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## BARAPUKURIA GRAFT ACC permitted to quiz Bhuiyan, Nizami, Shamsul

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday gave the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) permission to interrogate detained former LGRD minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, land minister M Shamsul Islam and Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Motiur Rahman Nizami at jail gate in connection with the Barapukuria coalmine corruption case.

Meanwhile, former chairman of Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) AK Rashid Uddin Ahmed, an accused of the Gato graft case, was sent to jail after he surrendered to a Dhaka court and sought bail.

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## QUASHING NIKO CASE Hearing starts on Khaleda's petition

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday started hearing on the petition filed by former prime minister Khaleda Zia for quashing the proceedings against her in Niko graft case.

The HC bench comprising Justice Khademul Islam Chowdhury and Justice Mashuque Hossain Ahmed adjourned the hearing after arguments by Khaleda's lawyers and fixed 2:00pm today for further proceedings.

On Tuesday, the HC bench comprising Justice Sharif Uddin

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## Govt talks with parties from today

### BNP-led alliance sits for first time during emergency over common strategy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The formal dialogue between the caretaker government and political parties kicks off today with the hope of reaching a consensus over a number of debatable issues and creating an atmosphere congenial to holding of the stalled parliamentary election by the end of this year.

Formulation of a national charter proposed by the government and the release of the top political leaders, complete withdrawal of the state of emergency and all restrictions on indoor politics are expected to dominate the talks to be held at the Chief Adviser's Office.

Meanwhile, the BNP-led four-party alliance will hold a meeting at the residence of BNP acting

Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain today for the first time since the declaration of the state of emergency.

BNP acting Office Secretary Rizvi Ahmed told The Daily Star last night that the meeting will discuss the alliance's stance on the dialogue and other issues including the existing political situation and

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## Polls to 5 city corporations, 9 municipalities in July: CEC

UNB, Gazipur

The Election Commission (EC) will announce schedule for local-body polls soon after the law ministry finalises the electoral rules, the chief election commissioner (CEC) yesterday said.

"We hope we'll be able to hold the local-body elections in five city corporations and nine municipalities by the third week of July," ATM Shamsul Huda told reporters at Bhawal Mirzapur Haji Jamiruddin High School.

The CEC was inaugurating the

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## Defaulted loans rise by Tk 1,215cr in 3 months

### Sluggish economy, arrest of defaulter businessmen possible reasons

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Defaulted loans in the banking sector increased by about Tk 1,215 crore or 5.36 percent in the first quarter of this year due to sluggish economy.

According to Bangladesh Bank (BB) statistics, the loans defaulted till March 30 totalled Tk 23,838 crore, compared to Tk 22,624 crore on December 31 last year.

Of the increased amount, the four state-owned banks accounted for Tk 421 crore, private commercial banks Tk 825 crore and foreign commercial banks Tk 33 crore. Development financial institutions' defaulted loans however declined by Tk 64 crore during the same period.

Khondkar Ibrahim Khaled, Krishi Bank chairman and former BB deputy governor, said many

businessmen are either in jail or absconding because of anti-corruption drives, which is hampering repayment of loans.

He also identified price hike of essentials as an indirect reason for the increase of defaulted loans. People are spending more on food items than on other commodities, and profits in other businesses have reduced for this, he said.

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## THE IMPORT SCANDAL

# Graft goes institutional amid lax NBR watch

Star Investigation 3

SYED ASHFAQUL HAQUE and JULFIKAR ALI MANIK

Rampant corruption in the control of imports became institutionalised as the bodies charged with monitoring trade, the National Board of Revenue (NBR) and customs, became partners in the crime, an investigation by The

Daily Star can reveal.

Either through direct involvement or by turning a blind eye to the illegal actions of their colleagues, taxmen and customs officials joined the circle of some businessmen, politicians, and employees of pre-shipment inspection (PSI) firms who manipulated the system at will to enrich themselves at the country's cost.

And despite the recent clampdown on corruption the country is still missing out on over Tk 1,000 crore in revenue a year as the PSI

companies continue to allow phoney declarations, under or over invoicing, false inspection and certification of consignments, say business observers and revenue experts.

The banks also have their share in the crime, as they do not effectively deliver their responsibilities entrusted by the central bank to help contain price-manipulation on commodities at the initial level.

"The L/C (letter of credit) opening banks can easily do the market

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## US envoy sees bleak political situation if poll not held by Dec

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

US Ambassador in Dhaka James F Moriarty yesterday said the political situation in Bangladesh, along with other elements, would deteriorate if general elections are not held by December this year.

"We fear that if the elections are not held in time, things such as the political situation will deteriorate in Bangladesh," Moriarty said, addressing a lunch organised by the American Chamber of Commerce at a city hotel.

