

DEFAMATION CASE Gujarat HC refuses to grant interim relief to Rahul

NDTV ONLINE

In another setback for Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, the Gujarat High Court yesterday refused to grant an interim stay on his conviction in a criminal defamation case over his "Modi surname" remark in which he was sentenced to two years in jail by a Surat court. The court will give an order on his petition post summer vacation.

The former Congress president had sought an interim stay of the conviction till the High Court pronounced the order on his petition.

Abhishek Manu Singhvi, the lawyer for Rahul, cited "extreme urgency" to request from the court for an interim or a final order after arguments from both sides in the matter concluded during the day. However, the court of Justice Hemant Prachchhak said no interim protection can be granted at this stage.

Justice Prachchhak said he will pass a final order only after going through the records and proceedings, and posted the matter for verdict after reopening of the High Court post-summer vacation, which will be from May 8 to June 3.

Rahul, who represented Wayanad parliament constituency in Kerala,

Justice Prachchhak said he will pass a final order only after going through the records and proceedings, and posted the matter for verdict after reopening of the High Court post-summer vacation, which will be from May 8 to June 3.

was sentenced to two years in jail after he was convicted on March 23 under sections 499 and 500 of the Indian Penal Code for criminal defamation in the case filed by BJP MLA Purnesh Modi.

The BJP MLA's case against Rahul was over his "how come all thieves have Modi as the common surname?" remark made during an election rally at Kolar in Karnataka on April 13, 2019.

The two-year jail term resulted in him being disqualified as a Member of Parliament. The law states that if a member is convicted of any offence for two or more years, his or her seat will be declared vacant. One can only stay in the parliament if the conviction is suspended.

The senior Congress leader vacated his official residence, which he had since 2005, last month after losing his MP status.



"Let's meet for coffee" is the casual invite for friends now. It got me thinking — when did we become a nation of coffee drinkers? I am a Dhakaite and I love gorom cha; that hot cup of tea to kickstart my lazy mornings. I need "cha" during my mid-morning meetings, during my busy afternoons, and I need my tea at a friend's gathering over a hot political debate.



Bring back THE LOVE OF 'CHA'

RBR

From sipping orange pekoe in posh cafes to slurping hot tea from the saucer in front of the tong er dokan, cha in any form is Dhaka to me. Having said this, I found that the pronouncement was no longer holding true for most of my fellow Dhakaite, because tea was no longer their thing.

We are now a coffee-drinking metropolis where our mundane cha seemingly has no place. Coffee for Dhaka is such a new fad and it seems to have taken over our tea-drinking palate.

All cafes around the city, especially near Gulshan, Banani, Uttara, or Baridhara carry a fancy coffee menu featuring all sorts of lattes, espressos, mocha, americanos, and cappuccinos with malai cha, dudh cha, or masala cha having no place in these places.

While there are some exclusive tea bars in town, if you ask me, finding a decent cup of tea in these establishments is an unlikely matter

because you will be served a light tea bag in a beautiful tea cup with kettles and all, or the frothy malai cha will be accompanied by spring rolls — an odd item with tea. In fact, the menu in these tea bars is unnecessarily "posh"; you will find pasta, quiche, and potato wedges but not puris or piyajus.

Be it after a movie or office hours, or even on the weekends, if you want to



hang out with friends over a steaming cup of malai cha or just black tea, your café options in Dhaka are plenty. But they hardly carry any tea on their menu, except maybe an earl grey or a green tea, that too in a tea bag!

We are Bangalees at heart no matter how much we might pretend otherwise and we will always crave a daal puri with dudh cha and the only place to find them is on the streets. Upmarket cafes will not carry such snack menu items but if your heart craves it, you can always grab a cup by any roadside.

Farmer trampled by elephant

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A farmer was killed by elephants in Sherpur's Sreebordi upazila on Monday evening.

The victim is Abdul Hamid, 50, of Hatibor Tilapara village, said police.

A herd of elephants entered into a paddy field on Monday evening. On information, a group of farmers rushed to the spot to shoo them away, said Biplob Kumar Biswas, officer-in-charge of Sreebordi Police Station.

At one point, the elephants attacked the farmers and trampled on Hamid. Locals rushed him to Sherpur General Hospital where doctors declared him dead, he added.

An unnatural death case was lodged with the police station in this connection.

Six BNP leaders sent to jail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Six leaders of the BNP and its associate organisations were sent to jail in Sirajganj yesterday on charges of vandalism and arson attacks.

The accused are Saidur Rahman Bacchu, secretary of Sirajganj district unit BNP, Muraduzzaman Murad, secretary of Sirajganj district unit Jubo Dal, Golam Kibria Borat, president of Sirajganj Sadar unit Jubo Dal, Yeard Ahmed, secretary of Kalia Haripur union unit Chhatra Dal, and Sohel Rana and Mohammad Noman, leaders of the union Jubo Dal.

