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Tarique's return rests on Khaleda's health condition

He is waiting for Khaleda to be fit for London travel: Fakhrul

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman's decision to return home from London depends on Khaleda Zia's condition and the possibility of taking her abroad for treatment.

"If Khaleda Zia's health condition remains unchanged, Tarique Rahman will return to Bangladesh soon," BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir was quoted in a post on the party's verified Facebook page last night.

To provide further support to the medical board overseeing Khaleda's treatment, two additional teams of specialist doctors -- one from the United Kingdom and another from China -- are expected to arrive today, according to the BNP media cell.

Her personal physician, AZM Zahid Hossain, yesterday said Khaleda is able to continue receiving treatment, or, as he phrased it, "she is able to maintain her treatment".

Speaking to reporters outside Evercare Hospital in the afternoon, Zahid said Khaleda is not yet fit to travel, and any decision to take her abroad for treatment will depend on the medical board's assessment.



BNP chief 'maintaining treatment'
Specialists from UK, China due today
SSF deployed at Evercare
Party urges caution against rumours



Specialists from the UK, the USA, China, and Bangladesh are currently overseeing her care, said Zahid, expressing hope for her recovery.

The BNP chief was admitted to Evercare on November 23 after being diagnosed with infections in her heart and lungs.

She is also suffering from pneumonia and is currently receiving treatment in the hospital's Coronary Care Unit (CCU).

The 80-year-old former prime minister has long been battling multiple health complications, including liver cirrhosis, arthritis, diabetes, and issues affecting her kidneys, lungs, heart, and eyes. She has a pacemaker and has previously undergone stent implants in her heart.

PREP FOR TREATMENT ABROAD

At the briefing, Zahid noted that the BNP has made all necessary preparations to take Khaleda overseas if required.

He mentioned that many governments and heads of state have extended support.

Party sources said China has agreed to provide an air ambulance and has also offered to take her to the country for treatment.

Visiting physicians have already consulted with Khaleda's medical board, and a decision may be made on advanced treatment abroad after doctors from the UK give their advice.

Her family members, including Tarique and Zubaida Rahman, have been in close contact with the doctors.

TARIQUE'S RETURN

Party sources said Tarique will wait for the medical board's decision before finalising his plan to return to the country.

Tarique may choose not to return to Dhaka immediately if Khaleda's condition eventually becomes stable enough for air travel to London.

Before Khaleda's health deteriorated, Tarique had planned to return after the announcement of the polls schedule.

Meanwhile, Foreign Adviser Touhid Hossain yesterday said the government has no specific information about Tarique's return, as he He

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Only army can bring peace in CHT

Says Iftekharuzzaman

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Transparency International Bangladesh Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman thinks that bringing peace to the hilly regions and ensuring the rights of indigenous people is mainly in the hands of the army.

"The hilly region is under the authority of the Bangladesh Army. They are the ones who can establish peace," he said.

He added that the people expect the army to take visible steps towards peace. "If they move away from the ongoing divide and rule situation and take real steps based on facts and events, then it is possible for them to establish peace."

He made the remarks at the TIB office in the capital's Dhamondi after the launch of a research report titled, "Inclusion of Indigenous Communities in Social Safety Programmes: Challenges of Good Governance and Ways Forward."

Responding to a question from a "The

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

The struggle to cope with rising salinity, depleting sweet water, and diminishing livelihoods continues on the frontlines of climate change in the rural southwest. This is the 4th of a 5-part series.

How salinity sank Satkhira farmers' harvests

Crop fields disappear as saltwater invasion forces them to switch to shrimp farming

WASIM BIN HABIB, back from Satkhira

On the outer edge of the Sundarbans, Abdul Majed Sarkar once found solace in his modest patch of land. The four-bigha plot he inherited from his father had long been his anchor -- a fertile stretch in Satkhira's Burigoalini union where he grew rice for decades.

"The landscape used to be lush green, extending as far as the eye could see," recalls the 84-year-old, his voice tinged with nostalgia.

"Paddy would sway in the wind. The harvest was enough to feed our family, and we still had some left to sell."

But by the mid-1990s, Majed and his neighbours began noticing a subtle yet troubling shift. Rice plants withered, yields fell, and shrimp farming began taking over neighbouring fields.

Today, the land where Majed once grew rice lies submerged beneath a murky, grey-green sheet of water. It has been transformed into a shrimp enclosure, locally known as gher.

"Initially, there were only a few ponds. But slowly, they spread. I tried growing rice for six or seven more years, but eventually, I had to give up. The land changed, and we had to adapt," Majed says, gazing out from his home in Paschim Porakata village of Shyamnagar upazila.

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Saltwater has overtaken vast stretches of farmland in Satkhira, where once-thriving rice fields and freshwater ponds have been replaced by shrimp enclosures. At least 1.53 lakh hectares of land have been affected by salinity, leaving thousands of farmers struggling to grow crops. The photo was taken from Burigoalini in Satkhira's Shyamnagar recently.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN



Satkhira covers an area of 3.81 lakh hectares

Shrimp cultivated on 73,000 hectares

Acreage plunged to 6,610 hectares from 12,265 in 15yrs

Aman acreage fell to 88,650 hectares from 104,820

Soil salinity exceeded tolerable level in at least 3 upazilas



KSRM
সেকুড় থেকে শিথরে

Referendum, polls likely between Feb 8 and 14

Says Election Commissioner

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission is likely to finalise its decision on announcing the schedules for the upcoming 13th national election and the referendum, both to be held on the same day, at its meeting scheduled for December 7.

At that meeting, the commission will also discuss extending voting hours by one hour and increasing the number of secret chambers at polling booths to ensure smoother voting.

"The plan is to add half an hour at both the beginning and end of the voting," Election Commissioner Anwarul Islam Sarkar told this newspaper yesterday.

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Mobile phone traders blocked the road in front of Jamuna Future Park in the capital for hours yesterday, demanding reforms to the National Equipment Identity Register, an end to monopolistic syndicates, and the opening of the market for unrestricted mobile phone imports. The blockade caused significant suffering to commuters.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Basu Bahini: The fierce guerrilla force in the haor

AHMAD ISTIAK

In the wide waters of the Kishoreganj haor, where the tall grasses stand like watchmen, an unlikely guerrilla force rose during Bangladesh's Liberation War under the leadership of Abdul Motalib Basu,



TALES OF FREEDOM

once the feared "Bhorsa Dakat". His band, later known as the Basu Bahini, began with his own followers and grew to more than 300 fighters across nine upazilas in three districts.

Some of their stories are documented in Jahangir Alam Jahan's Kishoreganj Jelar Muktijuddher Itihas, and in the memories of those who lived beside them. In May this year, this reporter travelled through five upazilas in

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