Pak ex-PM Imran's sisters freed from jail

Third sister remains in prison

AFP, *Lahore*

Two sisters of jailed Pakistani former prime minister Imran Khan were released from prison in Lahore yesterday, their lawyer and Khan's political party said.

Noreen Khan and Uzma Khan "were released from Kot Lakhpat at 2:00 pm (0900 GMT)", their advocate Rana Mudassar told AFP over the phone, explaining that the government had withdrawn their joint detention order, while a third sister, Aleema Khan, remained in prison.

Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party confirmed the release of the two sisters. But it said in a statement the move did not "erase the suffering inflicted on Imran Khan's family" and called for "no further persecution".



Women balance earthen pots adorned with mango leaves and flowers on their heads and dance to the beat of drums during the opening of a three-day indigenous cultural festival and fair in Rajshahi's Godagari upazila yesterday. Indigenous artists from across the division joined the event. Stalls at the fair, organised on the grounds of Kadma High School in Rishikul union, showcase traditional farming tools, indigenous crafts and herbal medicines.

PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

HSC retake exams from Dec 1 to 15

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The routine for this year's Higher Secondary Certificate and equivalent supplementary examinations, scheduled for December 1 to 15, was published yesterday.

Of the 594,113 students who failed this year's HSC and equivalent examinations, 422,905 failed in one or two subjects and are eligible to sit the supplementary tests.

The examinations will begin with English first and second papers on December 1, followed by Bangla first and second papers on December 2.



Physics, accounting and logic examinations will be held on December 3, followed by information and communication technology on December 5.

The written examinations will conclude on December 15 with economics and Arabic papers. All practical examinations must also be completed by that date.

The morning session will begin at 10:00am and the afternoon session at 2:00pm. Candidates must enter examination halls at least 30 minutes before the tests begin.

Education Minister ANM Ehsanul Hoque Milon announced the supplementary examinations on October 31, saying students who failed in one or two subjects should not have to wait another year to pass.

The authorities plan to publish the results by December 31.

US-Israeli strikes on Iran emit 1.5m tonnes of CO_2

Iranian President Pezeshkian tells COP31 delegates

AGENCIES

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian has said that US and Israeli attacks on fuel facilities in Iran released 1.5 million tonnes of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, causing extensive environmental damage.

At the COP31 UN climate summit in Turkey on Wednesday evening, Pezeshkian said attacks on fuel facilities in Asaluyeh released 500,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide. In comparison, strikes on fuel storage tanks near Tehran produced another one million tonnes.

Israeli strikes targeted oil storage facilities in Tehran on March 7, while gas processing facilities in Asaluyeh in southern Iran were hit March 18.

The president accused Washington and Tel Aviv of causing severe environmental destruction during the military offensive, which began February 28.

He said the attacks highlighted a contradiction between international efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and military operations that destroy infrastructure, trigger widespread fires and release pollutants into the atmosphere.

Pezeshkian urges documentation of war-related environmental damage in Iran and Gaza and compensation mechanisms

Pezeshkian also condemned Israel's military operations in the Gaza Strip, saying the territory was facing a humanitarian and environmental catastrophe due to the destruction of infrastructure, water resources and ecosystems.

He said attacks on Iranian protected areas and environmental ranger stations also damaged natural resources and threatened future generations.

Calling for international accountability, Pezeshkian urged organizations to document environmental damage caused by US and Israeli military operations in Iran and Gaza and establish mechanisms for compensation.

He also highlighted Iran's renewable energy development, saying the installed capacity increased from 1,250 megawatts to more than 6,150 megawatts during the last two years.

Iran generated more than 4.5 billion kilowatt-hours of clean electricity in 2026, preventing 2.5 million tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions, according to Pezeshkian.

He stressed that peace and environmental protection were inseparable, saying lasting peace was essential to safeguarding the planet.

The US and Israeli attacks triggered a war that has caused widespread casualties and damage to infrastructure. Diplomatic efforts involving regional mediators have since sought to end the hostilities.

Turkey is hosting the COP31 UN climate conference in the Mediterranean resort city of Antalya from November 9 to 20, bringing together world leaders and climate negotiators to discuss emissions reductions, climate adaptation and financing.

