

## HC to hear Fakhru’s bail petition December 7

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court has set December 7 for the bail hearing of BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir in a case filed over the vandalism of the chief justice’s residence on October 28.

The HC bench of justices Md Salim and Shahed Nuruddin set the date yesterday after Fakhru’s lawyer Zainul Abedin asked for the hearing.

Fakhru filed the petition with the HC on Sunday through his lawyers after a Dhaka court on November 22 denied him bail.

His lawyer, Sagor Hossain Leon, said, “Fakhru was not involved in the vandalism of the chief justice’s residence in any manner. He is an elderly person and he has been suffering from various ailments, including heart problems.”

Fakhru landed in jail on October 29 in connection with the case that was filed with Ramna Police Station.



Top leaders of the 14-party alliance congratulated Awami League President and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on receiving the Asia Climate Mobility Champion Leader Award at her official residence Gano Bhaban yesterday.

PHOTO: PTD

## NATIONAL POLLS 118 aspirants defaulted on loans: BB

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 118 aspirant MPs who have filed nomination papers out of the total 2,713 for the January 7 national election have been identified as loan defaulters, said Bangladesh Bank officials.

The CIB reports of the 118 were not clean before the submission of their nomination papers, which is why their nomination papers may be cancelled, said a senior official of the central bank’s Credit Information Bureau.

Article-12 of the Representation of the People Order-1972 stipulates that a person shall be disqualified from contesting an election if they fail to repay their defaulted loans seven days before the submission of nomination papers.

A director of a company or a partner of a firm will be disqualified if they fail to clear their defaulted loans a day before the submission of nomination papers, it adds.

The Election Commission has already cancelled the nomination

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## Restore all rivers, canals in and around the capital

PM directs the authorities concerned

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday directed the authorities concerned to restore all the rivers and canals in and around the capital as soon as possible.

She gave the directive at a meeting in the cabinet room of her office. The meeting was organised to make a presentation on the survey report on preventing pollution and taking up a project to protect the water bodies in light of the master plan adopted in this regard.

Prime Minister’s Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim briefed reporters after the meeting.

Directing the authorities to stop river pollution, Hasina said, “We have to save our rivers if we want to save Bangladesh.”

She mentioned that the rivers are for Bangladesh, just like body’s veins for blood circulation. “Survival of Bangladesh also depends on rivers.”

The meeting identified seven spots for restoration of navigability of the rivers and canals in and around Dhaka. These are Gazipur, Garanchatbari, Savar, Purbachal, Kalyanpur, Narayanganj, and Kamrangirchar.

The PM asked the authorities to take



Seven spots have been identified for restoration of navigability of the rivers and canals in and around Dhaka. These are Gazipur, Garanchatbari, Savar, Purbachal, Kalyanpur, Narayanganj and Kamrangirchar.

up integrated projects in these spots on a priority basis, and advised them to implement a “hotspot strategy” across the country in phases.

Referring to the steps taken by her government to stop river pollution, encroachment, and restoration of navigability, Hasina said the government always tried to protect the rivers and restore their navigability.

She said the unplanned low height

bridges have created obstacles to navigation. “...those bridges have been beneficial for the people. But the issue of movement of vessels was not taken into consideration during the construction of those bridges. That’s why the navigation problem cropped up after we started dredging the rivers,” the PM said.

Prime Minister’s Principal Secretary M Tofazzel Hossain Miah presented the report before the meeting.

## Election code breakers go unpunished

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state minister for disaster management; Zunaed Ahmed Palak, state minister for ICT; Zahid Ahsan Russel, state minister for sports; AL lawmaker Mohibbur Rahman from Patuakhali-4; AL lawmaker Shamim Osman from Narayanganj-4; AL nominee for Magura-1 Shakib Al Hasan; and AL nominee for Sunamganj-4 Mohammad Sadiq.

The violations include staging processions during nomination submission; holding rallies after nomination submission; seeking votes in rallies; and using government vehicles for electioneering.

