

Investigators get new warrant to arrest S Korea President Yoon

AFP, Seoul



South Korean anti-graft investigators yesterday secured a new court-ordered arrest warrant for impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol, whose failed martial law bid threw the country into turmoil.

The former star prosecutor has refused questioning three times after his bungled December 3 martial law decree plunged South Korea into its worst political crisis in decades.

As anti-graft officials and police got a fresh warrant from the same court that issued the first order, Yoon was believed to be holed up in his residence surrounded by hundreds of guards preventing his detention.

"The arrest warrant re-requested for the suspect Yoon was issued today in the afternoon," the Joint Investigation Headquarters said in a statement.

Seoul Western District Court declined to confirm when contacted by AFP.



A woman sunbathing her seven-day old nephew, who was admitted to Dhaka Shishu Hospital with a cold, after having his echocardiogram done yesterday. The child, born on December 31, was admitted to a Shariatpur clinic the very next day with a cold and then referred to the hospital in the capital. According to doctors, around 40 new patients are admitted every day, 60 percent of them with cold-related issues.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Meta shelves fact-checking program in US

REUTERS

Social media giant Meta yesterday scrapped its US fact-checking program for a community-based system similar to X and reduced the curbs on discussions around contentious topics such as immigration and gender identity.

The move marks a reversal in Meta's policy as CEO Mark Zuckerberg has long championed active content moderation despite criticism from conservatives over alleged censorship on its platforms.

It also comes shortly after the company named Republican policy executive Joel Kaplan as global affairs head and elected Dana White, CEO of Ultimate Fighting Championship and a close friend of President-elect Donald Trump, to its board.

"We've reached a point where it's just too many mistakes and too much censorship. It's time to get back to our roots around free expression," Zuckerberg said in a video.

"We're going to focus on reducing mistakes, simplifying our policies and restoring free expression on our platforms. We're going to tune our content filters to require much higher confidence before taking down content."

The end of the fact-checking program, started in 2016, caught some partner organizations by surprise.

Iran begins military drills near Natanz nuclear site

AFP, Tehran

Iran's military has begun drills near the Natanz nuclear enrichment plant in the centre of the country, state media reported yesterday, as part of exercises planned nationwide.

The drills – dubbed Eqtedar, or "might", in Farsi – have involved the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), the ideological branch of Iran's military, alongside the army.

"The first phase of the joint Eqtedar exercises in the air defense zone of the Natanz nuclear facility has commenced under the orders of the air defense headquarters commander," state TV said.

It added that IRGC air forces were undertaking "an all-out point defense" of the site "against a multitude of air threats in tough electronic warfare conditions".

On Monday, IRGC spokesman Ali Mohammad Naini said the drills, which will also cover other parts of Iran until mid-March, were being conducted in response to "new security threats", without elaborating.

Several branches of the IRGC, including the navy and the paramilitary Basij forces, will also take part in the exercises, he added.

Last week, US news website Axios reported that White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan had presented President Joe Biden with options for a potential US strike on Iran's nuclear facilities if Tehran moved toward developing a nuclear weapon before January 20, when Donald Trump takes office.

Gas crisis

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"We pay a monthly rent of Tk 3,000. But we are having to spend more to be able to cook," said Meghla Akter, a resident of the project. "We pay for the gas but do not get it."

Residents said they can cook only from 3:00am-6:00am. Sometimes on weekends and holidays, they get gas for one or two hours.

Toma Sarker said, "Our lifestyle has changed due to the gas crisis. We have to wake up at midnight to cook."

Utara Sector-II resident Sakhawat Hossain Mukter said they faced a gas crisis every winter, but it was unbearable now.

Polls by Dec

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an address to the nation.

On December 16 last year, during a Victory Day address, Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus stated that the next general election could be held either at the end of 2025 or in the first half of 2026 after completing necessary reforms.

Clarification

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be obtained from the Dubai Land Department and other official sources.

3. In our report, we refrained from naming 442 individuals based on these two criteria.

4. We reiterate that we did not apply any personal bias or "pick-and-choose" method to either include or exclude any individual in our report.

We only followed the criteria mentioned above. Thank you for your understanding.

Khaleda finally off to UK for treatment

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Khaleda will be meeting her son for the first time in seven years on her first overseas visit since July 16, 2017, when she travelled to London for treatment.

Tarique, acting chairperson of BNP, has been residing in London with his family since 2008. Khaleda's younger son, Aralat Rahman Koko, died in Malaysia in 2015.

Khaleda set out from her Gulshan residence "Firoza" at 8:12pm. Her motorcade reached the airport at 10:51pm. The journey from her home to the airport took over two hours due to severe traffic congestion caused by the presence of hundreds of party leaders and supporters on the streets.

