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KHALEDA'S RETURN BNP plans a grand welcome on Tuesday

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP leaders are making elaborate preparations to provide a warm welcome to party chief Khaleda Zia, who is expected to return home on Tuesday after nearly four months of medical treatment in London.

The former prime minister is scheduled to depart Heathrow International Airport tomorrow on a special Royal Air Ambulance, arranged by the Emir of Qatar. Her son and BNP's acting chairman, Tarique Rahman, will see her off at the airport.

Her travel plans got delayed by a day. Earlier, the plan was that she would leave London today and arrive in Dhaka tomorrow.

Upon her arrival in Dhaka on Tuesday, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir and senior members of the party's Standing Committee will greet her at the airport. She will then head to her Gulshan residence "Firoza".

According to party leaders, BNP activists will line the route from the airport to her home, holding national and party flags to welcome their leader.

Zubaida Rahman and Syeda Sharmila Rahman, Khaleda's daughters-in-law, will accompany her. Zubaida



Dozens of shops occupy the road in front of Tejgaon College, severely obstructing vehicular and pedestrian movement in an area that is already busy all day due to its proximity to the Farmgate exit ramp of the elevated expressway and the metro station. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Govt has no tools to stop cases against journalists

Says CA's press secy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Journalists are being named in murder cases filed over the July-August movement, but the government has no tools to put a stop to this, Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam said at an event marking World Press Freedom Day yesterday.

Speaking at "Bangladesh Post Monsoon Uprising: Media Landscape", organised by Bangladeshi Journalists in International Media, at Alliance Française de Dhaka (of Dhaka), he said, "This is a failure of the government. In many of the cases, we know they are good journalists, but they are now facing murder charges because an aggrieved person has filed a wholesale case against



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Polls should be in Feb or Apr, but no later

Says Jamaat Ameer
Shafiqur Rahman

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The election must not be delayed beyond April next year, said Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Shafiqur Rahman yesterday.

Chief Adviser M u h a m m a d Yunus has maintained that the 13th parliamentary election will be held between December and June next year. But Ramadan will begin in the third week of February and go on for two-thirds of March.

"We think there are two appropriate timeframes for the election," he said at the two-day conference of district and city Ameer of Jamaat at the Al-Falah Auditorium in Moghbazar.

One is in February, before the beginning of Ramadan, "And the other is, if for any reason, the reforms and the visible justice process do not reach a level that builds public trust, then the election should not be delayed beyond April."

The election must be free and fair, he said.

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Israel to expand Gaza ops

Say media reports amid faltering ceasefire efforts; Gaza
rescuers say three babies among 11 killed in Israeli strikes

AGENCIES

Israel's security cabinet approved plans for an expanded operation in the Gaza Strip, Israeli media reported on Friday, adding to signs that attempts to stop the fighting and return hostages held by Hamas have made no progress.

The decision came after comments from both Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the head of the military, Lieutenant General Eyal Zamir this week indicating that Israel intended to step up the campaign in Gaza.

Since the collapse of an earlier ceasefire agreement in March, Israeli troops have been carving out wide buffer zones in Gaza, squeezing the 2.3 million population into an ever narrower zone in the centre of the enclave and along the coast and shutting off the entry of aid trucks.

"As long as Hamas does not release our hostages, we will significantly deepen our military action," Ynet, one of Israel's main news outlets, quoted an unnamed Israeli official as

saying.

A spokesperson for Netanyahu's office declined to comment on the reports, which said the decision would be approved by the full cabinet today.

Despite efforts by Egyptian and Qatari mediators to restore the ceasefire, neither Israel nor Hamas has shown willingness to back down on core demands, with each side blaming the other for the failure to reach a deal.

Israel, which wants the return of 59 hostages still held in Gaza, has insisted that Hamas must disarm and be excluded from any role in the future governance of the enclave, a condition that Hamas rejects.

The group, which has run Gaza since 2007, has insisted on agreeing a lasting end to the fighting and a withdrawal of Israeli forces as a condition for a deal that would see the release of the hostages.