None of these are allowed under election codes, as election aspirants cannot hold election campaigns until after allocation of election symbol, slated for December 18.

Some of the rule violators are repeat offenders.

Natore-2 AL lawmaker Shafiqul Islam Shimul is one of the frontrunners when it comes to election lawbreaking.

Also a vice-president of Natore Awami League, he broke the electoral code at least four times in the past – in 2015, 2016, 2021, 2022 – in union

parishad, municipal and district council elections.

In 2015, when he was served a show-cause notice, he apologised to the EC and promised not to violate the election code again, according to media reports.

But he broke the promise in 2016, 2021 and 2022.

This time, Shimul held a rally and a procession, causing traffic congestion in his constituency on November 28.

The Electoral Enquiry Committee for Natore-2, led by Assistant Judge Sharmin Khatun, issued a show-cause notice, demanding an explanation.

In his response, the lawmaker promised not to repeat the offence, and the enquiry committee on December 1 decided to recommend to the EC to exonerate him, Muzammel Haque, bench assistance of Natore court, said.

Shimul did not respond to our call and text message for comments.

Incumbent AL lawmaker Omor Faruk Chowdhury, who is vying for Rajshahi-1, held a public meeting on a schoolground on November 17, two days after the polls schedule was announced.

The EC on November 22 warned him for violating the election law.

Undeterred, Omor Faruk, also a former state minister, held a rally on December 2 in Tanore municipality area, where he sought votes.

On Sunday, the Electoral Enquiry Committee for Rajshahi-1 served him a show-cause notice, asking him to explain his action by today.

The Rajshahi lawmaker faced allegations of election code violation in the past as well. During the Rajshahi City Corporation election in July 2018, he held a meeting with local influentials to seek votes for a candidate. Earlier, during the union parishad polls, he was served a show-cause notice for breaking the election law, according to media reports.

He did not respond to our calls and text message for comments.

On November 30, Election Commissioner Brig Gen (retd) Ahsan Habib Khan warned against election code violations.

“Stern actions will be taken as per the law if any candidate violates the electoral code of conduct,” he had said.

As of yesterday, the EC did not bring anyone to book.

Former Election Commissioner

Brig Gen (retd) M Sakawat Hossain said the Returning Officer, through executive magistrate and judicial magistrate, should have taken “instant steps” against code violations.

Instead, the EC is now depending on Electoral Enquiry Committees, which are tasked with investigating and making recommendations about such allegations within three days, he said.

“But we are not aware what recommendations they [committees] are giving. We haven’t seen the Election Commission take any step in this regard,” he told The Daily Star yesterday.

People are watching the violations and raising questions about it, he said, adding, “All this has cumulative effects [on the election process].”

EC Additional Secretary Ashok Kumar Debnath said the enquiry committees are supposed to make recommendations to the Election Commission for taking actions.

“But we haven’t received any such recommendations [about punitive actions] from any enquiry committees yet. The commission will take the matter into consideration only after getting the recommendations”, he told The Daily Star yesterday.

said.

The commerce ministry will present the progress made in labour rights at a special meeting of the Trade and Investment Cooperation Forum Agreement (TICFA) and in the meeting of the ILO governing body to be held in March next year, Ghosh said.

The senior secretary said that he plans to hold a meeting with three secretaries, five diplomats, and an ILO official this month to tell them about the progress made.

The US wants trade unions in factories inside export processing zones.

Ghosh assured that Bangladesh’s labour law would be up to standard by 2026. Over the last 10 years, the labour law has been amended three times, he said.

## ‘Independents’ will stay

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discussions would be held between leaders of the allies for a decision on the number of seats AL would share, said the sources.

Hasina formed a committee of her party, comprising AL leaders Amir Hossain Amu, Obaidul Quader, Jahangir Kabir Nanak and AFM Bahauddin Nasim, to sit with the alliance partners for making the decision on seat-sharing.

The AL president on November 26 gave the go-ahead to her party colleagues to run as independents in an effort to make the election competitive and bring more voters to the polling centres.