Senior BNP leaders greeted her at the Gulshan residence before departure while party supporters gathered along the route, cheering and chanting slogans in her support. A significant number of law enforcers were deployed to maintain order.

Earlier, Khaleda's family members, including her younger brother Shamim Eskander, his wife Kaniz Fatima, and her late brother Sayeed Eskander's wife Nasrin, also greeted her at her residence.

The former PM's deteriorating health had been a matter of grave concern for years. Despite repeated appeals from her party and physicians to allow her to seek treatment abroad, the AL government rejected over 20 such requests.

Khaleda's personal physician Dr Zahid Hossain said, "If they [doctors in London] say she needs further treatment that they can't provide

and there is a need to take her to Johns Hopkins University Hospital in Maryland, USA, that will be looked into."

According to doctors in Dhaka, the BNP chairperson may require a liver transplant because of the cirrhosis and the entire treatment process, including recovery, may take several months.

Zahid said doctors will decide the feasibility and timing of the liver transplant after a detailed evaluation at the specialised unit in London.

Khaleda's eventual departure only became possible after the fall of the AL regime on August 5, 2024, signaling a major shift in the country's political landscape. She was fully freed by an order from President Mohammed Shahabuddin the very next day, paving the way for her overseas treatment.

Her health crisis, compounded by political resistance, had become a rallying point for BNP leaders and activists, who are now hopeful for her recovery and the opportunity for her to reunite with her family in peace.

BNP standing committee member Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury told The Daily Star, "We've long been demanding that she receive treatment abroad, but we were unsuccessful. Due to the lack of adequate medical care, she reached a critical point, where her life was at risk. She is now slightly better and will fully recover once she receives treatment abroad."

"Khaleda Zia made the greatest contribution to the July-August movement because she inspired the entire country and gave strength without any compromise."

Injured victims to be given jobs in police

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Police to hire some of the people who suffered injuries," he said.

"We are trying to recruit as soon as possible those who have recovered from their injuries. Those who are still recovering can also be considered for employment," the adviser said.

He mentioned that each injured victim faces unique challenges. "One has lost an eye, another a finger. They will be placed in departments where their abilities can be best utilised."

"Initially, we plan to start with 100 wounded victims. We will increase the number in phases."

Asked if the recruitment would be limited to police, he responded, "We are starting with the police as it falls under my ministry's jurisdiction. However, we have a plan to expand this initiative to other departments."

Jahangir also talked about the issue of traffic management, saying, "A proposal was submitted to recruit 1,000 students for controlling traffic. So far, 400 students have been recruited."

Govt scraps passports of Hasina, 96 others

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He said the Indian authorities are already aware of the matter of revoking the passport of Hasina as they said, "India has issued travel documents for her."

Azad added that expatriate Bangladeshis who sought passports would also get text messages from the authorities as soon as their passports are ready for delivery.

He mentioned that it was earlier discussed that applications of 1,97,000 machine readable passports are pending and authorities have printed 1,82,745 MRPs. These new MRPs will reach the embassies soon.

The deputy press secretary added that the authorities of the department are taking different steps to make the passport offices free from "brokers".

He added that the government is planning to appoint some "agents" for

helping the service seekers, which will be helpful to break the syndicate of brokers.

On the delay of textbook distribution, Azad said that as of Monday, around 11 crore textbooks out of 40.15 crore had been printed and most of them had already reached schools.

He hoped that students would get all textbooks by the end of this month. He also blamed the delay on non-cooperation of some of the textbook printers and said, "The education ministry will probe the incident."

Meanwhile, CA's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam said Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Shafiqur Rahman held a meeting with Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus at state guesthouse Jamuna in the evening.

Topics of discussion included electoral reforms, national unity, and reforms in the banking sector.

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir said, "During madam's imprisonment, she fell critically ill. We repeatedly urged Sheikh Hasina to allow her to seek medical treatment abroad, but she ignored our requests."

"She prays for the well-being of the people and the establishment of democracy."

CASES

According to Khaleda's lawyer, of the 37 cases filed against her during the caretaker government and AL government tenures, seven cases are still pending with the courts as of yesterday. These include the Zia Orphanage Trust corruption case, the Niko corruption case, three sabotage cases in Cumilla, and two defamation cases.

On February 8, 2018, Khaleda was jailed in a corruption case.

In April 2019, Khaleda's health deteriorated due to inadequate medical treatment. On March 26, 2020, amid the Covid-19 pandemic, she was released from prison after 776 days.

The government temporarily released her on an executive order, suspending her sentence on the condition that she remain at her Gulshan residence and not leave the country. The term of her release had been extended several times.

In April 2021, she contracted Covid-19 and recovered while under treatment at home. However, as the other health complications surfaced, she was admitted to Evercare Hospital several times.

About the law and order during the interim government's five months in office, the adviser opined, "You can judge for yourself whether there has been any improvement. Police have resumed their work and are continuously trying to improve the situation."

