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Khaleda, Hasina have Tk 2-3cr each in banks

Show account details to Bangladesh Bank so far; Hasina says the amount belongs to Bangabandhu Trust

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Commercial banks so far have reported that former prime ministers Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina each have up to Tk 3 crore in bank accounts, said banking sources.

More banks continued to submit information on the two leaders and their dependants as part of the central bank's inquiry into their transaction details.

Most of Khaleda's money was deposited in the state-owned Sonali Bank while Hasina's in

Agrani Bank. As of last evening, the facts and figures on their family members' accounts were yet to come, added the sources.

The Bangladesh Bank (BB) on Wednesday verbally directed the commercial banks to come up with all banking information on Khaleda by midday that day. It also asked for similar information on Hasina to be provided by 11:00am yesterday.

The information gathered till yesterday afternoon has already been sent to the National

Coordination Committee (NCC) on Corruption and Crime. Earlier, the NCC has sought the information through the BB, said sources close to the administration.

Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina last night told The Daily Star, "Why running around for the information? I have already submitted those [wealth statements] to the Election Commission along with my nomination papers."

Asked about the reported Tk 2-3

Bhuiyan trashes controversy over Khaleda's leadership

UNB, Dhaka

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan yesterday dismissed any controversy over the leadership of Khaleda Zia.

"There is no controversy in the BNP over the leadership of Khaleda Zia," he told the news agency at his residence.

He said the BNP is united and necessary reforms in the party will be done under the leadership of Khaleda Zia.

Bhuiyan thanked the Election Commission for taking initiative to reform the electoral procedures.

"I saw the reform proposals. We will review the proposals in party

British consultant dies 430m down Barapukhuria mine

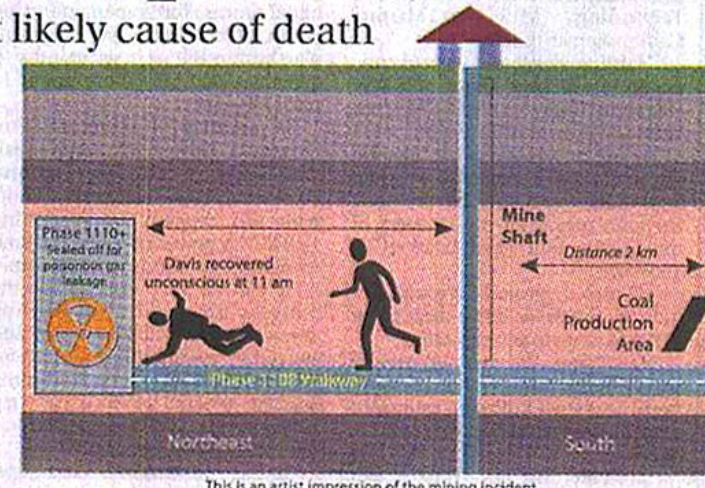
Air poisoning most likely cause of death

SHARIEF KHAN with KONGKON KARMAKAR in Barapukhuria

A British mining consultant died most likely from air poisoning inside the hazardously heated Barapukhuria coal mine at a depth of 430 metres yesterday.

The incident did not affect the mine's daily production that officially resumed on April 17. But this has hampered recovery of huge mining equipment which were abandoned in a danger zone in 2005.

Mine ventilation expert Albert Barnes Davis (62) and Nicolas Sharon Woodburn (26) alias Nick,



This is an artist impression of the mining incident

both belonging to the mine's British consultant firm IMC, went down the mine at around 8:30 am to implement a recovery plan for the abandoned equipment in mining zone-1110.

This zone was sealed off in October 2005 because of an alarming rise of deadly carbon-monoxide gas caused by combustion of extracted coal that was left unattended.

A top source at the mine told The Daily Star that at one point of a newly developed passage under zone-1108 that led to the sealed off poisonous zone, Woodburn

SEE PAGE 19 COL 7

ADB for big IPP plants to mitigate power crisis

UNB, Dhaka

Asian Development Bank (ADB) Country Director Hua Du yesterday stressed the need for setting up big plants of Independent Power Producer (IPP) to mitigate the power crisis in Bangladesh.

"You definitely need big IPP plants," she told newsmen after meeting with Finance Adviser Mirza Azizul Islam at his secretariat office.

About the small IPP plants, the ADB country chief said before setting up small IPP plants "you must take into account the site, economic viability and how far it is from the grid."

Hua Du observed that the

SEE PAGE 19 COL 6



BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia waves as she comes out of her brother Sayeed Iskandar's Baridhara residence in the capital early today after a family gathering.

Khaleda steps out after 24 days; meets family

She will leave for Umrah next week, return shortly

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Khaleda Zia, who was under tremendous pressure over last one week for going into exile, stepped out of her cantonment residence last night for the first time in 24 days of reported confinement and said, "I will tell everything on time."

