

Teenage son Bilawal succeeds Benazir

PPP decides to take part in election, Pak ruling party sees polls delay, Sharif too backs out from election boycott decision

AGENCIES, *Nasir*

Slain Pakistani opposition leader Benazir Bhutto's son Bilawal yesterday was named chairman of her party, with her husband named co-chairman, two top party officials told AFP.

Slain Benazir's party will take part in national elections set for January 8, her husband Asif Ali Zardari said yesterday.

The party of former Pakistan premier Nawaz Sharif will also take part in elections, after earlier saying it would boycott, two spokesmen of the party said.

Zardari earlier called on Sharif

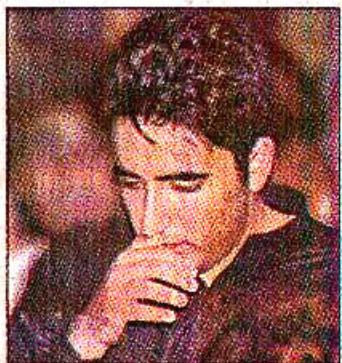
A blood-stained family legacy

AFP, *undated*

At just 19 years old, a blood-stained family legacy could hang heavy on the shoulders of assassinated Pakistan opposition leader Benazir Bhutto's only son Bilawal.

He becomes the third Bhutto to

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Bilawal

to reverse his decision to boycott the polls, which Sharif had announced as a gesture of solidarity in the wake of Benazir's assassination on Thursday.

"We will go to elections," Zardari told a news conference at which his son Bilawal was presented as the new chairman of the Pakistan People's Party.

"We are grateful to Nawaz Sharif for announcing a boycott of the election. But we appeal to him to end the boycott and take part."

Meanwhile, a personal spokes-



Asif Ali Zardari

man for Sharif said the decision was taken after Benazir's husband Asif Ali Zardari had asked Sharif's party to participate.

"We will contest the election," a party spokesman said. "No major party should boycott because it would damage democracy," the spokesman, Zaeem Qadri, quoted Zardari as telling Sharif.

The decision came just three days after Bhutto was assassinated, leaving a void at the head of the PPP.

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Dhaka asked to adopt counter militant ideology

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh may end up facing Pakistan's militancy situation in just five years if the government does not counter militant ideology by creating strategies within itself and the civil society, said renowned political analyst Rohan Gunaratna yesterday.

A global expert on al-Qaeda, Gunaratna said Bangladesh has the operational capability to prevent militancy but the government does not have mechanisms in place to sweeping arrests last year, Gunaratna said.

Referring to the countrywide bomb blasts carried out by the JMB on August 17, 2005, he said, "The JMB was known to the Bangladeshi authorities before that incident, [but] there wasn't the initiative on part of the Bangladeshi authorities to act against this group until they could plan and conduct the operation."

"That in many ways speaks of a nation," he said, adding that the JMB was able to work under religious cover through which they made linkages within the country and was able to survive and grow enough to conduct the August 17 operation.

"The threat of terrorism is sometimes hidden," Gunaratna said. "Though JMB leaders have been executed, the ideology of this

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India ups prices of exported rice again

Refixes it at \$500 from \$425 a tonne

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

India has increased the minimum rate of different kinds of rice exported to Bangladesh to \$500 from \$425 per tonne, which rice traders said will cause further rise in the already hiked price of the commodity in domestic market.

In a notification on Thursday, the commerce ministry of the

Indian central government increased the prices of exported rice with effect from yesterday, our correspondent at Benapole reports.

Rice importers have described the Indian government's decision as an indirect effort to ban rice export to Bangladesh.

