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BARAPUKURIA SCAM

Khaleda denies graft links to ACC man

UNB, Dhaka

Denying any wrongdoing in awarding the coalmine deal, detained former prime minister Khaleda Zia yesterday told the investigator of the Barapukuria graft case that she had just acted as per law, procedures and the decision of the purchase committee.

"I acted following law, procedures and the decision of the purchase committee. I did it and anybody else would have done the same. People in my place would do the same in future," she was quoted by her lawyer Shimul Biswas as telling the investigating officer of the graft case filed against her.

Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) Deputy Director Monirul Haque, the investigation officer of the case, went to the sub-jail to question the immediate-past prime minister in connection with the case.

Khaleda's two lawyers--Barrister Mahbubuddin Khokon and Shimul Biswas--were present during the questioning from 4:00pm to 5:15pm.

The case has been filed "illegally to harass me", Khaleda was quoted as saying.

Asked if there was any discussion about politics, Shimul said there was no scope for having any political discussion due to the presence of government officials.

On February 26, ACC Assistant Director Shamsul Alam filed the case with Shahbagh Police Station against Khaleda, 10 former ministers of her cabinet and five others on charge of causing a loss of about Tk 159 crore to the exchequer through awarding Barapukuria coalmine deal to the highest bidder instead of the lowest.

Former finance minister Saifur Rahman, ex-BNP secretary general

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1 killed, 20 hurt as CNG cylinder of microbus explodes

A CORRESPONDENT, Narayanganj

At least one person was killed and 20 others were injured in yet another explosion of a gas cylinder of a CNG-run microbus yesterday in Panchabati area of Narayanganj.

The deceased was identified as Bakul Chandra Mandal, 40, a worker who was walking past the parked microbus.

A fireball from the explosion fell on a nearby garments factory igniting it too and burning valuables worth about Tk 10 lakh, claimed the proprietor of the factory.

Another 10 to 12 nearby shops were also damaged due to the explosion.

Ten of the injured were rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH), three of whom were admitted to the burn unit with critical injuries.

The government launched a clampdown on unauthorised CNG conversion workshops in February, in the wake of repeated fatal blasts of CNG cylinders installed in converted motor vehicles claiming numerous lives.

The unauthorised workshops are engaged in fitting motor vehicles with faulty and sub-standard

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PHOTO: STAR

This heap of twisted metals was once a people carrier. The vehicle caught fire at Panchabati of Narayanganj yesterday and when locals were trying to douse the flames the CNG cylinder of the vehicle exploded leaving one person dead and 20 others injured.

Home for security council to fight terrorism

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The home ministry has suggested forming a Cabinet Committee on National Security, a National Security Council (NSC) and a Joint Intelligence Unit to counter terrorist threats in a coordinated way.

Its proposal on Counter Terrorism Strategy in Bangladesh, submitted to different ministries for their feedback, also suggested creation of a Central Inter-agency Counter Terrorism Coordination Cell to coordinate and monitor activities of counter-terrorism cells in all intelligence and law enforcement agencies. The proposal includes an organogram on this cell.

"The structures of these proposed bodies will be decided following opinions given by the ministries," said a home ministry source.

The ministries are expected to give their feedback by May 30.

The home ministry prepared the proposal as part of global initiatives against terrorism under the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy endorsed by

member states in September 2006.

The focus of this anti-terrorism initiative will be based on four principal strands -- prevent, pursue, protect and prepare.

The proposal recommends upholding democratic governance through the rule of law both at national and local levels to prevent terrorism.

The ministry uses a controversial survey conducted by the four-party alliance government on determining educational background of arrested militants in 2006, and says, "Madrasa education has long been a subject of profound blame, to be a breeding ground for terrorism in Bangladesh. But recent trends in terrorism in Bangladesh reject any significant correlation between madrasa education and its linkages with terrorism. Only 19 percent of those who were arrested for terrorism were drawn from Madrasas."

It however recommends that madrasa curricula should be revised and modernised along with that of mainstream education.

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No party to sign nat'l charter

Says Delwar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain yesterday said that the caretaker government wants to stay in power for a long period without holding the parliamentary election.

"As per the constitution, the caretaker government's only responsibility is to assist the Election Commission (EC) in holding a free and fair general election within 90 days, but this government seems to be hanging on to power through various schemes," he alleged.

The BNP chairperson-appointed party secretary general

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DIALOGUE

Govt in unofficial parley to persuade AL, BNP

ASHEAQ WARES KHAN

Concerned about the uncertainty surrounding the participation of the three largest political parties in the ongoing dialogue, the government has started unofficial negotiations to persuade them into the much-hyped pre-poll talks.

Sources in the Awami League (AL) and BNP told The Daily Star that they had been contacted separately through unofficial channels to find ways to bring

them to the dialogue.

But both the government and the political parties did not disclose the details of any possible deal between the two sides.

The efforts came as the success of the dialogue, which enters second day today, hangs in the balance with the AL, BNP and Jamaat-Islami not yet agreeing to participate in the talks unless their party chiefs are released from jail.

Senior government officials

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Local govt commission to be set up soon

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The caretaker government has moved to form the much-anticipated Local Government Commission (LGC), in an effort to free local government administrations from absolute subjugation to central government's whims.

"We have started the process of forming the commission and hope it will be formed as soon as possible," LGRD Adviser Anwarul Iqbal told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said his ministry is now looking for an office for the LGC.

President Iajuddin Ahmed on May 11 promulgated an ordinance regarding formation of the LGC with provisions designed to strengthen local government institutions, and to make them dynamic and

accountable to the people.

The new law empowers the commission to draw up recommendations for strengthening the local government system. It also allows the commission to probe alleged financial and administrative irregularities in the system, and to ask the central government to take actions against the accused.

Formation of an LGC was being discussed since 1992, but no elected partisan government since then initiated any step to form the commission.

Rather, successive elected governments in the last 15 years slapped numerous unwarranted restrictions on local government administrations by issuing frequent orders and directives.

Against such a backdrop, the

current military backed caretaker government made its move to strengthen the local government system in an effort to ensure proper decentralisation of power.

The caretaker government already incorporated provisions in newly promulgated laws governing city corporations and municipalities that limit the central government's supervisory power over those local government administrations.

According to those laws, the LGRD ministry, which is the custodian of the local government system, will have to consult with the LGC before issuing any instruction or before formulating rules regarding functions of city corporations and municipalities.

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REPORTING ON BRIBE

Star reporter beaten up by jail guards

STAR REPORT

Tangail correspondent of The Daily Star was beaten up by jail guards yesterday while working on a report on harassment of visitors,

and corruption at the local prison.

Mirza Shakil, the reporter, was admitted to hospital with severe injuries in the chest, back and neck.

Witnesses said he went to the

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Mirza Shakil, left, critically injured by jail guards. One of the attackers, right, of The Daily Star correspondent.

স্ট্যান্ডার্ড ব্যাংক লিমিটেড-এর
পাছপথ শাখা স্থানান্তর

নতুন ঠিকানা

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পুরাতন ঠিকানা

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১২৯, শেখ সালেহুদ্দীন রাস্তা
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