All of them were accused of vandalism and arson attacks during a clash at Kalia Haripur union, said Humayun Kabir, officer-in-charge of Sirajganj Sadar Police Station.

Pro BNP lawyer Nazmul Islam said the accused appeared before the Sirajganj district and session judge court.

Body found in Tangail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Police recovered the body of a youth in Tangail's Madhupur upazila yesterday.

The dead is Shamsheer Miah, 23, of the upazila's Harindhara village, said police.

Locals found the body and informed police about it. On information, they law enforcers recovered the body and sent it to Tangail General Hospital morgue for autopsy, said Mohammad Mazharul Amin, officer-in-charge of Madhupur Police Station.

Marks of fatal injuries were found on the body, he said.

Police suspect that the youth was killed at night and his body was dumped in an isolated place in the dark, he added.

Elderly man found dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

The throat-slit body of an elderly man was found in Dinajpur's Birampur upazila yesterday.

Dead Wahed Munshi, 80, of Bhabanipur village, was a quack by profession, said police.

The body was recovered in a grass field and sent to M Abdur Rahim Medical College Hospital for autopsy, said Ershad Ali, sub-inspector of Birampur Police Station.

Police suspect that he was killed over previous enmity or disputes, he added.

WB to give \$2.75b over next 5 years

FROM PAGE 1

Of the sum, \$753.45 million will be given by way of the \$1.05 billion Accelerating Transport and Trade Connectivity in Eastern South Asia (ACCESS) Programme Phase I project.

The project, which was approved by the WB board on June 28 last year, will help improve regional trade in Bangladesh and Nepal by reducing trade and transport costs and transit time along the regional corridors.

It will upgrade the 43-kilometre two-lane Sylhet-Charakai-Sheola road to a climate-resilient four-lane road, connecting the Sheola land port with the Dhaka-Sylhet highway. This will cut down travel time by 30 percent.

The project will support digital systems, infrastructure, and more streamlined processes at Benapole, Bhomra and Burimari land ports, the three largest land ports in Bangladesh handling approximately 80 percent of land-based trade.

It will also support the modernisation of the Chattogram customs house which handles 90 percent of all import/export declarations in Bangladesh.

The implementing agencies are the National Board of Revenue, the Roads

and Highways Department and the Bangladesh Land Port Authority.

Another \$500 million will come through the Resilient Infrastructure for Adaptation and Vulnerability Reduction (RIVER) project, the first major investment project to support the Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100.

The project, which was approved by the WB board on July 15 last year, will help improve disaster preparedness against inland flooding in 14 flood-prone districts benefiting over 1.25 million people.

The Local Government Engineering Department of the Local Government Division is the implementing agency.

The WB will give \$250 million towards the \$483.7 million Bangladesh Environmental Sustainability and Transformation (BEST) project.

The project, which was approved by the WB board on December 1 last year, will help the country strengthen environmental management and promote private sector participation in green investment.

It will support the Department of Environment to strengthen

its technical and administrative capacity, help construct four vehicle inspection centres and an e-waste management facility.

The Bangladesh Road Transport Authority, the Bangladesh Bank and the Bangladesh High-Tech Park Authority are also part of the project.

Both the ACCESS and RIVER projects are expected to wrap up in June 2028 and BEST in December 2028.

The \$500 million First Green and Climate Resilient Development Credit will help the country's transition to green and climate-resilient development.

The project, which was approved on April 27, will (i) enhance public planning, financing and delivery of green and climate-resilient interventions; and (ii) promote key sector reforms for greener and more efficient production and services.

The Finance Division is the main implementing agency for the programme. The amount, which will come as budget support will be released by June 30, 2024 subject to compliance with certain prior conditions, said a press release from

the ERD.

The \$250 million Sustainable Microenterprise and Resilient Transformation (SMART) project will help transform the micro enterprise sector into a more dynamic, less-polluting, resource efficient and climate-resilient growth sector.

The project, which was also approved on April 27, is scheduled for completion by December 31, 2028 by Palli Karma Sahayak Foundation.

At the same board meeting on April 27, the WB approved \$543 million for the Programme on Agricultural and Rural Transformation for Nutrition, Entrepreneurship, and Resilience (PARTNER) project.

The \$4.57 billion project will help promote diversification, food safety, entrepreneurship and climate resilience in the agri-food systems once it wraps up on December 31, 2028.

The loan agreement for the project is yet to be signed.

Sharifa Khan, secretary of the Economic Relations Division, and Abdoulaye Seck, the WB's country director, signed the loan agreements for all six projects save for PARTNER.

BNP weighing options

FROM PAGE 1

Daily Star yesterday.

Sources said BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman will hold a meeting with its organising secretaries tomorrow.

The party already held a series of meetings with the like-minded political parties and took their views.

A BNP standing committee member, seeking anonymity, said the committee held a meeting on Monday night where they discussed the party's next course of action.