"This price hike will discourage

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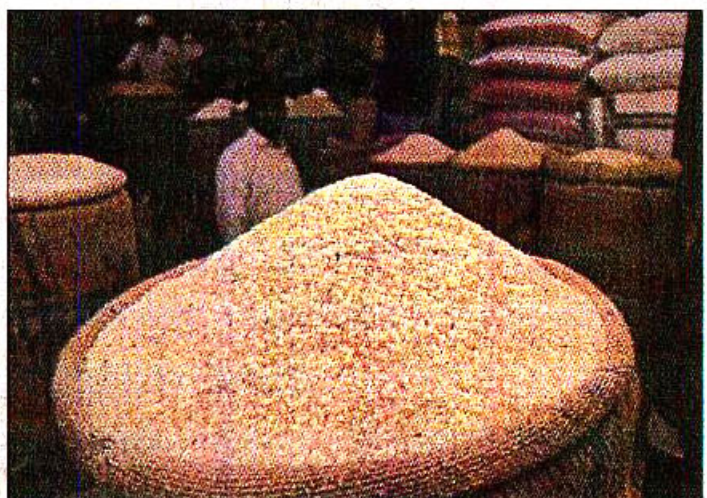


PHOTO: STAR

Rice with its soaring price is set to become even costlier as India increased the minimum price of rice exported to Bangladesh.

NIKO GRAFT CASE Khaleda, Moudud shown held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Detained former premier Khaleda Zia and two of her detained former cabinet colleagues including former law minister Moudud Ahmed were shown arrested yesterday in connection with Niko graft case.

Following separate petitions filed by the investigation officer (IO) of the case, ACC Assistant Director SM Sahidur Rahman, the order was issued by Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Golam Rabbani, which also showed detained former energy minister AKM Mosharraf Hossain as arrested.

The IO in the petitions filed yesterday -- one against Khaleda Zia and Mosharraf, and the other against Moudud -- mentioned that for the sake of fair investigation the accused needed to be shown as arrested.

Earlier on December 9, ACC Assistant Director Mahbubul Alam filed the case against Khaleda Zia and four others saying that although Khaleda Zia had been the custodian of the country's wealth as the prime minister, she awarded Niko an opportunity to extract gas worth Tk10,000 crore, criminally violating her oath, abusing her power unlawfully, and through

corruption. The ACC however did not take any decision regarding two other accused in the case -- former acting energy secretary Khandaker Shahidul Islam, and Vice-president (South Asia) of Niko Research Bangladesh Ltd Kashem Sharif.

Khaleda Zia was detained on September 3 following filing of the first graft case by the ACC against her and her younger son Arafat Rahman Koko, in connection with alleged violation of tender conditions in appointing Gatco, an indenting house, for container handling at Dhaka inland container depot and at Chittagong port yard.

Confirming ACC's move to show the former premier along with two of her former cabinet colleagues arrested, ACC Director General (Admin) Col Hanif Iqbal said, "A requisition order for documents was also issued by the ACC."

"Once the documents are gathered, the IO will take depositions, question witnesses and suspects, and visit places for investigation," he added.

Sources in the ACC said depositions of secretaries to different ministries including energy and law ministries, and former officials

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New Year's Eve to see tight security

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has taken up heavy security measures in the capital to check any destructive activities and maintain law and order during New Year's Eve and the celebration of the New Year.

Security measures will also be beefed up in other parts of the country particularly in the divisional cities and district headquarters.

Around 6,000 law enforcers will be deployed in the city including the diplomatic zone and the posh areas of Gulshan, Banani, Baridhara, Dhanmondi, Uttara and on the Dhaka University Campus.

Of the law enforcers to be deployed, 2,500 will be from the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and the rest police who keep vigil across

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PUBLIC SERVANTS Deadline for wealth report submission now Feb 28

BSS, *Dhaka*

The Ministry of Establishment has extended the deadline for submission of wealth statements of the government officials and employees to February 28, 2008.

The extension was made following request from the officials concerned at home and foreign missions.

The earlier deadline was December 31 (today).

According to an official hand-out, the deadline would only be applicable for this year only.

50pc internet tariff cut on cards

MD HASAN

The government is likely to cut internet tariff by 50 percent soon in a bid to boost the country's ICT (information and communication technology) industry.

Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB), which is responsible for fixing the tariff, last week sent in a proposal to finance ministry to reduce the prices.

But industry insiders said 50 percent cut is not enough.

