

Khaleda admitted to hospital for more tests

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia was admitted to Dhaka's Evercare Hospital yesterday for more medical tests, just six days after she had undergone several required tests in the same hospital.



The former premier reached the hospital around 8:20pm from her Gulshan residence and was admitted to the hospital as per the medical board's advice, said Khaleda's medical team member AZM Zahid Hossain.

He said the BNP chief will undergo some more tests as the medical board formed to treat her advised to do so.

Earlier on August 22, Khaleda underwent Echo, ECG, USG, X-ray and blood tests, as a follow-up after her coronary angioplasty.

Reviewing the reports of those, the medical board recommended admitting the BNP chief to the hospital for some more tests.

Khaleda, the 77-year-old former premier, has been suffering from various ailments, including liver cirrhosis.

On June 10, she suffered a heart attack due to a 95 percent blockage in her left artery, for which a stent was placed through surgery at the same hospital the following day.

Khaleda spent some time in Old Dhaka Central Jail as a lower court sentenced her to five years' imprisonment in the Zia Orphanage Trust corruption case on February 8, 2018.

Later that year, she was found guilty in another graft case.

Amid the Covid-19 pandemic, the government temporarily freed the BNP chief from jail through an executive order suspending her sentence on March 25, 2020, on conditions that she would stay at her Gulshan residence and would not leave the country.

Khaleda was admitted to Evercare Hospital six times since she was infected with Covid-19 in April 2021.

Her family submitted several applications to the government seeking permission to send her abroad for treatment, but the government rejected it every time as she was convicted in two cases.



A man puts out fire in his house after a Russian strike on the city of Sloviansk, Donetsk region on Saturday, amid Russian invasion of Ukraine. PHOTO: REUTERS

MONSOON FLOODING IN PAKISTAN

Death toll tops 1,000

Southern Sindh province braces for deluge from swollen northern rivers; Turkey sends team to help with rescue efforts

AGENCIES

Pakistan's flooded southern Sindh province yesterday braced for a fresh deluge from swollen rivers in the north as the death toll from this year's monsoon topped 1,000.

The mighty Indus River that courses through Pakistan's second-most populous region is fed by dozens of mountain tributaries to the north, but many have burst their banks following record rains and glacier melt.

Officials warned torrents of water are expected to reach Sindh in the next few days, adding misery to millions already affected by the floods.

"Right now, Indus is in high flood," said Aziz Soomro, the supervisor of Sukkur Barrage -- a massive colonial-era construction that regulates the river's flow and redirects water to a vast system of canals.

The annual monsoon is essential for irrigating crops and replenishing lakes and dams across the Indian subcontinent, but it also brings destruction.

Officials say this year's monsoon flooding has affected more than 33 million people -- one in seven Pakistanis -- destroying or badly damaging nearly a

million homes.

The country's National Disaster Management Authority yesterday said the death toll from the monsoon rains had reached 1,033, with 119 killed in the previous 24 hours.

It said this year's floods were comparable to 2010 -- the worst on record -- when over 2,000 people died and nearly a fifth of the country was under water.

Pakistani leaders have appealed to the international community for help and plan to launch an international appeal fund. The foreign affairs ministry said Turkey had sent a team to help with rescue efforts, reports Reuters.

"The magnitude of the calamity is bigger than estimated," said Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, in a tweet, after visiting flooded areas in Balochistan province. He announced a grant of Rs10 billion for the province.

Thousands of people living near flood-swollen rivers in Pakistan's north were ordered to evacuate from danger zones, but army helicopters and rescuers are still plucking laggards to safety.

"People were informed around three or four o'clock in the morning to evacuate their houses," rescue worker Umar Rafiq

told AFP. "When the flood water hit the area we had to rescue children and women."

Many rivers in the area -- a picturesque tourist destination of rugged mountains and valleys -- have burst their banks, demolishing scores of buildings including a 150-room hotel that crumbled into a raging torrent.

Guest house owner Nasir Khan, whose business was badly hit by the 2010 flooding, said he had lost everything. Officials blame the devastation on human-driven climate change.

The flooding could not come at a worse time for Pakistan, where the economy is in free fall and the former prime minister Imran Khan was ousted by a parliamentary vote of no confidence in April.

While the capital Islamabad and adjoining twin garrison city of Rawalpindi have escaped the worst of the flooding, its effects were still being felt.

"Currently supplies are very limited," said Muhammad Ismail, a produce shopkeeper in Rawalpindi.

"Tomatoes, peas, onions and other vegetables are not available due to the floods," he told AFP, adding prices were also soaring.

Resentment runs rife among Biman pilots

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They said such gross anomalies in the recruitment process is unprecedented in the country's aviation history.

A senior pilot of Biman, preferring anonymity, said that according to Biman's operation manual, any pilot hired as an FO must have a minimum of 300 flying hours, accumulated over the three years prior to recruitment.

"None of the new first officers have the required 300 flying hours."

