

Concern over Khaleda's health grows as jail authorities cancel planned family visit

The jail authorities have cancelled a planned meeting of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia with her family members citing illness, the party says.

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Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir says they are worried about her health. Khaleda's sister Selina Islam, son Tarique Rahman's mother-in-law Iqbal Mand Banu and Tarique's sister-in-law Shahina Khan Zaman Bindu, and several other relatives went to visit her at the old jailhouse on Nazimuddin Road in Dhaka on Friday afternoon.

Mirza Fakhrul said they had permission to visit her, but the jail authorities did not allow them to see her. He said the authorities told Khaleda's relatives that she was "unable to come downstairs".

"It seems her condition has deteriorated a lot. We (BNP leaders) have also been denied an appointment," he added. Mirza Fakhrul and two other BNP leaders went to visit the former prime minister in jail on Thursday, but the jail authorities did not let them in.

"Her family members have expressed concern after hearing about her condition from the jail authorities. We are also concerned," the BNP secretary general said. Senior Superintendent of Dhaka jail Jahangir Kabir neither took bdnews24.com calls nor did he answer text queries on the issue. Khaleda has been in the prison since Feb 8 when a court sentenced her to five years in prison for corruption in Zia Orphanage Trust case.

Mirza Fakhrul met her in jail for the last time on Apr 6. The BNP chief underwent a medical checkup at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University the following day. On Mar 29, the jail authorities cancelled her meeting with Mirza Fakhrul, citing her illness.

The authorities also formed a team of doctors for Khaleda's treatment. After a checkup, the doctors said Khaleda's condition was 'nothing serious'.