

## Free Khaleda

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held by this December as mentioned in the Election Commission's roadmap, otherwise democracy would be in grave peril.

Hafiz said they also discussed the price hike of food items and recommended measures for the government to arrest the upward spiral.

A code of conduct for the political parties to ensure discipline in post-election politics should be formulated through discussions between the government and political parties, he added.

"It would help to put politics in order after the polls and also ensure that parliament is the centre of everything," Hafiz said, adding that people must not be held hostage to the whims of political parties resorting to programmes like hartal and blockade.

Replying to a query, Lt Gen (ret'd) Mahbubur Rahman said since elections cannot be held under the state of emergency, they have demanded its withdrawal as soon as possible.

Termining the talks 'fruitful', Commerce Adviser Hossain Zillur Rahman said the BNP leaders have placed some specific proposals and those will help the formal dialogue to succeed.

"They have demanded implementation of the electoral roadmap while we have assured them that both the government and the Election Commission are working towards a meaningful and credible election," he said, adding that the discussions have agreed on the need for a qualitative change in politics.

Referring to the proposal for a code of conduct, he said, "It is indeed a good suggestion and would be discussed in details during the formal talks."

The adviser said the BNP delegation agreed with the government's idea of holding dialogue with people alongside the political parties.

"The leaders believe a code of conduct drawn up through talks

will have the potential to be a Magna Carta by bringing about a qualitative change in politics," he continued.

According to Hossain Zillur, the BNP leaders will support whatever decision the government would take regarding timing of the local government elections.

"They even said the government can hold upazila election at any time," the adviser added.

Before going to the state guest-house, the faction leaders met at acting chairman M Saifur Rahman's Gulshan residence.

A meeting of party leaders and former lawmakers will be held at a Gulshan community centre today to decide on the next course of action.

**PRO-KHALEDA LEADERS' REACTION**  
On the news of unofficial talks between advisers and Saifur-led faction, the leaders loyal to the now detained former prime minister Khaleda Zia held an emergency meeting at Khandaker Delwar's Namflat.

During the four-hour long meeting from 11:00am, they decided they would take part in the talks if the interim government allows them to consult the detained chairperson.

Standing committee members RA Gani and Tanveer Ahmed Siddique, chairpersons of Advisers Brig Gen (ret'd) Hannan Shah and Mushfiqur Rahman, vice-presidents MK Anwar and Sarwari Rahman, joint secretaries general Goyeshwar Chandra Roy, Selima Rahman and MA Mannan, among others, attended the meeting.

The leaders also decided to take up programmes to press home the demand for Khaleda's release. They might also send a letter to the EC asking it not to invite anyone except Khandaker Delwar to represent BNP in the electoral reforms talks.

"The government is actually staging a drama by holding talks with a BNP manufactured in the government factory. It's unfortunate," Delwar told newsmen.

## Scores killed in DR Congo plane crash

AFP, GOMA, DR Congo

Scores of people were killed when a passenger plane crashed and burst into flames just after take-off yesterday at Goma in the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo, airport sources said.

An official working in the control tower at Kinshasa airport said he had received information from Goma that of about "100 people on board, there were six survivors, including the pilot and co-pilot."

The DC-9 jet, chartered by the private Hewa Bora Airline, was leaving to fly west to the capital Kinshasa when it crashed in Goma's Birere market area at around 2:30 pm (1230 GMT), trapping people inside the burning wreckage, officials at the two airports said.

## 14 grenades

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Police recovered five Arges grenades, one sub-machine carbine (SMC), two of its magazines, and 68 bullets, including 30 SMC bullets, at North Damudya of Damudya upazila in Shariatpur Monday, our Madaripur correspondent reports.

The grenades, firearms and the ammunition were found in a sack dumped into Siddya canal.

Police said the sack was pulled out to the bank around 3:00pm by Shafiq and his father who were fishing there with a net.