The US envoy also said the next elected government must respect

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## Aga Khan pledges help in developing human resources

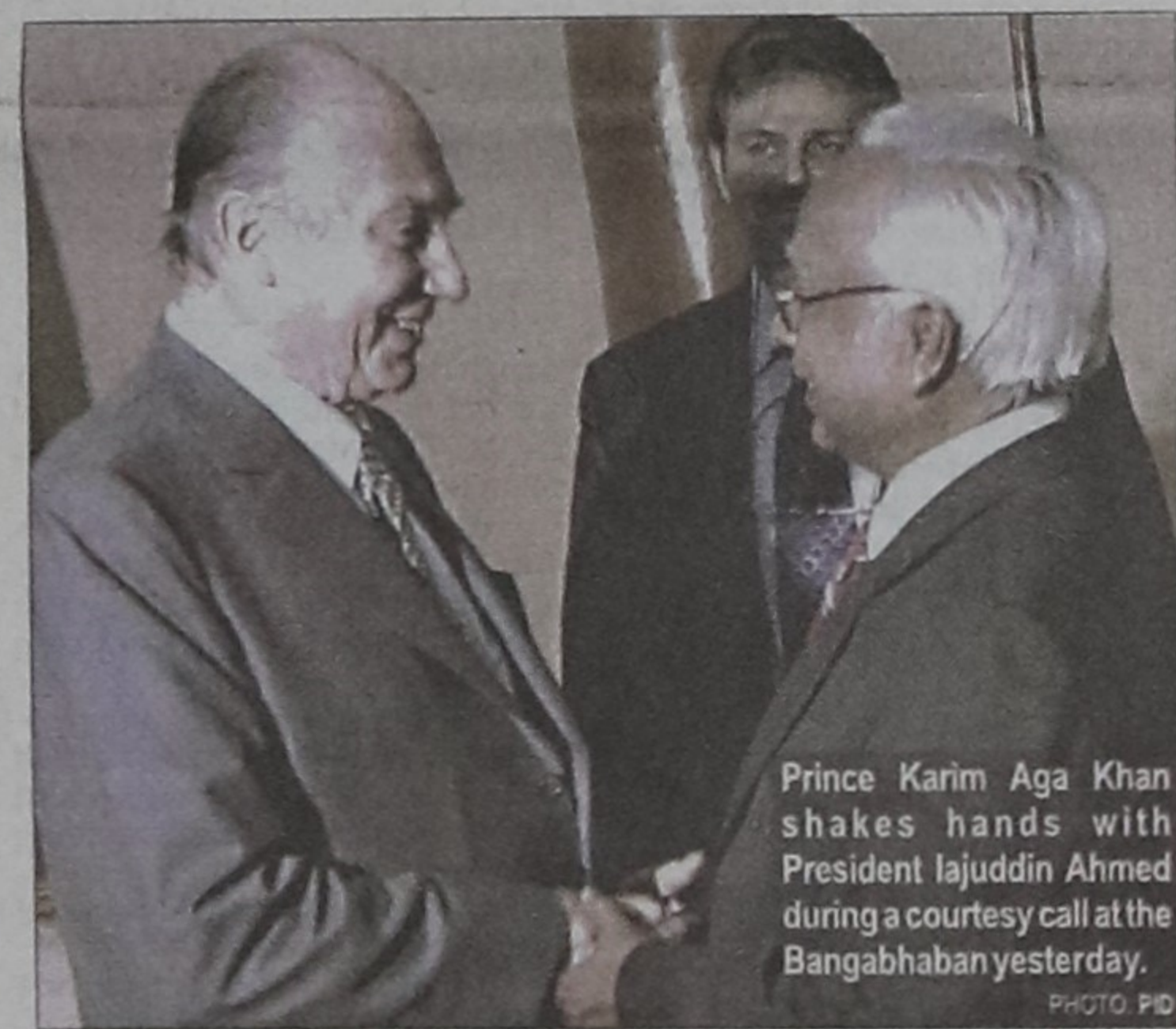
UNB, Dhaka

The visiting Imam of the Shia Ismaili Muslim Community, Prince Karim Aga Khan, yesterday said his community would undertake various training programmes to develop human resources in Bangladesh.

He said this when talking to President Iajuddin Ahmed at Bangabhaban.

Foreign Affairs Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, who was present at the meeting, spoke to reporters about the meeting.

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Prince Karim Aga Khan shakes hands with President Iajuddin Ahmed during a courtesy call at the Bangabhaban yesterday.

## Hasina's trial starts at special court

### Plaintiff of power plant case cross-examined

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A special court yesterday started trial of the barge-mounted power plant graft case against former premier Sheikh Hasina and seven others with deposition of plaintiff Anti Corruption Commission (ACC) Deputy Director SM Sabbir Hasan.

As Hasina's counsels started cross-examining the plaintiff, Judge Firoz Alam of the Special Court-1 set

up on the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban premises adjourned the proceedings at 12:25pm and fixed Thursday (today) morning for further proceedings.

Earlier yesterday, Sabbir submitted his statement for more than one and a half hours and identified Hasina and former power secretary Dr Toufiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury as the accused after they were hauled

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## Niko corruption case against Hasina shifted to special court

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Niko corruption case against detained former premier Sheikh Hasina and eight others was transferred yesterday to a special court set up at the Sher-e-Bangla Nagar MP hostel for trial.

After scrutinising the case documents, Judge Mohammad Azizul Haque of the Dhaka Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court transferred the case to the Special Judge's Court-2.

Earlier, the court had directed

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## ILL-GOTTEN WEALTH

# Sonali CBA don Bakir gets 13yrs, wife 3rs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday sentenced BM Bakir Hossain, a top leader of Sonali Bank collective bargaining agent (CBA), to 13 years imprisonment, for amassing illegal wealth and concealing information in his wealth statement to the Anti-corruption Commission (ACC).

Judge Firoz Alam of Special Judge Court 1, set up on Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban premises, also sentenced Bakir's wife Nazma

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