following an anti-government agitation.

In 2019, the HC had granted ad-interim bail to the BNP chief and issued the rule asking the state why she should not be granted permanent bail in this case.

Khaleda's lawyer Kayser Kamal said she is accused in 37 criminal cases and on bail in 35 of them. She is convicted in two more cases.

The BNP chairperson will get bail and acquittal in all 37 cases if the law can take its course and if any external interference is not made in the case proceedings, he added.

Deputy Attorney General Sarwar Hossain Bappy said the HC granted permanent bail to Khaleda as she did not misuse her ad-interim bail.

Khaleda landed in jail on February 8, 2017, after being sentenced to five years imprisonment by a special court in Dhaka in the Zia Orphanage Trust graft case.

On October 30 the following year, the HC enhanced her punishment to 10 years after dismissing her appeal in the case.

The former prime minister was convicted by another special court in Dhaka in the Zia Charitable Trust corruption case on October 29, 2018. She was sentenced to seven years' rigorous imprisonment by the court.

Khaleda was freed from jail on March 25, 2020, after the government suspended her jail sentence for six months.



Chhatra League men beat up Abu Afsan Mohammad Yahya, organising secretary of Jatiyatobadi Chhatra Dal, near the Central Shaheed Minar yesterday. Leaders and activists of the pro-BNP students' platform came under attack from the BCL men when they were going to Dhaka University to hold a scheduled programme.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

BATTLE ON EASTERN FRONT

Russia moves to encircle Ukraine troops

20 countries offer new arms packages for Kyiv

AGENCIES

Russian forces were launching an all-out assault to encircle Ukrainian troops in twin cities straddling a river in eastern Ukraine yesterday, a battle which could determine the success or failure of Moscow's main campaign in the east.

Exactly three months after Russian President Vladimir Putin invaded Ukraine, authorities in its second-largest city Kharkiv re-opened the underground metro, where thousands of civilians had sheltered for months under relentless bombardment.

The reopening was evidence of Ukraine's biggest military success over the past few weeks: pushing Russian forces largely out of artillery range of Kharkiv, which they did from the capital Kyiv in March.

But the decisive battles of the war's latest phase are still raging further south, where Moscow is attempting to seize the Donbas region of two eastern provinces, Donetsk and Luhansk, and trap Ukrainian forces in a pocket on the main eastern front.

The easternmost part of the Ukrainian-held Donbas pocket, the city

of Sievierodonetsk on the east bank of the Siverskiy Donets river and its twin Lysychansk on the west bank, have become the pivotal battlefield there, with Russian forces advancing from three directions to encircle them.

"The enemy has focused its efforts on carrying out an offensive in order to encircle Lysychansk and Sievierodonetsk," said Serhiy Gaidai, governor of Luhansk province, where the two cities are among the last territory still held by Ukraine.

Further west in Slovyansk, air raid sirens wailed yesterday morning but streets were still busy, with a market full, children riding bikes and a street musician playing violin by a supermarket, reports Reuters.

Gaidai said Ukrainian forces had driven the Russians out of the village of Toshkivka just south of Sievierodonetsk. Russian-backed separatists said they had taken control of Svitlodarsk, south of Bakhmut.

Comments by senior Russian officials yesterday suggested plans for a drawn-out conflict ahead. Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu said Russia was deliberately advancing slowly to avoid civilian casualties.

The Donbas fighting follows Russia's biggest victory in months: the surrender last week of Ukraine's garrison in the port of Mariupol after nearly three months of siege in which Kyiv believes tens of thousands of civilians have died.

Petro Andryushchenko, an aide to Mariupol's Ukrainian mayor now operating outside the Russian-held city, said the dead were still being found in the rubble.

US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, in a meeting of allies, announced on Monday that some 20 countries offered new security assistance packages for Ukraine to battle Russian forces.

In Russia, foreign ministry announced that it was imposing an entry ban on 154 members of the UK parliament's House of Lords in retaliation for sanctions against Russian senators over Ukraine, reports AFP.

At the World Economic Forum in Davos yesterday, Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said Sweden and Finland, which have applied to join Nato, will attend the transatlantic alliance's summit in Madrid next month.

Spain will speed up its parliamentary procedure to give its backing for the entry of the two nations in the alliance, he said.

The poet's return

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was brought back to Bangladesh from India the day before – within six months of the country's independence.

Known to have portrayed love, freedom, revolution and opposed religious bigotry through his works, Nazrul stayed in the country till his last breath.

Today, Bangladesh is celebrating his 123rd birth anniversary through various programmes across the country.

"Bangabandhu brought Nazrul back to Bangladesh on his own will and declared him the national poet while celebrating his 73rd birthday," Mohammad Nurul Huda, Nazrul researcher, poet, and director general of Bangla Academy, told The Daily Star.

Researchers say the poet was invited to a newly independent Bangladesh on December 2, 1971, by the then prime minister Tajuddin Ahmad.

His family confirmed he would visit Bangladesh soon.

In February 1972, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman sent bouquets to the poet, who by then had begun losing his voice and memory due to old age, and invited him to visit.