Police later recovered the weapons but could not arrest anyone as of 8:30 last night.

Superintendent of Police (SP) of Shariatpur Shahriar Rahman told The Daily Star that even though the grenades were under water, they were still alive.

## Tigers

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another clean sweep.  
Everybody however will look forward to see whether Mohammad Ashraf's boys can carry their fighting spirit in this match also.

The day-night game begins at 4pm Bangladesh time with TEN Sports and state-run Bangladesh Television (BTV) beaming live coverage from the 30,000-capacity ground.

The vulnerable Bangladesh batting, which showed some character before losing the third match by 23 runs chasing a mammoth 308 runs, however is all set to face a test of Mohammad Asif who is making a comeback after five-month lay-off.

The fit-right-arm paceman, who has swing and seam expertise, may pose real trouble for the Bangladesh batsmen to make sure that his side continue their dominance and do not give up the winning habit.

The visitors are likely to make one change in their batting line-up as left-handed opener Shahriar Nafees, who is struggling to keep his spot, could be replaced by either Zunaed Siddiqui or Nazimuddin.

Shakib Al Hasan's gutsy 75 in the third game after Tamim Iqbal's well-composed half-century gave the tourists some confidence and the they can enjoy another day in Multan where the pitch is usually flat.

A small stat will however be encouraging for the Tigers as Pakistan haven't enjoyed major home advantage at this ground - winning three matches and losing as many. In four day-night matches so far the team batting second has won on three occasions.

There is however uncertainty over full action today as it rained in Multan on Monday and showers are also forecast for the match day.

**TEAMS**  
**PAKISTAN** (from): Shoaib Malik (captain), Salman Butt, Mohammad Yousuf, Misbahul Haq, Shahid Afridi, Kamran Akmal, Mohammad Asif, Umar Gul, Sohail Tanveer, Rao Iftikhar, Sohail Khan, Wahab Riaz, Fawad Alam, Bazid Khan, Naumanullah and Saifraz Ahmed.

**BANGLADESH** (from): Mohammad Ashraf (captain), Tamim Iqbal, Shahriar Nafees, Zunaed Siddiqui, Aftab Ahmed, Shakib Al Hasan, Mahmudullah, Dhiman Ghosh, Mashrafe Mortaza, Forhad Reza, Abdur Razzak, Shahadat Hossain, Syed Rasel, Rokibul Hasan and Nazimuddin.

The banner from Dhaka engine replaced the one from Kolkata at the front of the train.

Though the two countries agreed on putting metal fencing on both sides near the border, Bangladesh is yet to start work on it.

As the passengers got off to be thoroughly checked, they found themselves in a waiting lounge after the customs and security personnel led them through small doors for checking.

The journey resumed after almost two and a half hours. Although the train ran a bit faster on its way from Gede, it was 9:30pm (BDT) when it reached its destination, Chittipur station.

The exhausted passengers were not in a mood for a big welcome after the long journey and there were no such arrangements. Only a single dancer was performing on a podium built there on the occasion of the train service launching. Still, it had the sincerity that touched the incoming passengers.

Additional Communications Secretary ATKM Ismail is the head of the 28-member government delegation, which travelled on the inaugural Maitree Express.

Indian High Commissioner Pinak Ranjan Chakravarty, who also travelled to Kolkata aboard the train, talked with the passengers about their feelings.

"The main objective of the service is to merge it with the Trans-Asian Railway," he said during the journey.

Several advisers to the caretaker government including Communications Adviser Gulam Quader were present at the inaugural ceremony at Dhaka Cantonment Station. They hoped that the service would increase trade and commerce between the two countries apart from improving relations among people.

## Hasina falls sick

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Hossain with one of their colleagues. Mokbul had forced a journalist to get up from a seat in the courtroom, since there is no seat designated for journalists there.