A BAPA member, citing examples of irregularities, said one of the newly recruited first officers even failed in two subjects in the Aircraft Transport Pilot Licence exams.

Meanwhile, allegations of nepotism have surfaced over the appointment of Sadia Ahmed as an FO for a Boeing 777.

Sadia, who was terminated from US-Bangla Airlines and Regent Airlines due to inefficiency and other shortcomings, is the wife of Captain

Sazid Ahmed -- a member of the recruitment committee.

The PMO report said Sazid might have played a key role in recruiting his wife, along with others, by relaxing the existing requirements of the standard recruitment procedure.

Asked about the allegations of irregularities in her recruitment, Sadia said, "The Biman MD and CEO have spoken to the media on this issue. I have nothing to add."

"Also, I can't talk to you about this issue without permission from my office."

Despite repeated calls and text messages on different dates, Sazid could not be reached for comments.

BAPA sources claimed that one of the newly recruited Boeing 777 captains has not flown an aircraft in the past five years and lost a considerable amount of his pilot currency.

Another newly recruited pilot used to fly an Airbus.

The sources said airbus pilots cannot fly Boeing aircraft unless they obtain the required training and certification.

"Why was this person hired? Biman will have to spend a huge amount of money to train that pilot," another BAPA leader, wishing anonymity, said.

Another allegation made by several serving pilots was that the new recruits were awarded five-year initial contracts. Initial contracts lasting over one year are against the rules, they said.

Over 30 existing pilots of different posts in Biman were eligible for promotions, which were "deliberately blocked to pull off this gross act of corruption and nepotism", they added.

M Mahbub Ali, state minister for civil aviation, said the ministry will not tolerate any irregularities in Biman's pilot recruitment process.

He also said they formed a committee to investigate the alleged irregularities in the recent

recruitments.

"The minister has asked Biman to provide necessary information and reports as part of the investigation," he told reporters recently.

Zahid Hossain, CEO and managing director of Biman, told the media that they already formed an internal probe committee in this regard.

BAPA DEMANDS INVESTIGATION
In its letter to the Biman authorities yesterday, BAPA said, "We have at different times pointed out that the way pilots are being recruited on contract is beyond regulation."

It further said, "The recruitment could have been done within the legal and ethical framework, which would have been suited the airline and its pilots. But the way it was done has seriously tarnished the image of the national flag carrier and the pilot community. We, the pilot community, are not ready to take any responsibility for the misdeeds of any individual."

Pandya helps India

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In the last few overs had him limping as India took control with the right-left batting pair of Pandya and Jadeja.

Pakistan kept chipping away with wickets as Naseem bowled Suryakumar Yadav for 18 and Mohammad Nawaz rattled the stumps of Jadeja in the final over.

Virat Kohli scored 35 before falling to Nawaz's left arm spin that also claimed skipper Rohit Sharma for 12.

Naseem struck early with the wicket of KL Rahul for nought as the opener dragged an express delivery on to his stumps.

Earlier Kumar set the tone for India's dominance as he dismissed skipper Babar Azam for 10 in the second over and returned figures of 4-26.

Pandya rattled Pakistan's middle-order with his three wickets including the dangerous wicketkeeper batsman Mohammad Rizwan who had hit 43 off 42 balls.

Shahnawaz Dahani smashed two sixes in his six-ball 16 before being bowled by left-arm medium-pace bowler Arshdeep Singh, who took two wickets as Pakistan's innings folded in 19.5 overs.

Russia destroys

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forces struck residential buildings in the region's main city of Zaporizhzhia, about a two-hour drive from the plant, and the town of Orlikiv further east.

On Saturday, Starukh told Ukrainian television residents were being taught how to use iodine in case of a radiation leak.

Ukraine's military reported shelling of nine more towns in the area on the opposite side of the Dnipro river from the plant in its daily report, while the RIA agency quoted the Russian defence ministry as saying its air force struck a Motor Sich MSICH.UAX plant in the region where helicopters were repaired.

45 BNP men hurt in clash with cops

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rubber bullets while eight others were injured in an attack by AL and BCL men.

Saheb Ali Pathan, additional superintendent of police in Narsingdi, said the BNP was requested not to bring out a procession on the road as the AL had announced a programme in the same area.

Later, AL men joined police and attacked BNP men at different points, witnesses said.

ASP Pathan said police were forced to disperse them by firing rubber bullets as the BNP men kept throwing bricks.

At least 10 police personnel were injured, he said, adding that legal action would be taken in this regard.

Denying the allegations, Priyashish Roy, general secretary of the upazila AL, said that at the time of the incident, the local AL leaders and activists were busy with the party's own programme.

In Jashore, the house of Anindya Islam Amit, acting organising secretary of Khulna division BNP, was attacked

yesterday afternoon after his car was vandalised.

The district BNP office was also vandalised.

On Saturday, the homes of the top four district BNP leaders were attacked. Tajul Islam, officer-in-charge of Kotwali Police Station, said action would be taken if someone files a complaint.

