

No assembly on the court premises

SC asks lawyers to strictly follow 2005 HC directives

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court yesterday asked lawyers to strictly follow the 2005 High Court directive that prohibited them from assembling or taking out processions on any court premises across the country.

As per the order, no assembly, gathering, procession, distribution of leaflets and use of microphone can take place on court premises, Attorney General AM Amin Uddin told reporters at his office on the SC premises.

Citing the HC directives issued in 2005, he said the violation would be deemed a contempt of court and the respondents to contempt of court proceedings will refrain from all court activities until the matter is settled.

Earlier in the day, a four-member bench of the Appellate Division led by Chief Justice Hasan Foez Siddique passed the order for strictly following the HC directives when SC lawyer Nahid Sultana Juthi appealed to the apex court to hear a contempt of court petition against seven pro-BNP lawyers.

The other judges are Justice Obaidul Hassan, Justice Borhanuddin and Justice Md Ashfaqu Islam.

The Appellate Division fixed October 19 for hearing the petition.

On Tuesday, SC lawyer Md Nazmul Huda filed the petition against seven pro-BNP lawyers for making “slandorous, derogatory

SEE PAGE 6 COL 6

Madrasa student feared to have fallen into drain

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A 10-year-old boy has been missing since Tuesday afternoon when he, according to firefighters, might have fallen into a drain from the roof of a madrasa in Chattogram.

The boy, named Muhammad Alif, is a resident student at Azizia Tadbirul Quran Madrasa on Syed Shah Road, said Abdur Rahim, officer-in-charge of Bakalia Police Station.

In security camera footage, the boy is seen going to the rooftop of the seven-storey building around 2:30pm on Tuesday, he said, adding that he had not been seen since then.

Divers from the fire service started looking for him in the drain yesterday, officials said.

Alif's uncle Jainal Abedin said his nephew was admitted to the madrasa a year ago.

No one from the madrasa could be contacted.



Green coconuts being sold at a wholesale market in the capital's Jatrabari for Tk 65-70 yesterday. In retail, however, they sell for as high as Tk 130-180 each. Even though they are abundant throughout the country, coconuts are getting expensive due to rising demand. Dengue patients are often prescribed coconut water to stay hydrated.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

SEIZURE OF \$S1B ASSETS IN S'PORE New charges slapped on eight of 10 accused

Again remanded to custody

REUTERS, Singapore

Ten foreigners accused of involvement in a major money laundering operation in Singapore were again remanded to custody yesterday, with new charges slapped on eight, as the city-state widens the net in one of its highest-profile crime cases.

Authorities seized assets of more than S\$1 billion (\$739.64 million) in simultaneous raids two weeks ago, from gold bars, designer handbags and fistfuls of jewellery to scores of properties and luxury cars, in a haul that shocked the wealthy nation known for low crime rates. In a raid on August 15, 10 foreigners aged between 31 and 44 were arrested, from Cyprus, Cambodia, Dominica, China, Turkey and Vanuatu.

Police have tied the seizures to overseas organised crime, including scams, remote gambling in the Philippines and unlicensed moneylending in China.

All ten who appeared in court via

video link yesterday were denied bail and remanded until September 6, with eight facing fresh charges.

These included having millions in bank accounts and safe deposit boxes, cryptocurrencies and cars as “benefits from criminal conduct”.

Their lawyers sought bail but gave no indication of how the suspects would answer the money laundering accusations.

Prosecutors said the suspects were a flight risk if given bail, as they had overseas connections and assets, and could also collude to contaminate evidence.

In all, 105 properties, bank accounts with S\$110 million, 50 vehicles, S\$23 million in cash, hundreds of luxury handbags and watches, and jewellery and two gold bars were seized in the August 15 raids at nine locations.

Eight more suspects are wanted and 12 are assisting in investigations, police have said.

LEAKED DOCS Imran Khan's jail custody extended for 14 days

REUTERS, Islamabad

A Pakistani court yesterday extended the jail custody of former prime minister Imran Khan for 14 days to investigate him on charges of leaking state secrets, his lawyer said, a day after another court suspended his prison sentence for graft.

The special court held the proceedings at Attock Jail, where Khan began the three-year prison term on August 5 after being found guilty of unlawfully selling state gifts.

A high court suspended that sentence on Tuesday, ordering Khan to be released on bail, but he was barred from leaving as he was still under remand in the official secrets case.

Speaking to journalists outside the jail after judge extended Khan's remand until September 13, Khan's lawyer Naem Panjutha said an application for bail had been submitted and would be heard on September 2.

“We have also filed a plea for an open court trial,” Panjutha said, anticipating that the prosecution could seek a closed door trial, without media of public present.



Schoolboy dies falling off swing

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

An eight-year-old boy died yesterday after falling from a swing while playing on his school ground in Lalmonirhat's Aditmari upazila.