The protesting journalists also made a six-point charter of demand including a demand for an apology from Mokbul, and his withdrawal from the security detail of the case hearings. The demands also include withdrawal of the deputy commissioner of police for the prosecution, and Additional Commissioner of Police of Tejgaon Zone Abdul Mannan, designating of seats for journalists in the courtroom, and permission for them to carry cellphones in the courtroom since currently everybody else other than them are allowed to do so.

As Hasina, clad in a traditional Baishakhi sari, reached the courtroom at 9:50am, she exchanged Bangla New Year greetings with her counsel while complaining about her deteriorating physical condition.

Expressing discontent about the treatment she is receiving, Hasina also complained, even her relatives are not being allowed to meet her in jail.

"I am going blind. I can't see with my left eye and can't hear in my left ear. I'm suffering from an unbearable pain in my injured ear and from terrible headaches resulting from that pain," said Hasina.

Defence lawyer Advocate Toufique Newaz made a submission focusing on the government's rules of business and the parliamentary system in relation to the process of awarding the contract for setting up laws and the constitution showing that there is no legal ground for indicting their client.

As Toufique continued with his submission, the judge asked him to argue on points relevant to the case. Earlier, Hasina tried to draw the judge's attention several times without any success.

At one point Hasina told the judge, "The case will not move forward if you lose patience. You must listen to everyone. Does independence of the judiciary exist only in papers?"

She also said the lawyers must be allowed to argue their points of view and the judge should afford them full hearings.

"The people can right now see how separate the judiciary and the executive branches really are! If there is a great deal of pressure on you, you may deliver the verdict right at this moment," Hasina quipped at the judge.

"Now the question is, do you enjoy enough independence to deliver justice?" Hasina threw a question at the judge.

She then went on to explain that the contract for setting up the barge-mount power plant was awarded during the tenure of an elected government, and that there were a number of committees and sub-committees to ensure transparency.

## A day fused with gaiety

**FROM PAGE 1**  
integral part of the Bangalee culture and tradition and has been considered as the spirit of a non-communal festival as people irrespective of religion and caste celebrate the day.

A festive spirit gripped the capital and other parts of the country. Women in soothing white saris with border and men in panjabi - the dresses decorated with Baishakhi motifs - welcomed the new year. Youths had their cheeks painted with the country's map and other emblems that gave the celebration a special tone.

Braving scorching heat, thousands of revellers started pouring into streets, parks and open spaces from early in the morning to celebrate the biggest festival of the Bangladesh. The crowd turned into a human sea in the afternoon when the mercury came down slightly. Many were seen returning homes even at midnight.

Many foreigners clad in traditional Bangalee dresses were also seen at and around the main venue. Colourful rallies, musical programmes, fairs and cake festivals added colour to the celebration.

Varieties of handicrafts were displayed and sold at the Baishakhi fairs in different parts of the capital.

The celebration began with Rabindranath Tagore's song "Esho he Baishakhi esho esho" performed by the artists of Chhayanyat at the city's Ramna Batamul at dawn. Thousands of men, women and children welcomed the new year with the tune of the song.

Chhayanyat has been organising the event for over three decades. It set up a huge stage for its trademark cultural programme at Ramna Batamul. The artists of Chhayanyat sang, recited poems and essays, concluding their programme with the national anthem.

Students of the Institute of Fine Arts of Dhaka University brought out the traditional procession - Mongol Shobhajatra - around 9:30am from their institute premises.

The Shobhajatra featuring giant replicas of tiger, cat, owl, tortoise and huge colourful masks seeks well-being of all. It was attended by tens of thousands of people.

Many ate "panta bhat" (rice soaked in water) with fried Hilsha, lentil, green chili and onion at home restaurants and at fairs to celebrate Pabla Baishakh.

Makeshift restaurants set up in different parks were, however, seen charging high prices for the delicacies.

Different organisations held cultural functions that kept the whole Dhaka University area throbbing with celebrating people.