In Tangail's Kalihati, BNP men claimed they were attacked by Chhatra League activists. At least 10 people were injured and 17 motorcycles, six pickup vans and four buses were vandalised, they said.

Witnesses said when a rally by the upazila BNP was going on, BCL men arrived with sticks and assaulted the BNP activists.

Later, the police reached the spot and brought the situation under control, said Azizur Rahman, OC of Kalihati Police Station.

Meanwhile in Noakhali, police filed a case against 494 BNP men, naming 94, including central Joint Secretary General AMM Mahbub Uddin Khokon,

on charges of assaulting police during the BNP-Awami League clash in Sonaimuri on Saturday.

Two BNP activists were arrested, said Haroon-Or-Rashid, OC of Sonaimuri Police Station.

In Magura, Saurav Mollah, general secretary of Magura Adarsha College Chhatra League, filed a case with Magura Sadar Police Station against 436 BNP men on charges of vandalism and assault in connection with Saturday's clash. Of the accused, only 36 are named.

Police have so far arrested six BNP men, said Mostafizur Rahman, OC of Magura Police Station.

Meanwhile, local administrations of Cox's Bazar's Pekua and Rangamati's Kaptai upazilas yesterday imposed Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, which restricts freedom of assembly, to avert any toward situation after local units of the BNP and AL called programmes at the same place on the same day.

(Our correspondents in Narsingdi, Tangail and Noakhali contributed to this report.)

After 6 years, it now needs a fresh start

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a new investor for the project," BR's Director General Dhirendra Nath Mazumder told The Daily Star last night.

BR has to find out a new financier -- be it the government or foreign lender -- for the Tk 927.52 crore project, six years after the project was taken up, and the revised deadline of the project was set at June 2024.

It means, the authorities will have to start this already-delayed project almost afresh, which includes an invitation for bidding.

Asked about the reason behind this decision, a BR official said years have gone by but still the loan contract could not be signed, making both the contractor and their financier apparently lose interest.

"Besides, the Chinese contractor and their financier even didn't provide the necessary documents sought by the ERD [Economic Relations Division]. So in line with ERD's recommendation, the government committee changed

its position on the hard loan."

The development came after two other major railway expansion projects fell into uncertainty.

The Chinese government early last year informed Bangladesh that it would not fund the Joydebpur-Ishwardi project for a "lack of in-depth preliminary work and insufficient feasibility study".

Besides, the Chinese contractor for Akhaura-Sylhet rail line expansion project declined to work after downward revision of project cost.

According to a recent report, the BR owns a total of 1,671 carriages and 47 percent of them have crossed economic life, causing a rise in maintenance costs and safety risks.

In October 2016, the Executive Committee of National Economic Council (ECNEC) approved the project to procure 200 metre-gauge passengers' carriages to improve BR's capacity.

Out of the total project cost of Tk 927.52 crore, the government was

Man sentenced to death over murder

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A Pabna court yesterday sentenced a man to death for killing a woman after failing to rape her on November 1, 2017.

Convict Tutul Pramanik was sent to jail after Judge Mizanur Rahman of the Woman and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal in Tangail delivered the verdict.

Tutul first tried to rape his neighbour Aleya Khatun. Failed, he strangled her to death and hid the body into a paddy field.

The victim's daughter filed a case with Santhia Police Station.

On January 31, 2018, police submitted charge sheet accusing Tutul.

Schoolboy found dead in Tangail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Police recovered the decomposed body of a schoolboy in Tangail's Gopalpur upazila yesterday.

Mohammad Hridoy, 13, grade-VI student of Shimla Public High School at Hadira union, went missing on August 22.

As he did not return, his father filed a general diary with Gopalpur Police Station on August 24.

Yesterday, villagers saw a body at a waterbody and informed the police. Later, the victim's family identified the body.

The body was sent to Tangail General Hospital morgue for autopsy, said Mohammad Mosharaf Hossain, officer-in-charge of Gopalpur Police Station.

Bangladesh logs 217 more Covid cases

UNB, DHAKA

Bangladesh reported zero death from Covid-19 and 217 new fresh infections from the virus in the 24 hours till Sunday morning.

While the country's total fatalities remained unchanged at 29,323, the new number took its caseload to 2,011,317, according to the Directorate General of Health Services.

The daily case test positivity rate rose to 4.62 percent from Saturday's 4.26 percent as 4,695 samples were tested during the period.

The mortality rate remained unchanged at 1.46 percent and the recovery rate rose to 97.23 percent from Saturday's 97.22 percent.

18 killed in western DR Congo clashes: govt

AFP, Kinshasa

Eighteen people were killed in clashes between two communities in western Democratic Republic of Congo earlier this month, according to a government report seen by AFP yesterday.

Fighting broke out between the Yaka and Teke people following a dispute over taxes and land, people in Mai-Ndombe province told AFP.

Members of the Teke community consider themselves the original inhabitants of villages spread over 200 kilometres (124 miles) along the Congo River.