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STATE SECRETS CASE Pak court jails Imran for 10yrs ahead of polls

His lawyers to challenge verdict in higher court

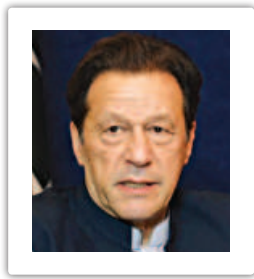
REUTERS, Islamabad

A Pakistan court jailed Imran Khan for 10 years yesterday for leaking state secrets, the harshest sentence the former prime minister and cricket superstar has received and announced just days before a general election.

The special court found Khan, 71, guilty of making public the contents of a secret cable sent by Pakistan's ambassador in Washington to the government in Islamabad, his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party said. Former foreign minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi was also sentenced to 10 years in the same case.

Khan had earlier been sentenced to three years in jail in a corruption case in August, which ruled him out of the public spotlight ahead of the February 8 election.

The court is likely to issue a written verdict within a day or two. Khan's PTI party said it would challenge the



SEE PAGE 7 COL 1



A bus drops off passengers on a ramp of the Dhaka Elevated Expressway in Kakoli intersection area yesterday, obstructing traffic and putting the lives of pedestrians and people in other vehicles at risk.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

HC questions imposition of death penalty sans guideline

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday issued a rule asking the government to explain why the imposition of the death penalty as a general course of punishment without a guideline should not be declared illegal and unconstitutional.

In the rule, the court asked the authorities concerned to show cause as to why a guideline should not be formulated regarding the application of discretion in awarding the death penalty.

The HC bench of Justice Mustafa Zaman Islam and Justice Md Atabullah issued the rule following a writ petition filed by Supreme Court lawyer Ishrat Hasan challenging the legality of the provision for the death penalty in the country's criminal justice system.

Ishrat Hasan submitted the petition as a public interest litigation to the HC on December 7 last year, saying that the provision for the death sentence as the maximum punishment is

SEE PAGE 7 COL 4

Schoolgirl along with parents found murdered at home

Cops say they were hacked to death a couple days back

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU, Pubna

Police yesterday recovered the bodies of a 15-year-old schoolgirl and her parents from their flat in Tarash upazila of Sirajganj.

Officers said the victims, Paromita Sarkar Tushi, a 10th grader, and her parents Bikash Sarkar, 46, and Swarna Rani Sarkar, might have been hacked to death almost two days ago.

After the murders, the assailants locked the door from outside and left, said Nazrul Islam, officer-in-charge of Tarash Police Station.

Failing to contact them, the victims' relatives tried to check on them and found the door of their flat locked. They then called the police.

Police broke into the flat in the Baroari Kali Mondir area and found the bodies, Nazrul said.

It seems the assailants and the victims were familiar, he said, adding that that's why the attackers were allowed inside. "Bikash's brother Prokash Sarkar lives next door. But his family did not hear anything. Other tenants of the building also did not notice anything unusual," he added.

Bikash was a well-off farmer and Prokash is the vice president of Tarash upazila Awami League, the OC said, adding that the two brothers had disputes over property. Prokash could not be reached for comment.

The bodies were sent to Sirajganj Sadar Hospital for autopsies.



Bikash Sarkar Swarna Rani Paromita

Israeli forces raid West Bank hospital

Kill three Palestinians as raid underscores risk of offensive spreading to other fronts

AGENCIES

Israel said undercover commandos killed three Palestinians in a raid on a hospital in the occupied West Bank yesterday, a further sign that Israel's offensive in Gaza is spreading to other fronts.

In the northern Gaza Strip, Israeli forces fought battles with Hamas fighters that forced more Palestinian residents to flee to safer areas, and southern parts of the coastal enclave were hit by Israeli air strikes.

CCTV footage of the West Bank hospital raid appeared to show around a dozen troops, including three in women's garb and two dressed as Palestinian medical staff, pacing through a corridor with rifles.

Hamas said one of the dead in Ibn Sina hospital in the city of Jenin was a member of the group. The allied faction Islamic Jihad said the other two killed were brothers and member of the faction. Ibn Sina said one of the brothers had been receiving treatment for an injury that paralysed his legs.

The Israeli military said this showed that Hamas members were using civilian areas and hospitals as shelters and "human shields". Hamas has previously denied such allegations. Israel's military also said one of those killed had a pistol.

While the West Bank - an area

that Palestinians envisage as part of a hoped-for independent state - had seen increased violence even before the outbreak of the Gaza offensive, the hospital raid could fuel a more intense phase of unrest.