Most of the standing committee members favoured the road marches, but could not reach a consensus on whether the programme will be Dhaka-centric or from Dhaka to divisional headquarters.

Party sources said due to the ongoing SSC examination, the announcement of the programmes may take some time as the party does not want to go for any major programme during the exams.

Prefering anonymity, a senior BNP leader said, "They can hold fresh programmes from the third week of this month as soon as the exams are over."

Some senior leaders said the party had held various types of programmes, including human chains, hunger strikes and rallies, but those failed to get momentum. They said the divisional rallies saw a huge number of people.

The BNP leader said the top party leadership is mentally prepared for waging the final phase of the movement and wants to create a "solid foundation"

for the movement before Eid-ul-Azha. "We don't want to prolong the movement unnecessarily which may lose the momentum."

Party sources said the joint declaration of simultaneous movement has been finalised after discussions with the like-minded political parties.

The declaration will include the demands of the other parties, keeping intact the 10-point demand of the BNP.

Source added that apart from this, there will be a joint outline that will mention what the parties will do if they assume power in future.

The BNP already announced a 27-point outline and the proposals of other parties are also being included.

Leaders of the liaison committee of the like-minded political parties said a joint announcement will be made soon.

"It will be finalised within a day or two," said a leader.

Sources said there were some differences of opinions about the joint declaration between the BNP and Gonotontro Moncho, an alliance of seven political parties. To solve it, the two sides held a meeting at the BNP chairperson's Gulshan office on Tuesday, the sources added.

After the meeting, BNP Standing Committee member Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury told journalists that they discussed the joint declaration and it would be announced soon.

Help us graduate from LDC: Hasina to WB

FROM PAGE 1

World Bank Group President David Malpass said that they will support Bangladesh as it navigates a challenging global environment on its way to reaching upper-middle-income status by 2031.

"I am confident that with the right set of policies and timely action, Bangladesh can achieve its growth aspirations," he said.

Bangladesh's remarkable journey was made possible by the indomitable energy and resilience of its people and a national will to build a prosperous nation, the WB president said.

"We are proud of our partnership and look forward to opening the next chapter together with you," he said, addressing PM Hasina.

Malpass also tweeted: "Many countries can learn from Bangladesh's innovative approaches to reducing poverty, empowering women, and adapting to climate change."

Hasina is now in Washington DC to celebrate 50 years of Bangladesh-World Bank partnership, reports UNB.

She also had a meeting with the WB executive board where she delivered an introductory speech.

After her speech, a number WB board members asked her about different issues relating to Bangladesh's development journey, said a World Bank official present in the meeting.

Also on Monday, a deal of \$2.25 billion was signed between Bangladesh and the WB to implement five projects. Addressing in the plenary session,

the Bangladesh premier put forward five specific suggestions before the WB for its consideration.

She said Bangladesh will continue to invest in infrastructure and logistics for realising its vision to become a high-income economy by 2041 and added that she expected the World Bank support.

The PM said Bangladesh has aligned UN SDGs with its national aspiration to become an upper middle-income country by 2031.

"There is an expectation that the World Bank and other development partners would deliver increased, concessional and innovative financing for SDG implementation," she added.

Hasina mentioned that the multiple ongoing global crises, caused by the

pandemic, armed conflicts and climate emergency, have put most developing economies under serious stress.

Despite the crises, some of the development partners have chosen to increase their lending costs and interest rates, which detract from their core mandate, she said.

"I call upon the World Bank and other development partners to find viable alternatives so that our economies can cope better with the emerging challenges."

She said Bangladesh hopes that the WB's enhanced engagement in climate action would help address the wide gaps in financing under the Paris Agreement.

"We would stress the importance of equal distribution of financing

between climate mitigation and adaptation," the PM said, adding that Bangladesh has emerged as a global role model in disaster management and preparedness.

Describing Bangladesh as a living laboratory of climate adaptation, Hasina invited the WB and other development partners to join the country in implementing the projects under Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100.

About the Rohingya issue, the PM said Bangladesh has been working with the UN and other international agencies to secure safe, dignified and voluntary repatriation of Rohingyas to Myanmar, but not a single person has returned till date.

"The situation is getting increasingly difficult for us, with growing security

implications for the wider region. I thank the World Bank for joining us in our humanitarian endeavor and for the \$590 million grant for the Rohingya and the communities impacted," she said.

Hasina said Bangladesh has offered shelter to the forcibly displaced Rohingya from Myanmar over the last four decades and their number has reached 1.2 million.

PM's ICT Affairs Adviser Sajeeb Ahmed Wazed, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen, Planning Minister MA Mannan, and PM's Private Industry and Investment Adviser Salman Fazlur Rahman, among others, were present.

Former WB chief economist Kausik Basu also spoke at the programme.

Hasina arrived in Washington DC on April 28.