Gaza's civil defence agency yesterday said that an overnight Israeli strike on the Khan

- » UN voices concern as Israel hits more than 20 military targets in Syria,
- » Deploys troops in South Syria to protect Druze community
- » Yemen's Houthis fire missiles at Israel

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SAGAR-RUNI MURDER Inconclusive DNA test results stall probe

Task force tells HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The task force investigating the 2012 murders of journalist couple Sagar Sarowar and Meherun Runi in its report submitted to the High Court last month said it required more time to complete the probe as the results of the DNA samples collected from the scene were inconclusive.

On April 22, it also told the court that forensic evidence related to the case had been sent to the United States, and the task force was waiting for the report.

It also asked the court for nine more months to complete the probe, citing various reasons, including the transfer of investigating officers.

The court later granted a six-month extension to submit a report.

According to the April 22 report, Sagar and Runi

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This man's blood could unlock universal antivenom

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Tim Friede, a Wisconsin resident with a long-standing fascination for venomous creatures, has endured hundreds of snake bites, many self-inflicted, in a quest to build immunity.

Now, scientists are studying his blood, hoping to unlock the secrets to a more effective snake bite treatment.

Friede's unusual journey began with a hobby of extracting venom from scorpions and spiders. He kept numerous snakes at his home, and driven by "simple curiosity" and a desire for self-protection, he started injecting himself with diluted snake venom.

Gradually increasing the dosage, he allowed snakes to bite him, pushing the boundaries of his self-imposed experiment. This unorthodox approach has piqued the interest of researchers, who are now analysing his blood in the hopes of developing improved antivenom therapies.

"At first, it was very scary," Friede said. "But the more you do it, the better you get at it, the more calm you become with it."

Doctors say that when the immune system is exposed to the toxins in snake venom, it develops

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Ukraine downs Russian jet with sea drone

REUTERS, Kyiv

Ukraine destroyed a Russian Su-30 fighter jet using a missile fired from a seaborne drone, Ukraine's GUR military intelligence agency announced yesterday, in what it said was the world's first downing of a combat plane by a maritime drone.

Its statement on social media said the fighter had been shot down by a military intelligence unit called Group 13 on Friday over waters near Novorossiisk, a major Russian port city on the Black Sea.

Outmanned and outgunned by its larger, wealthier Russian adversary, Ukraine has turned to drone warfare in the air and at sea as a way to fight back throughout more than three years of full-scale war.

Ukraine's seaborne drones, which are much cheaper and smaller than conventional ships, have wrought havoc on Russia's Black Sea fleet.



PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Two female workers use their bare hands to remove impurities from a pile of powdered coal, which will later be used for incense stick production. Powdered coal contains harmful substances and handling it without proper protection poses serious health risks. For their hazardous labour, they receive a meagre daily wage of Tk 200-250. The photo was taken yesterday from the Zero Point area in Khulna city.

Riding anti-Trump wave, Aussie PM retains power

REUTERS, Sydney

Australia's Anthony Albanese claimed a historic second term as prime minister yesterday in a dramatic comeback against once-resurgent conservatives that was powered by voters' concerns about the influence of US President Donald Trump.

Peter Dutton, leader of the conservative Liberal party, conceded defeat and the loss of his own seat - echoing the fate of Canada's conservatives and their leader whose election losses days earlier were also attributed to a Trump backlash.

Supporters at Labor's election party in Sydney cheered and hugged each other as Albanese claimed victory and said his party would form a majority government.

"Our government will choose the Australian way, because we are proud of who we are and all that we have built together in this country," Albanese told supporters.

"We do not need to beg or borrow or copy from anywhere else. We do not seek our inspiration from overseas. We find it right here in our values and in our people."

Albanese is the first Australian prime minister to win consecutive terms in two decades. He said Australians had voted for fairness and "the strength to show courage in adversity and kindness to those in need".

The Australian Electoral Commission website

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