Central Shaheed Minar, Dhanmondi, and Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban areas were also seen swarmed with people throughout the day.

in the process.

And moreover, she said "the power plant deal was struck at a time when the constitution, parliament, and the judiciary were governing the country."

"But the government brought false allegations against me and brought the case under Emergency Power Rules (EPR), while constitutional rights of the people are restricted and the parliament does not exist. It can't be called justice," Hasina added.

"For the sake of justice you (the judge) must listen to the defence lawyers' arguments and allow me to talk," she said.

At that point the defence lawyers resumed their arguments and continued. Around 12:45pm Hasina informed the court that she was not able to stay in the dock any longer as she was having severe pain in her ear, prompting the court to adjourn the hearing.

Hasina once before became ill during the arraignment hearing on April 3.

Anti-corruption Commission Deputy Director Sabbir Hasan filed the case with Tejgaon police station complaining that Hasina and six others, in collusion and abusing power, helped a foreign company and its local partners win a deal for setting up a 100MW barge-mount power plant in Khulna, depriving the lowest bidder.

The curator of Bangabandhu Memorial Trust was also later indicted in the case.

## Tagore to be

**FROM PAGE 1**  
the passenger train service is a "historic occasion" for both India and Bangladesh.

Indian Railway Minister Lalu Prasad said "this historic day will be written in golden letters in the histories of India and Bangladesh. Though the geography of the two countries is divided, the soul of their peoples not."

"Through the rail network, we intend to strengthen our friendship and the cultural bonds that tie the people across the borders", Prasad said.

The first journey of the Dhaka-bound Maitree Express has been almost smooth barring a 13-minute hold-up at a place in Nadia district where refugees from Bangladesh took up position on the track demanding proper rehabilitation.

Meanwhile, The Indian Express said in its editorial that the restart of the rail link between Kolkata and Dhaka "is hope that various parts of South Asia are finding comfortable measures of each other."

Maitree Express carried the message that sought to break the "terrible stereotypes of the other that gain in the absence of popular and cultural interactions", the editorial said.

## Job project

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are related to rural infrastructure development like development of water supply system in cyclone hit areas, rural infrastructure development in Khulna, Bagerhat, Satkhira and greater Noakhali, roads development projects at union levels in Dhaka, Narayanganj, Gazipur, Narsingdi, Manikganj, Patuakhali, Barguna, and development of rural roads and markets in greater Sylhet.

The rest three projects were approved for renovation and maintenance of urea fertiliser factories.

The Ecneec yesterday sent back a project for establishing at least one wholesale market of agriculture products in each union across the country so that farmers can get fair price of their products.

The Local Government Division had placed the proposal saying the government would set up only shades for the markets, but the Ecneec members asked the Local Government Division to include options like mechanism so that farmers can get information about the prices of products in other markets.

## Bail under EPR

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under the EPR, concerning supply of adulterated oil.

On the night of March 21 last year, the government issued a gazette notification relating to bail under the EPR with retrospective effect from February 13.

According to the amended rule, an accused in such a case is stripped of the right to file bail petition during investigation or trial of the case.

Moreover, they cannot seek redress from 'any higher courts against any order given by any court or tribunal before or during the trial - until the delivery of the final verdict,' it says.

But the HC granted bail to Majjuddin, which the SC stayed later following the government appeal.

During hearing of the appeal, defence counsel Abdul Matin Khasru yesterday argued that the executive wing of the state has no jurisdiction to restrict anyone from seeking bail in any court.

## Left parties

**FROM PAGE 16**  
They accused the government of having a dual policy. "The government is trying to suppress the demand of the people in the name of state of emergency while sponsoring meetings of communal groups with their anti-people demands," they said.

Coordinator of the alliance Zonaid Saki read out a statement at the press briefing and Tipu Biswas, Saiful Haque, Bazul Rashid Firoz and advocate Abdus Salam spoke to the press.

Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal also condemned the police intervention during the alliance's peaceful human chain programme and the police threat to file cases against them.

Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal Convenor Khaliquezzaman in a statement also said, "The government is not allowing the Democratic Left Alliance hold peaceful programmes with pro-people demands but it remained silent during violent programmes of fundamentalists with their anti-people demands."

The hunger strike started at 10:30am and ended at 5:30pm with Razzak offering fruit juice to the fasting activists.

The AL leader alleged that contrary to its claims, the government has totally failed to run the country. People now understand well how the country is running, he said.

He criticised the government for what he termed its double standard, saying that politicians are being kept indoors under the state of emergency but militants are bringing out processions violating it. "A country can't run this way."

Another presidium member of the party, Suranjit Sengupta, mentioned that at the meeting with them, advisers assured them of holding parliamentary election by December 31.

AL Organising Secretary Mahmudur Rahman Manna said as the government has failed to run the country, it should hand over power to an elected government.

Party leader Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury and Sainik League President Bazul Rahman also spoke at the programme.

## Nepal election

**FROM PAGE 16**  
being sidelined by the peace deal.

Even parties seen as slightly sympathetic to keeping a monarch are lagging behind the ultra-republican Maoists in the vote count.

A total 208 seats have already been allocated, with the Maoists taking 114. Their nearest rival, the centrist Nepali Congress, has won 32 seats, the election commission said.

Officials said counting for the 335 seats to be awarded by proportional representation had also begun, with the results - based on roughly eight percent of returns - so far showing a more equal spread among the main parties.

## 15yrs in jail

**FROM PAGE 16**  
judge of the Supreme Court Appellate Division Gulshan Rabbani told The Daily Star that the incident is a proof that the legal system lacks the broader humane approach in trying a criminal case.

Citing the instance of a long-running Bombay High Court case during the British era, Justice Rabbani said the learned judges of the court quashed the proceedings of the case for its unreasonable delay.

"I therefore expect that such a case should be quashed immediately without considering any merit on grounds of inordinate delay," he added.

Another eminent jurist Dr Shahdeen Malik told The Daily Star, "Bail is a discretion of the court. However, it's very unusual that bail wasn't granted over such a long period of time."

The four accused spent 15 years in jail and their punishment is most likely to be less than the time they have already spent, Dr Malik said adding, "This could be a good instance for seeking compensation from the state for such a long imprisonment without conviction."

The maximum punishment for the offence of robbery is life term imprisonment or rigorous imprisonment of 10 years plus fine, said legal experts.

Referring to a Supreme Court order, the experts said since the disposal of the case became prolonged, the four confined accused could have been awarded bail as was awarded to the five others accused.

The Supreme Court in a rule in 1991 said undue delay in holding a trial due to the procrastination of the prosecution will be valid ground for granting bail and the issue of granting bail in such a case need to be considered with care. Furthermore, notice of application by prosecution for cancellation of the bail is to be served on the accused well in advance.

During the hearing on the case, the plaintiff could not identify anyone as he was blindfolded during the robbery.

A total of 90 workdays were fixed for the disposal of the case following framing of the charge and the counsels of the four detainees applied for bail almost every day.

The last time their bail petition was

## EC wont' invite

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their unification. He however said he did not see any positive signal in this regard.

"We will wait one or two more days to see their unification. Then we will take decision on talks with BNP since we can't wait for long," Huda said.

The CEC once again expressed his desire to have a united BNP at the EC's electoral reform talks. "We will be happy if they (BNP factions) resolve their differences and join the talks with us together. We hope they will reach an understanding. It is better for them and for us as well if they come together," said Huda.

Earlier in November last year, the EC had invited Saifur-led BNP faction to electoral reforms talks ignoring objections from the faction led by Delwar, who was appointed secretary general of the party by its detained Chairperson Khaleda Zia. This triggered a controversy.

