

SECURITY TRIAL

Hong Kong court finds tycoon Jimmy Lai guilty

REUTERS, Hong Kong

Hong Kong's High Court yesterday found tycoon and pro-democracy campaigner Jimmy Lai guilty of conspiracy to collude with foreign forces in the city's highest-profile trial under a China-imposed national security law that could see him jailed for life.

The landmark case has drawn international scrutiny of Hong Kong's judicial independence amid a years-long crackdown on rights and freedoms in the global financial hub after 2019 pro-democracy protests that Beijing saw as a challenge to its rule.

While 78-year-old Lai's supporters see him as a freedom fighter, Beijing sees him as a mastermind of the protests and a conspirator advocating for US sanctions against Hong Kong and the mainland. Chinese authorities have rejected accusations of eroding the city's rule of law.

"There is no doubt" that Lai "had harboured his resentment and hatred of" China for many of his adult years, Judge Esther Toh told a packed courtroom as the tycoon, wearing a pale green jumper and a grey jacket, sat with his arms folded.



Palestinian women react as a man collapses at the entrance to the Nur Shams refugee camp in the Israeli-occupied northern West Bank yesterday, after residents were expelled earlier this year during an ongoing Israeli military operation.

PHOTO: AFP

Chile elects Kast as president in rightward shift

Crime concerns defined campaign

REUTERS, Santiago



Jose Antonio Kast won Chile's presidential election on Sunday, leveraging voter fears over rising crime and migration to steer the country in its sharpest rightward shift since the end of the military dictatorship in 1990.

Kast secured a commanding 58 percent of the vote in a runoff with the government-backed leftist candidate Jeannette Jara, who won 42 percent and swiftly conceded.

Throughout his decades-long political career, Kast has been a consistent right-wing hardliner. He has proposed building border walls, deploying the military to high-crime areas, and deporting all migrants who are in the country illegally.

In a victory speech to a raucous crowd who waved Chilean flags at the headquarters of his Republican Party in the upscale neighborhood of Las Condes in Santiago on Sunday evening, Kast pledged "real change."

"Without security, there is no peace. Without peace, there is no democracy, and without democracy there is no freedom, and Chile will return to be free of crime, anxiety and fear," he said.

Candidates, July warriors can now apply for firearms

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The decisions on granting a licence or retainer will be made after scrutiny by the district magistrate and the intelligence agencies.

"In this process, the applicant will bear the cost for obtaining a licence and the appointment of a retainer. If the applicant can operate the firearm, then there is no need to apply for a retainer."

Police have already started threat analysis of high-profile individuals, including political candidates, to provide special security measures.

Md Faruq Hossain, joint commissioner (crime) of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police, told The Daily Star yesterday, "We may not be able to provide police security to all; in those cases, we may deploy Ansar members."

Meanwhile, Chattogram Metropolitan Police

Commissioner Hasib Aziz has directed his subordinates to provide additional security to candidates of the National Citizen Party and leaders of Students Against Discrimination.

In a wireless message issued yesterday, he instructed all personnel to remain alert and ordered officers-in-charge of the city's 16 police stations to coordinate efforts to ensure security.

Asked whether there was any specific threat, Hasib Aziz said, "There is no specific threat, but police will provide security as an added precaution following the incident in Dhaka [attack on Hadil]."

POLICY, APPLICATION As per the "Firearms Licence and Retainer Appointment Policy for Politically

Important Persons and Parliamentary Candidate

Nominees, 2025", when an application is filed, the district magistrate will carry out preliminary verification within two working days, and intelligence agencies will complete security checks within three working days for issuing a firearms licence.

To be eligible, an applicant must fall within the covered categories and, where applicable, be assessed as facing a security risk based on intelligence reports.

The guideline also requires a permanent address and proper arrangements for storing and safeguarding the weapon. It limits the licence to self-defence, bars approvals for multiple firearms and automatic or military-grade firearms, and says licences will not be issued for hobby or sporting purposes.

The guideline says an approved firearms

licence issued under this framework will remain valid until 15 days after the election results are published, after which it will be treated as automatically cancelled. It adds that the home ministry may convert such a licence into a general firearms licence if the applicant meets the conditions that exist for a general firearms licence.

If a licence holder cannot personally carry or use the weapon for valid reasons, a retainer may be allowed to carry it. To qualify, a retainer must be a Bangladeshi citizen aged at least 25, trained in firearm use and medically fit, with a fitness certificate from a government hospital. Each politically important person or candidate will be allowed only one retainer.

No firearms licence will be issued in a retainer's name. Retired police

or retired armed forces members will get priority.

The retainer may carry the weapon, but responsibility for the weapon and compliance will remain with the licence holder, and the retainer must carry the licence and approval documents while carrying it. The policy bars the weapon from being used for unlawful purposes, sold, transferred, or used beyond the purpose for which the licence or approval was granted.

Licences and approvals may be cancelled if misuse is proven or conditions are violated, and notes that the guideline is intended to complement the Election Commission's code of conduct, not override it.

Earlier, on December 13, the core committee meeting on law and order at the home ministry approved the decisions to provide firearms to

candidates and politically important persons.

Commenting on issuing firearms licences, Tawohidul Haque, associate professor at the Institute of Social Welfare and Research at Dhaka University, said the state must take full responsibility for ensuring security and not resort to stopgap measures like providing firearms licences. "How many people will be given licences? Is it enough to secure the candidates? The government must take proper steps to address security concerns," he told The Daily Star.

Besides, granting licences could lead to potential misuse of firearms as many would get one for the sake of it," he said, adding that the government must ensure strict monitoring.

Prosecution appeals

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scale of attacks on unarmed civilians left no scope for lesser sentences.

In another development, the prosecution yesterday began arguments in a case against former DMP commissioner Habibur Rahman and seven of his subordinates over the killings of six people in the capital's Chankharpur area on August 5 during the July uprising.

The prosecution said Habibur had ordered police

to open fire on unarmed protesters. At this stage, the tribunal asked whether the commissioner's order was to open fire from a kneeling position.

The prosecution confirmed, saying, "Yes, he ordered that." However, commissioner Habibur failed to take any action against his subordinates who disobeyed his orders. Instead, he awarded police officers for suppressing the student movement.

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প্রবাস ক্ষিম

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