While the literary genius was recognised as the national poet from the day after his return on May 24, 1972, no government gazette with regards to this recognition was ever issued.

Mohammad Zakir Hossain, executive director of the government-run Kabi Nazrul Institute, said, "It is

true that there has never been an official gazette in this regard. But there are at least two laws that were passed in parliament – Kabi Nazrul Institute Act 2018 and Jatiya Kabi Kazi Nazrul Islam University Act 2006 – that recognise him as the National Poet."

In recognition of Nazrul's contribution to Bangla literature and culture, Dhaka University awarded the poet with the honorary Doctrine de Letter (D.Lit) degree on December 9, 1974.

In January 1976, the Bangladesh government granted him Bangladeshi citizenship and on February 21, he was awarded the Ekushey Padak.

Nazrul, a poet, lyricist, musician, revolutionary and philosopher, was born 11th Joishtha in Bengali calendar year 1306 (May 25 in the Gregorian calendar). He has gifted the nation with at least 2,400 songs, popularly known as Nazrul Sangeeet.

Although known for his criticism of imperialism, social and religious taboos, Nazrul also delved deeply into the themes of love, romance and devotion.

Four migrants drown, three missing off Libya

AFP, Tripoli

Four migrants were found dead and three were missing after their boat capsized off the Libyan coast, the North African country's coast guard said yesterday.

Ahead of polls, press freedom more crucial

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He said one reason Bangladesh scored so low is the DSA, which the report calls "one of the world's most draconian laws for journalists".

In the same report, the US ranked 42nd among 180 countries. "Yes, that is in the top 25 percent but it's far from the top. Frankly, the United States needs to do better," he mentioned.

Stating that a free press is a key ingredient in a legitimate and free democracy, He said, "We all have an obligation to protect the free press and to allow journalists to seek and report the truth without fear, harassment or censorship."

About the next general polls, he said the US policy on Bangladesh polls is that the people of the country should have the ability to choose their own government through free and fair elections conducted in line with international standards.

It is Naoki, Japanese ambassador to Bangladesh, said that as freedom of expression is protected in Bangladesh constitution, it shouldn't be constrained by a particular law, the DSA.

Referring to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's statement that "in this country you can express your opinion, no matter what it is", Naoki said, "I think it is a very important statement in light of the fact that Bangladesh is going to graduate from LDC status; Bangladesh is going to achieve inclusive growth and SDG goals. So, this is a very basis of further

democratic development of this country."

Terming Dhaka a centre of regional diplomacy, the ambassador said it's clearly there to see that Bangladesh needs to be better in every aspect of democratic development.

"So, I am sure that press freedom should be a part of that. This is related to branding Bangladesh. As Bangladesh develops, I hope it will be able to ensure press freedom in a more perfect sense."

Canadian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Lilly Nicholls said the role of journalists is unique and absolutely critical for a just and democratic society.

Praising Bangladesh media for carrying on work amid huge pressure and tough situations, British Deputy High Commissioner to Bangladesh Javed Patel said free and credible media is essential for good governance.

"As the election is due next year, it's essential that Bangladesh retains space for both the incumbent party and the opposition to campaign so that people can make their own choices and above all for their choices to count on the election day."

About the DSA, he said, "We share concern about the use of the Digital Security Act and note that the government stated interest in amending the act to prevent its misuse. We continue to encourage the government to follow through on its commitment."

About the new

communications laws that are in the pipeline, he said, "We will encourage further dialogue with media professionals and the civil society to pave the way for more inclusive and permissive information environment, particularly ahead of the election next year."

Presenting the keynote paper, former president of Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists Monjurul Ahsan Bulbul said freedom of press is guaranteed in the constitution but in some cases, freedom after expression is restricted by some laws in Bangladesh.

"There are more than two dozen laws that sometimes create obstacles to freedom of expression."

Pointing out the challenges for journalists, he said, "Doing journalism in Bangladesh is like swimming in a pond infested with crocodiles."

Putting forward a set of recommendations, Bulbul said it's necessary for Bangladesh to have a tolerant society and media literacy and see an end to the culture of impunity to uphold the freedom of press.

Matiur Rahman, editor of Daily Prothom Alo, shared his experience of five decades as a journalist and said Bangladesh media is moving forward despite various types of pressure and risks.

Referring to the 1962 movement against the then military ruler Ayub Khan, he said, "Even after 60 years, we are talking about media freedom and doing journalism without fear and

intimidation."

Matiur shared his experience as editors of Bhorer Kagoj and Prothom Alo, and said sometimes government advertisements and sometimes private advertisements were stopped. There were also instances of harassment through lawsuits in different districts during the tenures of BNP and Awami League governments.

He said the DSA has become a big barrier to free press in the country.

A moment of silence was observed in the honour of Palestinian-American journalist Shireen Abu Akleh, who was tragically killed in the West Bank on May 11.

BNP to talk

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said, "We will talk to all political parties."