- Israeli forces, Hamas fighters battle in northern Gaza
- Hamas receives ceasefire proposal after Paris talks
- Death toll in enclave now 26,751

With Gazans already facing dire humanitarian conditions, the United Nations chief was set to meet yesterday with key donors who paused funding after members of the UN's Palestinian refugee agency were accused of taking part in the October 7 attacks.

Since then some 26,751 Palestinians have been killed and at least 65,000 others wounded by Israeli military strikes, according to the Gaza health ministry, with the death toll increasing by the day.

SEE PAGE 7 COL 6

State no party to case against Prof Yunus

Claims foreign minister

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister Hasan Mahmud said the government is not a party to the case involving Nobel Laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus and that the judicial process of Bangladesh is fully independent and transparent.

"With due respect to Dr Yunus, I would like to say that the judicial process of Bangladesh is transparent. That's why many [members] of the ruling party face trials and even jail sentences," he told journalists after meeting the non-resident ambassadors and high commissioners of 14 countries at the Foreign Service Academy yesterday.

Some 242 global leaders, including more than 125 Nobel laureates, on Monday expressed alarm over the "continuous judicial harassment and potential jailing" of Nobel Peace Prize laureate Muhammad Yunus in an open letter to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

They also proposed

SEE PAGE 7 COL 1

'India agrees to export sugar and onion'

State minister for commerce tells Star; Bangladesh to get shipments before Ramadan

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

India has agreed to export 50,000 tonnes of sugar and 20,000 tonnes of onion to Bangladesh before Ramadan, said Ahsanul Islam (Titu), the state minister for commerce. The neighbouring country has put curbs on sugar and onion exports to reduce domestic prices by increasing supplies ahead of the national election in May.

"As a gesture of friendship, the Indian commerce minister agreed to export 50,000 tonnes of sugar and 20,000 tonnes of onion ahead of Ramadan," State Minister for Commerce Ahsanul Islam Titu told The Daily Star over the phone yesterday.

The development comes after Titu on January 24 spoke with Piyush Goyal, India's minister of commerce and industry, over the phone.

In the phone call, Titu sought one lakh tonnes of sugar and 50,000 tonnes of onion.

But Goyal agreed to send 50,000 tonnes of sugar and 20,000 tonnes of onion instantly, Titu said, adding that the agreed essentials will come to Bangladesh on a government-to-government basis.

The rate at which the two commodities will be purchased by Bangladesh is yet to be fixed, he said.

Titu said he also sent a letter to the Indian government on Monday through the Bangladesh high commission in New Delhi about procuring the essential commodities.

"The two essential commodities are not coming under any quota - it is a good gesture from the Indian government," Titu said.

The demand for sugar doubles to 300,000 tonnes during Ramadan from the average monthly requirement of 150,000 tonnes, as per commerce ministry estimates. The Indian side could not be reached for comment.

Fetters only for militants, top criminals: HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday said the authorities cannot use fetters to restrain prisoners unless they are notorious criminals or militants.

It ordered the jail authorities to strictly follow the circular issued by the Department of Prisons on November 21, 2022, that directed using fetters on prisoners of a particular nature, including notorious criminals and militants, while producing them before the courts or during transfers.

In response to a writ petition, the court issued a rule asking the authorities concerned to explain why restraining Md Nazmul Hosen, a Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal leader of Patuakhali, with fetters when he was attending his father's funeral should not be declared illegal.

The HC bench of Justice Mustafa Zaman Islam and Justice Md Atabullah issued the order and rule following the writ filed by Nazmul.

Nazmul, JCD joint convener of Patuakhali's Mirzaganj upazila, was arrested on December 20 last year in a case filed under the Explosive

SEE PAGE 7 COL 6



Palestinians bury the dead at a mass grave in Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday. They were killed in Israeli strikes and Israel handed the bodies over, according to the Palestinian health ministry officials.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Neuralink installs brain implant in first patient: Musk

AFP, San Francisco

Elon Musk yesterday said his Neuralink startup had installed a brain implant in its first human patient with "promising" initial results.

The neurotechnology company co-founded by Musk in 2016 aims to build direct communication channels between the brain and computers.



The ambition is to supercharge human capabilities, treat neurological disorders like ALS or Parkinson's, and maybe one day achieve a symbiotic relationship between humans and artificial intelligence.

"The first human received an implant from Neuralink yesterday and is recovering well," Musk said in a post on X, formerly Twitter. "Initial results show promising neuron spike detection," he added.

The start-up last year said it won approval from US regulators to test its brain implants in people. Neuralink's technology will mainly work through an implant called the "Link" - a device about the size of five stacked coins that is placed inside the human brain through invasive surgery.