

## SC denies Haji Salim bail

### Sets date for further hearing in graft case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court yesterday refused to grant bail to Awami League lawmaker Haji Md Salim in a corruption case. The High Court earlier this year upheld his conviction and 10 years' imprisonment sentence.

The SC, however, kept Haji Salim's bail petition with the record and set October 23 for further hearing on it and the leave to appeal petition.

On May 23 this year, Salim filed the nearly-1,200 page leave to appeal petition, which includes the bail petition, with the Appellate Division through his lawyer Sayeed Ahmed Raza.

A three-member bench of the Appellate Division headed by Chief Justice Hasan Foez Siddique passed the order after hearing the bail petition. The two other judges are Justice Obaidul Hassan and Justice M Enayetur Rahim.

Sayeed Ahmed Raza told The Daily Star that the apex court kept his client's bail petition as it will hear it in details.

Meanwhile, Anti-Corruption Commission's (ACC's) lawyer Khurshid Alam Khan told this correspondent that Haji Salim did not get bail from the SC and therefore cannot be released from jail.

He is currently in the prisons cell of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) for treatment, the lawyer said.

He was taken to BSMMU on May 23 for treatment, a day after he was sent to Dhaka Central Jail in Keraniganj in the corruption case filed by the ACC during the military-backed caretaker government in 2007.

On February 10 this year, the HC released the full text of a verdict directing Salim to surrender to the trial court in 30 days.

Haji Salim surrendered before a Dhaka court on May 22.

## Bangladesh gets a peace award

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh has got an "International Peace Award " as one of the founding members of the D-8 Organisation for Economic Cooperation.

The award was given in memory of Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan of Turkey.

President of the Board of Trustees of Prof Dr Necmettin Erbakan Foundation, Fatih Erbakan sent a letter to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina informing her of the matter, said a press release of the PMO's press wing.



Bulk carrier M/V Razoni, carrying a cargo of 26,000 tonnes of corn, leaves Ukraine's port of Odessa, en route to Tripoli in Lebanon, yesterday, amid Russia's military invasion launched on Ukraine.

PHOTO: AFP

## ‘Relief for the world’

### Says Ukraine’s FM as first grain ship since start of war leaves Odesa port

REUTERS, Kyiv

A ship carrying grain left the Ukrainian port of Odesa for Lebanon yesterday under a safe passage agreement, Ukrainian and Turkish officials said, the first departure since the Russian invasion blocked shipping through the Black Sea five months ago.

Ukraine's foreign minister called it “a day of relief for the world”, especially for countries threatened by food shortages and hunger because of the disrupted shipments.

The sailing was made possible after Turkey and the United Nations brokered a grain-and-fertiliser export agreement between Russia and Ukraine last month - a rare diplomatic breakthrough in a conflict that is grinding on with no resolution in sight.

“The first grain ship since #RussianAggression has left port,” Infrastructure Minister Oleksandr Kubrakov said. “Today Ukraine, together with its partners, makes another step to prevent world hunger.”

The Sierra Leone-flagged ship Razoni will head to the port of Tripoli, Lebanon, after transiting through the Bosphorus Strait with its cargo 26,527 tonnes of grain.

The deal aims to allow safe passage

for grain shipments in and out of Odesa, Chornomorsk and Pivdennyi.

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said on Twitter: “The day of relief for the world, especially for our friends in the Middle East, Asia, and Africa, as the first Ukrainian grain leaves Odesa after months of Russian blockade.”

Moscow has denied responsibility for the food crisis, blaming Western sanctions for slowing exports and Ukraine for

**“Today Ukraine, together with its partners, makes another step to prevent world hunger.”**

Ukrainian Infrastructure Minister Oleksandr Kubrakov

mining the approaches to its ports. The Kremlin called the Razoni's departure “very positive” news.

Turkish Defence Minister Hulusi Akar said the vessel would anchor off Istanbul this afternoon and be inspected by a joint team of Russian, Ukrainian, United Nations and Turkish representatives.