The former prime minister and BNP chairperson herself and her younger brother Major (retd) Sayeed Iskandar confirmed that she is going to Saudi Arabia next week to perform Umrah.

Earlier, a senior BNP leader, who contacted Khaleda yesterday, told The Daily Star on condition of

anonymity that Khaleda along with some family members will stay in Saudi Arabia for five to seven days.

Khaleda along with her family members, excepting younger son Arafat Rahman Koko, attended a family gathering at Iskandar's Baridhara residence last night.

Emerging from the house after 2 hours 35 minutes, a smiling Khaleda replied to a few questions of the awaiting reporters.

Iskandar told reporters that Khaleda will leave for Saudi Arabia next week and that she requested the Saudi diplomat who met her Wednesday evening to issue visas for herself, younger son Koko and

two daughters-in-law.

Journalists from both the print and electronic media rushed to 45 Park Road house of Iskandar and waited there for hours until Khaleda came out of the first floor of the house at 12:25am.

TV cameramen focused flashlights on Khaleda as soon as she came out of the house looking at the journalists with a smile.

Asked how she was, Khaleda uttered a single word: "Well".

The journalists then asked Khaleda if she is going to Saudi Arabia. Khaleda remained silent for a few seconds and then said, "Yes."

SEE PAGE 19 COL 1

Mainul sees govt courage in lifting bar on Hasina

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law and Information Adviser Mainul Hossain yesterday said the government showed courage in withdrawing the restriction on Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina's homecoming.

"If the decision of imposing a ban on her homecoming was wrong, then the government showed courage by withdrawing it," he said while talking to the journalists about the withdrawal of the press note that had barred Hasina's homecoming.

The government had imposed the temporary restriction considering that the law and order situation might deteriorate after her

SEE PAGE 19 COL 3

DIALOGUE ON REFORM PROPOSALS Govt unwilling to free EC sectt from PMO

CEC says constitutional amendment needed for this; 2 ex-CECs reject his view

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The chief election commissioner (CEC) yesterday said the caretaker government does not want to free the Election Commission (EC) Secretariat from the control of Prime Minister's Office (PMO) since it requires amending the constitution.

But two former CECs and a few civil society members said there is no major obstacle to separating the EC Secretariat from the PMO, which is now the office of the chief adviser.

The views came at a daylong dialogue over a set of draft proposals for electoral reforms at the conference room of the National

Economic Council.

Responding to suggestions placed by eminent persons for de-linking the front organisations, including the student fronts, from the political parties, the CEC said the EC will examine if there is any scope to insert any provision to this end in the laws for the political parties' registration.

The government also wants to de-link the front organisations from the political parties and asked the EC to examine the possibilities, CECATM Shamsul Huda said.

Over 40 eminent personalities, including educationists, economists, NGO activists and former civil and military bureaucrats

SEE PAGE 19 COL 7

Hasina to return in first week of May

She tells The Daily Star of a motion in House of Commons protesting ban on her homecoming

HASAN JAHID TUSHER

The Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina will return home in the first week of May, she said in an exclusive interview with The Daily Star last night.

"I still have some appointments here, I will return home as soon as these are completed," the AL chief told The Daily Star over telephone.

"People of my country are eagerly waiting and I will return home as early as possible, probably in the first week of next month," said the former prime minister adding that there is nothing more

painful than staying away from home.

She thanked all the national and international media for taking a 'strong stance' after the government imposed a ban on her returning home.

"I met with three members of [British] parliament yesterday and talked to some international news channels," the elder daughter of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman said, adding that she would also talk to Commonwealth Secretary General Don McKinnon and other British parliamentarians.

SEE PAGE 19 COL 6

Where graft reigns supreme

Teachers forced to bribe for promotion, transfer, appointment

SURANJITH DEABNATH

The Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE) which is tasked with supervision of secondary schools, intermediate colleges and madrasas has turned into a centre of corruption where teachers are forced to bribe for getting their job-related tasks done.

A recent investigation by The Daily Star found that a large section of DSHE officials from top tiers to the bottom harass the teachers for their appointment, promotion, transfer, leave and monthly pay order (MPO).

The malpractice continues even during the present caretaker government that has initiated serious anti-corruption drives in different sectors.

Through interviewing over two dozen officials, staffs and teachers related to the DSHE situated at the Shikha Bhaban, it was gleaned that there are 'unwritten bribe rates' for everything at the DSHE.

SEE PAGE 19 COL 4



Teachers of high schools, colleges and madrasas from across the country are forced to wait in front of the closed gate of Shikha Bhaban in the capital as the authorities keep it shut until 2:00pm every working day.

PHOTO: STAR

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