He, however, acknowledged challenges, including the time required for the new officers to familiarise with their roles, as previous ones have been changed. Besides, there are shortages of vehicles and damaged police stations have yet been repaired fully.

"We are taking these matters seriously and working to address the issues."

The adviser said, "There was no government in place between August 5 and 7. Many fled during that time, some crossed borders into neighbouring countries. However, since we assumed office, no one has fled. If anyone attempts to leave, we will investigate the matter."

However, the date of the election was not discussed, he added.

Talking about the next election, Shafiqul referred to what the chief adviser said during his address to the nation on December 16.

Prof Yunus said the next polls can be held between the end of 2025 and the first half of 2026 after accomplishing necessary reforms.

Responding to a query about abduction along the Teknaf border, Shafiqul said the government is making significant efforts to improve law and order. According to information from law enforcement agencies, the situation has improved.

About the border killings, he said the previous government remained largely silent on the issue. But the current government has been protesting every such incident.

7 arrested over gang rape of 14-yr-old girl

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Police have arrested seven men for their suspected involvement in the gang rape of a 14-year-old girl in Badarkahli of Chakaria upazila in Cox's Bazar.

They were arrested from different areas of Moheshkhali upazila between Monday night and yesterday morning, said Jasim Uddin, additional superintendent of police in Cox's Bazar, without revealing the names.

The ASP said the arrestees were sent to jail via a court order.

The victim, who was allegedly gang-raped by eight to ten men, was receiving treatment at Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital, he said.

The incident has enraged the locals who have been assisting police in identifying and catching the culprits, said Alauddin Alo, a local journalist of Bodorkhali.

Since the incident, protest programmes – road blockades, human chains, and processions – have been held in Cox's Bazar Sadar, Moheshkhali, and Chakaria demanding the arrest of the perpetrators and their trial.

Hundreds of people also staged a demonstration yesterday in Moheshkhali.

The journalist said after receiving

information that three alleged rapists had taken shelter at a shrimp enclosure in Shaplapur of Moheshkhali, locals along with police surrounded them and apprehended them.

The victim was gang-raped at Badarkhali union in Chakaria upazila around 10:00pm on Sunday, when the girl, who lives in Moheshkhali upazila, was returning home from Banshkhali upazila, Chattogram.

According to the victim's statement, she was abducted at knife-point and raped by 8 to 10 men near the Bodorkhali bridge, said Manjur Kader Bhuyan, officer-in-charge of Chakaria Police Station.

She boarded a CNG-run autorickshaw from the Badarkhali Ferry Ghat area. However, the driver abandoned her midway near the Badarkhali Bridge saying the vehicle had some mechanical issues.

As she was walking back towards the ferry ghat area, two men abducted her at knife-point, the OC said, quoting the victim.

Later, six others joined the perpetrators in raping her.

After the incident, the girl made her way back to the ferry ghat, where with the help of locals she was admitted to Badarkhali General Hospital.

Strong tremor kills 126 in Tibet

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performing CPR on an injured person and soldiers erecting temporary shelters.

The Dalai Lama, Tibet's spiritual leader who fled to India along with thousands of Tibetans in early 1959 after a failed uprising against Chinese rule, said he was deeply saddened.

Chinese President Xi Jinping said all-out search and rescue efforts should be carried out to minimise casualties and to resettle affected people.

Villages in Tingri, where the average elevation is around 4,000-5,000 metres, reported strong shaking during the quake, which was followed more than 150 aftershocks with magnitudes of up to 4.4.

Crumpled shop fronts could

be seen in a video on social media showing the aftermath in the town of Lhatse, with debris spilling out onto the road.

Three townships and 27 villages lie within 20 km (12 miles) of the epicentre, with a total population of around 6,900, and more than 1,000 houses have been damaged, Xinhua reported.

Southwestern parts of China, Nepal and northern India are often hit by earthquakes caused by the collision of the Indian and Eurasian tectonic plates.

Since 1950, there have been 21 earthquakes of magnitude 6 or above in what is known as the Lhasa block, the largest of which was the 6.9-magnitude quake in Mainling in 2017, according to CCTV.

tonnes of rice was imported at the government level and 1.07 lakh tonnes at the private level.

The total stock of foodgrain was 12.22 lakh tonnes as of Monday, of which rice was 7.99 lakh tonnes.

Salehuddin urged the common people to be patient.

"Once, the price of onion hit Tk 200 per kg. Now, it is Tk 40 per kg. We also have to think about the farmers," he added.

Besides, at another meeting with rice traders, Commerce Adviser Sk. Bashir Uddin said the government is easing the rules for importing rice.

He made the remark in response to rice traders' demand for easing the rules of margin for opening letters of credit for rice import, according to a commerce ministry press release.