“It will then continue as long as no problems arise,” Akar said.

Prior to the Razon's departure, Ukrainian presidential officials had said 17 ships are docked in Black Sea ports with

almost 600,000 tonnes of cargo, mostly grain. More ships will follow it, Kubrakov said.

The US Embassy in Kyiv welcomed the shipping resumption, saying: “The world will be watching for continued implementation of this agreement to feed people around the world with millions of tons of trapped Ukrainian grain.”

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said he hoped it would be the first of many such shipments.

Chicago wheat and corn prices fell yesterday amid hopes that Ukraine's cereals exports could resume on a large scale.

Despite the breakthrough on the grain shipments, the war of attrition continued elsewhere.

Three civilians were killed by Russian shelling in Donetsk region - two in Bakhmut and one in nearby Soledar - in the last 24 hours, regional governor Pavlo Kyrylenko said.

An industrial city and transport hub, Bakhmut has been under Russian bombardment for the past week as the Kremlin's forces try to occupy all of Donetsk.

Russian strikes also hit Kharkiv - Ukraine's second biggest city and near the border with Russia - yesterday, regional governor Oleh Synegubov said. Two civilians were wounded, he said.

## One more dies from Covid; 349 infected

UNB, Dhaka

One person died from Covid, and 349 tested positive for the virus in the country yesterday.

While the country's total fatalities reached 29,292, the new number took its caseload to 2,005,606, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

The daily case positivity rate dropped to 5.86 percent from Sunday's 6.38 percent as 5,953 samples were tested.

The mortality rate remained unchanged at 1.46 percent. The recovery rate rose to 96.90 percent from Sunday's 96.87 percent.

Bangladesh reported its first zero Covid death on November 20 last year since the pandemic broke out here in March 2020.

## Journo Afzal gets bail from HC in DSA case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Somoy TV's journalist Afzal Hossain yesterday got anticipatory bail from the High Court in a case filed under the controversial Digital Security Act over airing a report on corruption allegations against a Noakhali court official.

The bench of Justice Sheikh Md Zakir Hossain and Justice AKM Zahirul Huq granted the bail to Afzal, a senior reporter of the private television channel, for six weeks in the case.

Afzal had appeared before the HC bench for his bail.

The HC, however, asked Afzal to surrender before the trial court concerned within six weeks.

Mohammad Alamgir, nazir of Noakhali District Judge's Court, filed the case with Chattogram Cyber Tribunal on May 11 last year against six people, including Afzal, Senior News Editor Manwar Hossain and Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer Ahmed Jobaer of the TV channel.

Except for Afzal, five other accused were dropped from the charge sheet.

Contacted, Afzal earlier said he prepared the report based on the charge sheets in two corruption cases against Alamgir.

The Anti-Corruption Commission had filed the two cases against Alamgir in connection with amassing illegal wealth and laundering money, he told The Daily Star.

## Lightning strikes kill 2, injure 7

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Natore

Two people were killed and seven others injured by lightning strikes in Natore yesterday morning.

The deceased were Ashiq Hasan, 20, son of Shihab Uddin of Karamdoshi area of Bagatipara upazila, and Salim Uddin, 42, son of Laim Uddin of Latabaria area of Bonpara municipality.

Ashiq was a mason and Salim a farmer.

Lightning struck a tea stall at Karamdoshi around 9:30am, killing Ashiq on the spot and injuring seven others, said officer-in-charge Sirajul Islam of Bagatipara Police Station.

Five of them were hospitalised.

In another incident around 8:30am, Salim was hit by lightning while working in a field, said OC Abu Siddique of Baraigram Police Station.

## Bangladesh sees lowest July rain

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Meanwhile, the temperature saw a considerable rise this month compared to the historical average. The average maximum temperature was 33.7 degrees Celsius this July -- a 2.6-degree rise from 30-year average of 31.1 degrees Celsius, Met office data showed.