Finally, Khaleda filed a writ petition with the High Court (HC) challenging the EC's invitation to Saifur-led faction to the HC on April 10 discharged the writ.

Against this backdrop, the EC is yet to hold talks with BNP.

Following discharge of the writ petition, Huda told reporters on the day the EC might informally talk to both factions of BNP so that they could join reform talks it together.

Asked yesterday if he would initiate any informal move now, the CEC said he does not feel encouraged after reading statements of both factions' leaders in newspapers.

## BENAZIR KILLING

## Pak lawmakers

## press for UN probe

AP, Islamabad

Lawmakers from Pakistan's newly elected parliament have passed a resolution seeking a UN probe into the assassination of former prime minister Benazir Bhutto, officials from her party said yesterday.

The National Assembly, the lower house of Pakistan's parliament, unanimously adopted the resolution late Monday, said Izhar Amrohi, secretary for parliamentary affairs for the Pakistan People's Party.

Benazir Bhutto died last December in a gun and suicide bombing attack as she was leaving a campaign rally in Rawalpindi. President Pervez Musharraf has blamed a Taliban militant leader, Baitullah Mehsud, for the attack.

Mehsud has reportedly denied involvement.

Law Minister Farooq Naek, who introduced the resolution, said Monday that it sought a UN mandated international commission to "identify culprits, perpetrators, organisers and financiers behind the heinous crime and bring them to justice."

The resolution will be forwarded to the foreign ministry, Amrohi said.

Musharraf has opposed a UN probe but allowed British police to look into what caused Benazir Bhutto's death.

The Scotland Yard probe concluded that Benazir Bhutto died after slandering her head against the roof of her bulletproof sports utility vehicle during the attack. Benazir Bhutto party officials claimed that she died from an assassin's bullet.

Pakistan's new government and parliament are dominated by a coalition of anti-Musharraf groups led by Benazir Bhutto's party.

denied by the court was on March 19 this year.

**CRONOLOGY OF THE CASE**  
The forcible entry and robbery case (number 44) was filed on April 22, 1993 by Ulfat Rana alias Rafiqul Alam from Dhanmondi with Dhanmondi Police Station accusing three to four unknown individuals.

Following the filing of the case, police arrested 22 suspects and four of them gave confessional statements under section 164. Following their confessional statements, the police recovered some of the stolen goods.

Sirajul Islam, an inspector of Detective Branch of police, pressed charges on September 9, 1993 accusing nine people.

On July 2, 2000, the case was sent to First Assistant Metropolitan Sessions Judges' Court for trial.

Charge was framed against the accused on April 29, 2001 and the trial of the case began on July 24, 2002.

Till March 19, 2008, six prosecution witnesses gave their depositions to the court.

## Rice prices

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Several rice wholesalers at Badamtoli, Babubazar and Mohammadpur Krishi Market said that in the last ten days, the wholesale price of coarse rice came down by over Tk 100 per maund (37.32 kg) and that of fine rice also dipped by Tk 60 to Tk 80 per maund.

A maund of Minikate, a higher grade of fine rice, was selling for Tk 1,570 to Tk 1,620 yesterday. A maund of this variety sold for Tk 1,650 to Tk 1,700 a week back.

Meanwhile, a total of 20 sacks (85 kg each) of BR-28, a variety of Boro, from Phulpur of Mymensingh reached Babubazar Wholesale Market in old Dhaka early hours yesterday.

Nizam Uddin, general secretary of Badamtoli and Babubazar Rice Wholesalers' Association, told The Daily Star, "As far as I know, this is the first (consignment) of Boro that reached the market this season."

The quality of this coarse variety is also superior, he added.

In the meantime, different outlets that sell subsidised rice and other essentials in the city have been witnessing a smaller crowd over the last three days.

## DU student

**FROM PAGE 16**  
Breaking the door of the room, her roommates and some other girls of the hall rushed her to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital by a rickshaw but the doctors declared her dead.