Shahadat Hossain, son of Mizanur Rahman of Kisamat-Chandrapur village, was a class two student at Chandrapur Government Primary School.

Headmaster Abu Sayeed Mostafa Kamal said a half-yearly examination was going on at the school. As part of the exam, all class two students took part in an oral test yesterday. After completing the exam, many students, including Shahadat, were playing on the school ground.

At one stage, Shahadat fell off the swing and sustained severe head injuries.

He was rushed to Aditmari Upazila Health Complex from where he was referred to Rangpur Medical College Hospital as his condition worsened. He died on his way to the hospital, the teacher said.

The incident happened when the teachers were busy evaluating the answer scripts of examinations, added the headmaster.

Locals alleged that swings at the school ground are old and risky.

Harekrishna Roy, Aditmari upazila acting primary education officer, said they would remove all old gaming equipment soon.

BGB members seize 10 gold bars

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chapainawabganj

BGB members recovered 10 gold bars, weighing over 1kg, from Bakher Ali village of Chapainawabganj Sadar upazila yesterday morning.

Lt Col Nahid Hossain, commanding officer of 53 BGB Battalion in Chapainawabganj, said acting on a tip-off, a BGB team went to the village around 7:30am. Sensing the presence of BGB members, a man fled leaving a bag.

Later, the BGB members found the gold bars in the bag.

Missing man found dead in Jamalpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

Police recovered the body of a man from a ditch of Jamalpur's Madarganj upazila yesterday, three days after he went missing.

Deceased Abdul Karim, 33, of Koidala village, was a salesman.

Quoting locals, Mahbubul Haque, officer-in-charge of Madarganj Police Station, said Karim went out of his house on Monday morning but did not return home.

Locals found his body in the ditch in Adervita village around 2:30pm yesterday and informed police.

The body was sent to Jamalpur General Hospital morgue for an autopsy, said the OC, adding that the body had no injury marks.

‘Handcuffs, blindfold ... it felt like a grave’

FROM PAGE 1

he said, adding that there were three cars.

“I was handcuffed and my head covered with a monkey cap. They beat me up so much that I started bleeding from the nose and the mouth. I was then taken to a room where all four walls had hooks. One of my hands was cuffed to a hook and I was then blindfolded,” he said.

He was kept in that room for three days before being taken to Rajarbagh Police Lines Hospital for treatment. “I don't know where I had been kept,” said the student at the event held at the Institution of Diploma Engineers, Bangladesh.

Moinuddin Mona was picked up, forcibly disappeared for three days, and kneecapped. He now walks with crutches.

He said he was detained by police from his home in Paschim Latifpur of Laxmipur on December 21 last year. He said he was tortured in the Chandraganj Police Station in the district.

“I was blindfolded for three days and they would put me in a car at night, take me around and threaten me with ‘crossfire,’” he said.

He alleged that on the third day around 2:30am, they shot him.

“One person stood on my chest while another held my leg and another slammed the gun into my knee and pulled the trigger,” he described.

He was taken to a hospital in the morning and doctors amputated the leg to save his life.

According to the law, a person picked up by law enforcers has to be handed over to the court within 24 hours.

High Court directives say that the family has to be notified within three hours of detention, in the case of warrantless arrests. Any violation of this amounts to enforced disappearance.

Moinuddin, in that state, was charged in 13 cases and sent to jail.

“I cannot describe the unimaginable pain of imprisonment with a freshly amputated leg,” he said.

The former leader of local Swetchhasebak Dal, the pro-BNP voluntary body, now depends on alms for a living.

Yakub Ali, a businessman from Khilgaon, lamented the death of his son, who was picked up, forcibly disappeared, and then allegedly shot dead.

Nuruzzaman Jonny, general secretary of the Khilgaon unit of Jatityatabadi Chhatra Dal, pro-BNP student body, was killed in a so-called shootout with detectives in the capital on January 20, 2015.

He was picked up the day before, alleged the father. “They shot my son 18 times in the chest. I ran my hands across his body and felt each of the bullet holes. Was it necessary to hurt him so badly? Would one shot not have been enough?” cried the man.

Shafiqul Islam Kajol, who had been forcibly disappeared for 53 days in 2020, said, “Shall we have to continue commemorating this day?”

Humam Quader Chowdhury, who was picked up in 2016 and forcibly disappeared for seven months, spoke of his experience.

“I was kept in solitary ... and I could not talk to anyone for weeks on end. It was such that I started looking forward to the interrogations that I was routinely taken to because it meant I had someone to talk to,” said Humam.

Humam is the son of executed war criminal Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury.

Prof CR Abrar, an academic, spoke about his conversation with the father of a victim of enforced disappearance who later turned up dead.

“The father said that when the police were coming for him [his son], he asked him not to run. He told him that he was not a criminal and that he would find him in court. How did that father feel when the son was killed?”