“We are facing an extraordinary weather pattern this year. The July rainfall this year has been the lowest the country has seen in the last 41 years,” said Md Abdul Mannan, meteorologist of BMD, told The Daily Star yesterday.

The situation was similar in June, with the average rainfall seeing a 3.6 percent drop, and the temperature a 0.6-degree rise.

“In last three years, we have been recording a rising trend in the country's temperature, while rainfall variation has been unusual. We are observing an abnormal weather pattern for the last few years.”

Explaining the reason behind the erratic rainfall and rise in temperature, he said Bangladesh, like the rest of the world, is experiencing the impact of global warming and climate change.

“This is hampering the lives and livelihood of the country's people, especially in the agriculture sector.”

## Some breathing space

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The BB had supplied a record \$7.62 billion to banks last fiscal year.

Ahsan thinks inflation will not come down soon due to the depreciation of the taka against the dollar.

The inter-bank exchange rate of the dollar was Tk 94.70 yesterday, up11.67 percent year-on-year.

Depreciation of the taka means consumers have to pay more to buy goods. Inflation in the country hit a nine-year high of 7.56 percent in June.

EFFECTS ON CROPS

The unpredictable weather has caused farmers to struggle, as they were preparing for Aman cultivation and growing Aush -- both rain-fed crops.

Due to poor rainfall, they had to opt for supplementary irrigation.

Aman accounted for 39 percent of the total annual grain production, estimated at around 3.80 crore tonnes, during the 2021-22 fiscal year.

The grain's production is dependent on rain as the process of preparing seedbeds for transplanting seedlings is almost over during the peak June-August rainy season, according to agriculturists.

They said the mild heat wave is also worrying for farmers and agronomists as any delay in transplantation will reduce the overall yield.

The government has a target to bag 1.63 crore tonnes of rice to offset the losses of Boro and Aush crops.

Until yesterday, farmers transplanted Aman on 9.96 lakh hectares of land, out of the government's target of 56.2 lakh hectares, according to the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE).

Farmers have prepared seedlings on 2.90 lakh hectares so far.

Habibur Rahaman Chowdhury, director of the field services wing of

the DAE, said the transplantation was delayed this year, but there is still time to complete it.

“Due to a lack of rainwater, farmers had to irrigate and increase the production cost a bit, but we are hopeful of the situation improving this month.”

As Aush and Aman are both rain-fed crops, supplementary irrigation was needed in many areas. “If that isn't ensured by the government, the impact on rice production will be severe,” said AMM Shawkat Ali, former food adviser to the caretaker government.

“The government should arrange and ensure irrigation for farmers free of cost to reach the production target.”

Md Shahjahan Kabir, director general of the Bangladesh Rice Research Institute, said seedlings of shortly matured varieties need to be transplanted within 15-20 days to ensure maximum output. If the time exceeds, the yield will decline.

“As rainfall was poor, only supplementary irrigation can ensure good production. We have instructed farmers to do it, but many of them aren't doing it due to high cost.”

He said the problem is multifaceted. “Delayed planting will reduce production and supplementary irrigation will increase cost.”

## Iran says ‘optimistic’ after EU proposal for nuke deal

AFP, Tehran

Iran said yesterday it remains “optimistic” about a possible revival of the 2015 nuclear deal after the European Union tabled a proposal aiming for a compromise in the talks stalled since March.

“We remain optimistic that the negotiation process will lead us to a logical and reasonable outcome,” foreign ministry spokesman Nasser Kanani said at his weekly news conference.

## Farmers braced for a hard time

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increasing the price of urea.

“We have seen in our research that poor farmers are benefited by subsidies on fertiliser and it helps them increase production,” he said.

Agro economist Jahangir Alam said the price of fertiliser has been showing a declining trend in the global market.

“The government should have waited for a few more months before increasing the price,” he said.

In February, the agriculture minister said the import cost of urea was Tk 96 per kg in fiscal 2021-22. According to an agriculture ministry release yesterday, that cost is now Tk 81.

Jahangir further said, “The farmers may reduce the use of fertiliser to cut costs, which may bring down the total production of rice.”