About the BNP-led 20-party alliance, Fakhru said, "We have not dissolved it yet. The future of the alliance will be finalised through discussions."

He added, "The main objectives of the talks are to restore democracy and voting and other rights of people that the fascist government has snatched and to revive the economy and the institutions of the country destroyed by this incumbent government."

Fakhru said their dialogue is to forge unity among political parties to wage a movement for establishing people's voting rights. Fakhru said after the talks, a set of united demands would be finalised. "We will then wage a united movement based on the demands."

Body of IU teacher's wife recovered

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Police recovered the body of a woman from her house in Kushtia Sadar upazila's Kamalapur area yesterday morning.

The dead was identified as Nujahan Parveen, 42, wife of Nazrul Islam, who is an associate professor at Kushtia Islamic University (IU).

Sabbirul Alam, OC of Kushtia Model Police, said that according to the couple's 13-year-old daughter, Nurjahan and Nazrul were fighting on Sunday night. During the fight, he hit her with a bat.

Several IU sources said the couple would often have such fights and had to be taken to hospital many times as a result.

OC Sabbir added that after continuing the fight on Monday, Nurjahan locked herself in a room at night. She was found hanging from a ceiling fan yesterday morning.

The body was sent to hospital for autopsy. Nurjahan's brother Jahangir claimed she died by suicide as she was beaten. "We will file a complaint with the police."

Speaking to The Daily Star, Nazrul admitted to fighting with his wife. "She also used to hit me from time to time. But I cannot accept that she would die by suicide for this."

Samrat back in jail

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday sent expelled Jubo League leader Ismail Hossain Chowdhury Samrat to jail again after he surrendered before it, seeking bail in a corruption case.

The case was filed against him for siphoning around Tk 222 crore and channelling it to casinos in Singapore and Malaysia between 2011 and 2018.

Judge Al Asad Md Asifuzzaman, of Special Judge's Court-6, passed the order after a hearing and also directed jail authorities to provide him with proper treatment in jail as per the Jail Code.

Earlier in the day, Samrat appeared before the court from BSMU by an ambulance.

On May 18, the HC cancelled Samrat's bail and ordered him to surrender. Following the order, Samrat challenged the order with the Supreme Court.

The chamber judge, however, refused to stay the HC bail order on May 23.

Samrat was released on bail on May 11 after spending over two and a half years in jail in four cases.

Man sentenced to life for rape

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

A Thakurgaon court yesterday sentenced a man to life in connection with a case filed against him for raping a student of Thakurgaon Polytechnic Institute in 2010.

Md Golam Farukh, judge of Thakurgaon's Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal, delivered the verdict.

The court also fined the convict Rizvi son of late Nurul Islam of Karnite village in Thakurgaon Ranishankoil's upazila, Tk 10,000, in default of which he will have to spend six more months in jail.

According to the prosecution, on May 27, 2010, Rizvi took the victim, who used to live in a dormitory for female students, to a local hotel and raped her there.

On May 29, the girl's father filed a case with Ranishankoil Police Station accusing Rizvi.

June 25: Countdown

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League's founding anniversary on June 23 also entered speculations, but Quader had ruled it out recently.

RIVER DETERMINES NAME

AL leaders on several occasions had demanded that the bridge, which is being built with the country's own funding following the directive of Sheikh Hasina, be named after her.

The Bridges Division earlier sent a formal proposal in this regard but the PM rejected it. The division yesterday placed the same proposal before her.

"We have brought two summaries [for the PM]. She signed one setting the inauguration date on June 25. But she did not sign another summary, regarding naming the bridge," Quader told reporters in front of the Gono Bhaban.

"She [PM] told us the name of the Padma bridge would be named after the Padma river. She did not want to give any one's name here," the minister said.

She said the bridge would not be named after anyone from Bangabandhu's family, he added.

PREPARATION FOR INAUGURATION STARTED

The Bridges Division has formed over a dozen committees to prepare for a gala event marking the inauguration of the bridge.

Project authorities are working at full tilt to complete installing guardrails, marking the road and connecting the

bridge to the power grid.

"We will complete all these works within June 15-20," Project Director Shafiqul Islam told The Daily Star yesterday.

The work for building murals of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Sheikh Hasina on both sides of the bridge and the inauguration plaque is also going on, officials said.

Although a test of the bridge's lights would be carried out later this month, it would take till around June 20 to complete the entire works, they said.

The process to release a commemorative coin and issue a postal stamp to mark the opening is also underway, Bridges Division Secretary Monjur Hossain, who accompanied Quader at Gono Bhaban, told this correspondent.

Quader, also the Awami League general secretary, said the prime minister will take part in rallies at the Mawa end and the Janjira end on the inauguration day.

Asked whether they will invite the BNP at the inauguration ceremony, the minister said they will invite all.

Govt moves

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budget to give some relief to the poor and low-income groups, said M Shamsul Alam, state minister for planning.

"Besides, we will not assess the new projects involving foreign purchase for the time being," he told The Daily Star yesterday. "The implementation of low-priority projects will be pushed by a few months. We are working on it."