An internet subscriber has to pay BTTB Tk 35,000 a month for a 256 kbps (kilobits per second) dedicated internet connection. But in India, a subscriber pays an amount that is hardly 1,800 in Bangladesh taka for the same connection.

BTTB's charge for 512 kbps dedicated internet connection is Tk 62,500 and for 1 megabit it is Tk120,000. In India, charges for the same connections are Tk 4,500 and Tk 7,500 respectively.

*FULL STORY ON STAR BUSINESS, PAGE 8



Incredible insurance

PINAKI ROY

The government was sending the artefacts to Paris for display at the Guimet National Museum under a nominal insurance cover.

The insurance value for 187 artefacts was only 5.50 million euros [around Tk 55.4 crore] whereas value of some of the items individually could be more than the insurance money, said experts.

'Vajrasattva', the Pala-era artwork moulded out of eight metals, and 'Pragya Paromita', ancient paintings on manuscript made of palm leaves -- any of them could fetch more than the amount the entire collection was insured for.

Dr Joachim K Bautze, a German art historian who is an honorary fellow of the International Centre for Study of

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The Guimet Museum catalogue shows the image of Pragya Paromita, a manuscript containing painting, top, and a statue of sitting Buddha, right.



STOLEN ARTEFACTS 2 ringleaders held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) yesterday arrested Md Abbas Ali and Nasir Uddin, the ringleaders of 'Abbas-Nasir' smuggling group who allegedly had two Vishnu statues stolen at Zia International Airport and destroyed.

A Rab source last night told The Daily Star that Abbas was arrested in Malibagh-Khulgaon area while Nasir was arrested at Uttara in the capital.

As Rab that arrested Abbas and Nasir were conducting more raids last night in connection with the theft of the statues, the source refused to give more details about

their arrest.

Rab officials Thursday came to know about Abbas and Nasir's involvement in the theft through the confessional statements of arrestees of the case.

Since then, investigators have been saying that they would be sure about the motive behind the theft and the destruction of the statues once the two are arrested.

Investigators yesterday recovered four more broken pieces, which seemed to be parts of the two stolen statues, but experts are yet to confirm these pieces as fragments of the 1500-year-old

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IDB to help rebuild in Sidr-hit areas Says chief adviser

BSS, *Dhaka*

Islamic Development Bank (IDB) has assured the government of assistance in developing infrastructure in the country's cyclone-hit areas, Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed yesterday said.

"During my visit to Saudi Arabia for performing the holy hajj, the IDB president assured me of extending their support for the development of physical infrastructure in the cyclone-hit areas," he said while receiving donations for the cyclone victims from government and private organisations and individuals at his office.

He said relief operations in the affected areas are in the final stage and now the government is putting emphasis on rehabilitation, especially on agricultural rehabilitation.

Expressing gratitude to those who donated to the Chief Adviser's Relief and Welfare Fund, Fakhruddin said the majority of the donated money is being spent on reconstruction of houses in the cyclone-hit districts, adding that the administration has so far distributed Tk 130 crore to that end.

He said the government has

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Former forest chief confesses to graft

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Detained former chief conservator of forest Munshi Anwarul Islam yesterday confessed to a magistrate that he amassed a huge amount of wealth illegally when he was the forest boss.

Meanwhile, detained former state minister for liberation war

affairs ministry Redwan Ahmed was shown arrested in the case filed in connection with amassing wealth illegally.

Metropolitan Magistrate Mohammad Hemayet Uddin recorded the statement of the forest boss after investigation officer (IO) Mirza Zahidul Alam,

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Upazila polls in CG tenure Says LGRD adviser

UNB, *Dhaka*

LGRD Adviser Anwarul Iqbal yesterday said the caretaker government wants to hold upazila elections during its tenure.

He also hinted holding of upazila elections along with the parliamentary election.

Briefing newsmen at his

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PHOTO: STAR

This picture shows work going on in full swing at the gate of the International Trade Fair 2008 at Agargaon in the capital yesterday. The fair is scheduled to open on January 1.

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