Grants, not more loans

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access to environmentally friendly climate technologies and providing necessary support for technology transfer to developing countries.

The fourth proposal called for accelerating the transition to renewable energy through affordable financing, skills development, and a fair energy transition.

Under the fifth proposal, Tarique urged COP31 to adopt the "Belem-Antalya Action Mechanism" to support a fair energy transition, with fair financing and fair trade as its core principles.

Tarique also outlined Bangladesh's ongoing initiatives and future plans to address climate change, highlighting the country's vulnerability despite its limited contribution to global emissions.

He said Bangladesh accounts for less than 0.5 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions, yet remains among the countries most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Despite challenges, the government remains committed to building a $1 trillion climate-resilient and sustainable economy.

Tarique said his government, guided by the principle of "Bangladesh First", believes economic growth and environmental protection must go hand in hand.

The prime minister said the government has set a target of meeting 20 percent of the country's total electricity demand from renewable sources by 2030.

To achieve this, the government is working towards generating 4,000 megawatts of solar power through special tax incentives while encouraging waste-to-energy projects.

Tarique said Bangladesh has around 300 LEED-certified garment factories, and the government is encouraging the expansion of such environmentally friendly industries.

He said initiatives are also underway to promote green transport, including electric vehicles, increase the use of environmentally friendly products such as jute bags, and establish a national framework for carbon trading.

The prime minister also announced plans to plant 25 crore trees across the country over the next five years as part of the government's environmental protection efforts.

He highlighted the Padma Barrage and Teesta Barrage master plans, alongside an initiative to excavate 20,000 kilometres of rivers and canals to improve water retention, reduce flood risks, restore wetlands, and raise groundwater levels.

The government is also working to restore mangrove forests on reclaimed coastal land to protect coastal communities and strengthen their resilience to climate change, he said.

He emphasised the need to translate climate commitments into concrete action and called for stronger global cooperation and collective efforts to build a sustainable future.

On the sidelines of COP31, Tarique held separate bilateral meetings with Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and British Foreign Secretary Ed Miliband, discussing Rohingya repatriation, climate change, investment and bilateral cooperation.

The premier also visited Bangladesh's Jute Pavilion at the COP31 Green Zone, where he inspected environmentally friendly jute products.

RMG Owners

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President Mahmud Hasan Khan told The Daily Star yesterday.

"If the situation in the industrial zones does not improve soon, we will be forced to follow section 13(1) of the Labour Act [no work, no pay] to save our industries," he said.

Production has been severely disrupted as groups of workers have vandalised factories or stayed away from work, demanding higher wages.

Over the past two weeks, an average of nearly 300 factories remained closed each day amid fears of vandalism, BGMEA data showed. Yesterday, 204 factories in Ashulia, Savar, and Gazipur were shut.

The unrest has also alarmed international clothing retailers and brands, which depend on timely deliveries in an intensely competitive market, Mahmud said.

Delayed shipments could force suppliers to pay for costly air freight, offer steep discounts or face order cancellations, he added.

He urged workers and union leaders to act responsibly, noting that a wage board was already working to revise the minimum pay.

Babul Akhter, workers' representative on the minimum wage board, also urged workers to return to their factories and continue production while the board works on a new pay structure.

"We do not own the ongoing illegal strikes, vandalism or throwing brick chips at factories. Workers should return to their workplaces and resume production," he told The Daily Star over the phone.

Babul has proposed raising the minimum monthly wage in the sector to Tk 32,000 from the existing Tk 12,500.

The board's third meeting is scheduled for November 16, when the owners' representative is expected to submit a wage proposal.

The new pay structure is scheduled to take effect in December, with workers receiving the revised wages in January.

Amirul Haque Amin, president of the National Garment Workers Federation, agreed that workers should not continue the unrest while the wage board is working.

Describing the current unrest as "anarchism rather than a labour movement", he blamed a delay in forming the board for fuelling the agitation.

The board should have been formed at least 15 days earlier, as the revised wage structure was already scheduled to take effect in December under the amended Labour Act 2026, he said.

The absence of active trade unions in many factories has also left workers without effective collective bargaining platforms, pushing some to take to the streets with their wage demands, Amirul added.

Khondaker Golam Moazzem, president of local think tank Knowledge Hub Institute (KHI), said the owners' representative should submit a wage proposal quickly to build workers' confidence in the process.