Farmers may also feel discouraged from cultivating rice due to higher production costs, in which case, Jahangir said, “The government would then have to import rice at higher prices.”

Following the rise in the price, dealers will have to pay Tk 20 instead of Tk 14 to buy each kg of urea, the agriculture ministry press statement said.

The price of the fertiliser is currently Tk 81 per kg in the global market. As a result, the government will have to pay a subsidy of Tk 59 per kg even after the price hike of Tk 6, the release added.

In fiscal 2005-06, the subsidy for the fertiliser was only Tk 15 per kg.

Sources in the agricultural ministry said there is adequate stock of all types of fertiliser in the country. The demand for fertiliser in the Aman season (July-September) is usually around 6,19,000 tonnes and currently there are 7,27,000 tonnes in stock.

According to the agriculture ministry press release, fertiliser prices in the global market have seen three to fourfold increase, and accordingly

the government had to raise subsidy almost fourfold.

The subsidy allocation for fertilisers was Tk 7,717 crore in fiscal 2020-21, which went up to Tk 28,000 crore for fiscal 2021-22, it added.

On July 23, Agriculture Minister Muhammad Abdur Razzaque said the government was in a fix over how to manage subsidies amid increasing fertiliser prices.

“We are well aware that a rise in fertiliser prices would have a ripple effect on the economy. It will cause further sufferings to farmers, increase production cost and ultimately, food prices as well. But at the same time this huge subsidy will hamper development work,” he told reporters at his Secretariat office.

He also said the government is providing subsidies on TSP, MOP and DAP fertilisers.

Asked whether they are planning to reduce the subsidies on those as well, he said, “We are thinking about it. We are also monitoring the prices of fertilisers in the international market.”

Currently, the demand for fertiliser this fiscal year is 57.5 lakh tonnes, and urea accounts for the highest portion, 26 lakh tonnes, followed by DAP (16 lakh tonnes), TSP (seven lakh tonnes), and MOP (7.5 lakh tonnes), according to the agriculture ministry.

Of the total annual demand for urea, state-owned factories provide around 8.77 lakh tonnes while the rest is imported.

Currently, two state-owned urea producing factories remain shut due to gas crisis.

IMPACT OF PRICE HIKE AT FARMERS' LEVEL

Abdur Rauf from Rajos village in Gaibandha said that in the last Boro season, he spent Tk 31,000 to produce 50-60 maunds (around 1,866-2,239kg) of paddy.

The cost included Tk 3,000 for ploughing, Tk 3,000 for planting, Tk 1,000 for irrigation, Tk 2,000 for weeding, Tk 1,400 to buy TSP

fertiliser, Tk 900 for potash, Tk 4,000 for pesticide, Tk 11,000 for harvesting and Tk 2,000 for threshing.

Apart from that, he spent Tk 1,600 on 100 kg of urea fertiliser, which will now increase to Tk 2,200.

Abdur Rauf, who grows paddy on one acre of land, thinks this year he would have to spend more for irrigation as it is raining less than usual.

[Our Bogura correspondent contributed to the story]

## Police file cases

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of the victim's family.

Meanwhile, BNP yesterday held gayebana janaza across the country for the victim, Swechchhasebak Dal leader Abdur Rahim.

Rahim was killed during the clash, which broke out when police intercepted the procession the party men were bringing out from their office in Bhola town around 11:30am Sunday.

The procession was part of the party's countrywide programme protesting the power crisis and price spiral of essentials.

## Six die in Libya fuel truck blast

AFP, Sabha

At least six people were killed and dozens injured yesterday when a fuel truck exploded in southwestern Libya, medics said.

The precise causes of the blast were not clear.

It happened when a crowd flocked around the tanker as it headed to resupply a petrol station in the Bent Bayyah district. A stampede occurred, followed by a massive explosion that set several cars on fire, according to images posted online.

An official at the main hospital in Sabha, southern Libya's main city, told AFP six people had died.