The party, however, later said any AL leader seeking to run as independent must get the party nod.

Over 400 “independents” from the AL are pitted against their party nominees in 298 seats. This means the AL candidates will be challenged by multiple party colleagues in almost all seats.

Many AL nominees, including incumbent lawmakers, are worried about their victories as they will have to face a tough challenge from party colleagues. Many of them contacted some top leaders to have the nominations of the independents withdrawn.

## Israel bombs areas where

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troops are continuing to operate in the Gaza Strip in parallel to Israeli air force strikes on approximately 200 Hamas targets”.

Dozens of Israeli tanks entered the southern part of the Gaza Strip near Khan Yunis yesterday, witnesses told AFP. Armoured personnel carriers and bulldozers were also seen.

As Israel’s military widened its ground offensive, Palestinian officials said more than 800 people killed since Saturday, reports Al Jazeera online.

At least 15,899 Palestinians, 70 percent of them women and children, have been killed in Israeli strikes on Gaza since October 7, the health

ministry in Gaza said yesterday. As many as 80 percent of Gaza’s 2.3 million people have fled their homes in an Israeli bombing campaign that has reduced much of the crowded coastal strip to a desolate wasteland.

Israeli forces largely captured the northern half of Gaza in November, and since a week-long truce collapsed on Friday they have swiftly pushed deep into the southern half.

“The goals in the northern section have almost been met,” the commander of Israel’s armoured corps, Brigadier-General Hisham Ibrahim, told Israel’s Army Radio. “We are beginning to expand the ground manoeuvre to other parts of the Strip.”

### CASE OVER ILLEGAL ENTRY

## HC stays trial against photojournalist Kajol

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday stayed for six months the trial proceedings against photojournalist Shafiqul Islam Kajol in a case filed by the BGB on May 3, 2020, for his alleged entry to Bangladesh from India without a passport.

The HC also issued a rule asking the state to explain why the trial proceedings in the case against Kajol should not be scrapped.

The bench of Justices SM Kuddus Zaman and Md Aminul Islam issued the order and rule after hearing a petition seeking cancellation of the case.

Advocate Nazmus Shakib represented Kajol while Deputy Attorney General Sujit Chatterjee Bappi represented the state.

Kajol had disappeared on March 10, 2020, and was “found” by the Border Guard Bangladesh roaming around the Benapole border 53 days later.

He then landed in jail for three DSA cases filed by lawmaker Saifuzzaman Shikhor, and two Jubo Mahila League activists over a Facebook post.

His bail appeals were rejected multiple times by the lower court, until the High Court on November 24, 2020, granted him bail in one case. On December 17, 2020, the HC ordered bail in two remaining cases. He was released from jail on December 25, 2020.

### POLITICAL VIOLENCE

## Charges framed against Rizvi, Aman, 43 others

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday framed charges against 45 leaders and activists of the BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami and their front organisations in a case filed over political violence in the capital in 2015.

BNP leaders Aman Ullah Aman, Ruhul Kabir Rizvi, Barkat Ullah Bulu, Ruhul Kuddus Talukder Dulu and Jubo Dal’s former president Saiful Alam Nirob are among the accused.

Aman and Nirob in jail and 23 others on bail pleaded not guilty after Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Md Tofazzal Hossain read out the charges to them.

Before that, the magistrate dismissed petitions for discharging them from the case.

The court also cancelled bail petition of 20 other accused, including Dulu, Rizvi, and Bulu as they were absent.

The court set December 25 for starting the trial of the case.

According to the case statement, a group of leaders and activists of the BNP and Jamaat and their front organisations led by Aman, brought out a procession in front of Zaker Dairy Farm in the city’s Mohammadpur area around 8:50pm on January 17, 2015. They also torched a bus by throwing a petrol bomb.

Following the incident, police filed a case against Aman, Dulu, Bulu, Rizvi and 19 others with Mohammadpur Police Station.

After an investigation, police submitted a charge sheet against 45 people on August 23, 2016.