"A quick solution is needed," he said, adding that he would also submit a proposal to the wage board soon.

The nature of the unrest suggested that it might involve not only workers but also "outside elements", Moazzem said, without elaborating.

Salauddin Shapon, general secretary of IndustriALL Bangladesh Council, said union leaders had made several attempts to contain the unrest, but their efforts remained fragmented.

"For instance, when the unrest is brought under control in Savar areas, agitation breaks out in Ashulia," he said, adding that unorganised labour movements were difficult to control because unions had limited influence over workers.

Nazma Akter, president of Sommilito Garments Sramik Federation, said many factories in Savar and Ashulia had shut yesterday afternoon as workers left their workplaces. She called for an urgent resolution to the crisis.

"And it is also true that police have been beating up the workers because of the unrest. This should stop and a new pay structure should be fixed quickly," she said.

"At the same time, political parties should reach a consensus not to use the garment sector for political purposes," she added.

Govt approves Chinese FSRU project despite higher cost

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over the cost of the project.

An earlier analysis by The Daily Star found that CNEE's proposed daily service fee was 35-37 percent higher than what Bangladesh currently pays for its two operational FSRUs.

Under the 15-year arrangement, CNEE will charge $342,000 a day, compared with $254,000 for Excelerate Energy's terminal and $249,115 for Summit LNG's terminal.

The proposed fee is also higher than the $239,653-a-day benchmark recommended in a feasibility study by state-owned Rupantarita Prakritik Gas Company (RPGCL) in 2025.

A seven-member government negotiation committee had recommended two options for the CNEE deal: a 15-year agreement at $342,000 a day or a 20-year agreement at $329,000 a day. However, the committee itself said it could not determine how much of the additional cost was justified without a more detailed assessment.

The Daily Star's earlier investigation also found that CNEE had no prior experience in developing FSRUs. Despite this, the company was selected for negotiations under the G2G arrangement, without competitive bidding.

An examination of government documents by The Daily Star found that at least four international companies had offered lower daily fees for similar FSRU facilities.

Aramco Trading Singapore quoted $190,000, China National Machinery Import & Export Corporation (CMC) $225,000, Azerbaijan's SOCAR $288,000 and Oman's OQ Trading $296,000, compared with CNEE's negotiated rate of $342,000.

A separate proposal from China Merchants Industry (CMI), submitted while negotiations with CNEE were underway, also offered significantly cheaper alternatives.

A comparison by The Daily Star found large portions of the proposal closely mirror another proposal submitted just 38 days earlier by US-based company NS Energy Navigation, whose chief executive is the grandson of Brahmanbaria-4 MP Mushfiqur Rahman, also the chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on the finance ministry.

CNEE's proposal had nearly identical wording, commercial alternatives, implementation schedules and contractual arrangements. A project map in CNEE's submission even retained the label "Proposed NS Energy FSRU".

On June 19, CNEE submitted a proposal to establish the offshore LNG terminal at Kutubjom under a build-own-operate model.

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs gave in-principle approval to process the proposal on July 28.

The purchase committee returned the proposal for further review in October before it was brought back for approval.

The decision appeared predetermined, as the authorities had cheaper proposals to consider and alternative procurement methods that could have saved public money, said M Shamsul Alam, energy adviser to the Consumers Association of Bangladesh.

Some international companies had submitted cheaper offers, but there was no indication that these had been considered in the decision-making process.

"We have repeatedly alleged that a deeply entrenched system of looting public money exists in the energy administration. Unless that system is reformed, changing the people in the administration will not change the process of exploitation."

The decision underscored the need for structural reforms in the energy sector, he said, adding that the interim government had overlooked the issue and the current government was also not giving it adequate attention.

If this practice continues, the government risks facing a major setback in ensuring energy security, he added.

The decision to add another FSRU comes amid a situation where Bangladesh has been facing growing pressure to secure LNG supplies amid disruptions to shipments from the Middle East following the war in the region.

Bangladesh currently operates two FSRUs, both located in Moheshkhali, with a combined regasification capacity of around 1,100 mmcfd. The proposed Kutubjom terminal is expected to bring the capacity to 1,700 mmcfd.