Human Rights Watch issued a statement saying that Bangladesh authorities should accept the UN's offer to support an independent commission of enquiry into the enforced disappearances.

The government has refused

to take up the UN offer to help establish a specialised mechanism to investigate allegations of enforced disappearances, the statement said.

“Bangladesh authorities are fooling nobody by continuing to deny the reality of enforced disappearances, and instead are prolonging the suffering of families who are desperate to know the whereabouts of their loved ones,” said Julia Bleckner, senior Asia researcher at Human Rights Watch.

“The government should show genuine commitment to addressing abuses....,” she said.

Some global

FROM PAGE 1

Hasina, also president of the ruling Awami League, came down heavily on these countries for their interference with the country's upcoming general election.

Some countries are always searching for democracy in our country but the fact of the matter is that Awami League leaders and activists shed their blood for establishing democracy and the people's voting rights in the country.

The PM said people of this country laid down their lives to gain independence under the leadership of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

“This sacrifice and blood must not go in vain, we will not allow that,” she said.

Talking about BNP's demand for democracy, Hasina said she is surprised to hear the party talk about democracy.

She said military dictators Ziaur Rahman and Ershad initiated the culture of vote-rigging in the country. They also grabbed state power by imposing martial law, she added.

“At that time, we struggled and fought to establish democracy,” she said.

At the outset of the meeting, one minute silence was observed to show respect to the martyrs of the August 15, 1975 carnage and the August 21, 2004 grenade attack.

It's DSA, only renamed

FROM PAGE 1

its spirit and wording,” said TIB Executive Director Ittekkharuzzaman.

He expressed concern that the new law might be repressive.

“The proposed Cyber Security Act will be identified as a black law like the Digital Security Act if the draft law is passed unchanged.”

The hint that a person will be in trouble if he shares his views freely on social media platforms is also there in the draft law, he added.

TIB recommended the draft CSA be thoroughly reviewed to enact a “genuine” cyber security law that would truly serve the purpose of ensuring the security of cyber infrastructure, computer and internet systems, digital platforms and other components of the cyber system.

A total of 7,001 cases had been filed under the DSA across the country as of January 31 since the law came into force in 2018.

Opposition politicians, journalists, businesspeople, students, and workers of firms were the majority of the accused in DSA cases, and people mostly from the ruling party affiliates prosecuted journalists, said TIB.

In June last year, the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) issued a technical note to the Bangladesh government recommending revisions to the DSA due to its vague and overly-broad rules that criminalises various legitimate forms of

expression and impose harsh penalties, including life imprisonment for repeat offenders.

It also said the law has provisions that do not allow bail and leaves scope for pre-trial detention.

The UN special rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression also called for repealing the DSA, highlighting concerns about arbitrary detention, torture, custodial death of journalists, and the chilling impact on journalism.

Amid growing demand from home and abroad, the cabinet on August 7 decided to replace the DSA with the proposed CSA.

Two days later, the CSA draft was published on the website of the ICT department, seeking views from stakeholders within August 22.

However, the cabinet on August 28 approved the draft CSA without consulting any stakeholders.

According to the TIB, the formulation of the draft is also controversial.

Ittekkharuzzaman said the government had initiated a good practice of involving stakeholders in the formulation of important laws, but this practice has not been followed so far in the case of CSA.

“I think there is still time for consultation with stakeholders,” he said.

The graft watchdog said the draft law is essentially a renamed version of

the DSA, with only a few changes in the form of reduced punishments.

TIB thanked the government for the changes, but expressed concern that the draft law puts people's fundamental rights at risk.

It urged the government to include all stakeholders, including independent legal and technical experts, sector specialists with knowledge and expertise on international best practices, human rights organisations, journalists and other professionals, in the process of “overhauling the draft”.

Ittekkharuzzaman said remedies can be found under the existing laws for defamation and other crimes committed in cyberspace.

“We don't think that there is any logic to prosecute people for such offences under a different law,” he added.

TIB said covering cybersecurity and cybercrimes in a single law is a problematic approach.

The naming of the law – Cyber Security Act – indicates that it would focus on safeguarding digital infrastructure and systems from cyber threats. However, the inclusion of cybercrimes in the same law can create a misleading and problematic legal framework, it observed.

Law Minister Anisul Huq on Tuesday said that stakeholders will be called in for discussion on the draft CSA in the parliamentary standing committee meeting.

investigation under DSA.

The rights groups are Amnesty International, Article 19 South Asia, Asian Human Rights Commission, Bangladesh Journalists in International Media, Capital Punishment Justice Project, CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation, Coalition for Women in Journalism, Committee to Protect Journalists, Forum for Freedom of Expression, Free Press Unlimited, IFEX, International Federation for Human Rights, International Federation of Journalists, International Women's Media Foundation, PEN America, PEN Bangladesh, PEN International, Reporters Without Borders, and Robert F Kennedy Human Rights.