At the same meeting, the CCGP approved the signing of three separate draft side-letter agreements with OQ Trading of Oman under two existing long-term and one short-term sales and purchase agreements (SPAs) for LNG imports in 2027.

The committee also approved a proposal to procure two LNG cargoes from Malaysia's Pentitude Energy in 2027 at a price of $0.18 per million British thermal units (MMBtu) below the Japan-Korea Marker price.

The number of cargoes may vary upon mutual understanding between the two parties, the approval document said.

Meanwhile, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs gave in-principle approval to import LNG through the direct purchase method from Japan, the UAE and Nigeria.

Under the approvals, the government will import LNG from UAE-based ADNOC Trading and Nigeria's Ojimadu & Marites Oil Marketing, while Petrobangla will sign a short-term agreement with Japan's JERA Global Markets.

Fire at NCP MP's home

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ancestral home.

The NCP leader said she received several threatening phone calls before the attack. She subsequently filed a general diary with Dhanmondi Police Station in Dhaka on Tuesday, but continued to get threats even after filing the complaint.

CCTV footage showed four consecutive explosions at the house around 12:00am, she said.

She also blamed the delay in the firefighters' arrival at the scene. By the time they arrived, most of the house had been gutted.

At parliament, Opposition Chief Whip and NCP Convener Nahid Islam first raised the issue. He said four petrol bombs had been hurled at the house of Tabassum, causing the fire.

He questioned how the government could still claim that law and order had not deteriorated after a reported petrol bomb attack on Tabassum's village home.

Warning that the ruling BNP could be the next target if attacks allegedly carried out by ousted fascist forces continue, Nahid urged the government to clarify its position.

He said the local police station OC claimed that no evidence of petrol bomb attack was found at the scene, without any forensic test.

Nahid said it was evident who was being targeted.

In response, Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed told the House that the fire might have been caused by an electric short circuit. Referring to preliminary findings, he said investigators currently believed that no petrol bomb had been used in the incident.

After the Maghrib prayer break, Nahid again rose on a point of order.

He said the home minister referred to various video clips and pieces of evidence, but a video widely circulated on social media clearly showed that an object had been thrown from outside, after which the entire house caught fire.

The opposition chief whip also disputed the minister's description of the property, saying that it was not an abandoned house nor merely a shed for livestock. He said people lived there, including the caretaker's family and relatives of Tabassum. "People could have died."

Nahid alleged that Kushtia Awami League leaders admitted the responsibility, but accused the home minister of absolving them of blame. "Unfortunately, he [home minister] has gone into complete denial and sought to dismiss the incident altogether."

Salahuddin then took the floor again, insisting that his statement had been evidence-based.

"A regrettable incident occurred," he said. "The opposition chief whip says the house was deliberately set on fire. Does that mean the investigation has already been completed, Honourable Speaker?"

His remarks triggered protests from opposition lawmakers.

Addressing them, the minister said, "Please allow me to speak. If you wish to make further remarks later, you may do so with the Speaker's permission."

As the opposition MPs continued to protest, many lawmakers from the treasury bench supported Salahuddin.

The home minister then restated details of the incident and repeated that preliminary investigations had found no evidence of petrol bomb attack, prompting another round of noisy protests from opposition members.

Deputy Speaker Kayser Kamal urged him to proceed, but opposition lawmakers continued their protests.

The deputy speaker repeatedly attempted to restore order and drew the attention of the opposition chief whip. Amid the commotion, the home minister was briefly forced to end his remarks and take his seat.

During the uproar, NCP lawmakers Abdul Hannan Masud, Mahmuda Alam Mitu, and others stood up and started speaking without microphones. The deputy speaker asked Hannan Masud to sit down time and again.

When the home minister again referred that two goats had reportedly been kept at the house, opposition lawmakers resumed their protests.

He subsequently said he directed law enforcement agencies to investigate the fire incident thoroughly.

"If a petrol bomb was thrown, there should be evidence of it. That should be investigated," he said. "If the fire was caused in some other way, that can only be known after the probe."

The minister said if sabotage or deliberate arson was established, appropriate action would be taken.

It is not appropriate to blame the entire government simply because an incident of fire at a house before the investigation is completed, he said. "I don't want to follow the old culture of immediately declaring that this or that group is responsible before the facts are established."