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Koko freed for 2 months

He may fly to Bangkok tomorrow for treatment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Arafat Rahman Koko, younger son of detained BNP Chairperson Khaleeda Zia, was released for two months on an executive order from the government yesterday.

He was brought out of the prison cell at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) at around 6:00pm and carried to his cantonment residence by an ambulance.

The same day the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) pressed charges against him of amassing wealth illegally and concealing information in his assets statement.

Earlier in the day, a Dhaka court exempted him from appearing in person before it during trial of the

case. Koko stands accused in two more cases—one for extortion and the other for graft in Gatco deal. He has already been excused from being present in court in the Gatco case while the High Court has stayed the extortion case proceedings.

Along with his mother, he was arrested on September 3 last year from their Shaheed Moinal Road residence in Dhaka cantonment.

His elder brother Tarique Rahman too is behind bars, accused in several cases.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, Inspector General of Prisons Brig Gen Zakir Hassan said, "The government has granted Koko temporary release on condition

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Koko takes a shot from inhaler as he is brought out of BSMMU hospital prison cell yesterday.

JOB OF 10 JUDGES NOT CONFIRMED HC declares BNP-led govt decision illegal

Asks govt to reappoint them in a month

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

The High Court (HC) yesterday declared illegal and unconstitutional the BNP-led government's not confirming the services of 10 additional HC judges appointed during the rule of Awami League despite the chief justice's positive recommendations.

The HC directed the government to reappoint the 10 judges with seniority within one month.

The court, however, said the time between the dates of non-confirmation and reappointment of the judges would be treated as leaves without pay.

The judges are justices Abdus

Salam, Momtaj Uddin Ahmed, Abdul Hye, Md Shamsul Huda, Faruque Ahmed, Marzi-ul Huq, Abdur Razzak, Hasan Foiz Siddique, AHM Shamsuddin Chowdhury and Nizamul Huq Nasim.

A three-member special bench comprised of justices Mohammad Abdur Rashid, SK Sinha and Nazmun Ara Sultana delivered the judgment observing that the government's action of not confirming the services of the 10 judges was mala fide and of no legal effect.

The court observed that as per articles 95 and 98 of the constitution the government has to give

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Economy regains growth momentum

Observes MCCI review

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The economy has regained the momentum for growth, said Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) in its latest analytical publication on the state of the economy in April through June of FY 2007-08.

In the publication titled 'Review of Economic Situation: April-June FY 2007-08', the credit for the growth has been given to higher production in agriculture and industries sectors, increased remittance, higher implementation of the Annual Development Programme (ADP), improved investment activities and slight decline in inflation rate.

The chamber said the overall performance of the economy has improved in the second half of the last fiscal compared to the first half of the year. "At such a trend, the economy is due to achieve the growth rate of approximately 1.6 percent per quarter, which has been achieved since FY03," said the review.

It said food grains and fisheries production went up by 1.8 percent in the last quarter of FY08 from 1.4 percent in the third quarter, while industrial production increased by 2.5 percent from 2 percent.

Investment activities improved as indicated by higher amount of LCs opened for capital machinery

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Burnt in lust of a beast

SHAMIM ASHRAF and
SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Posing as a saviour, an alleged member of an intelligence agency attempted to burn a girl to death about six weeks ago. He joined hands with her kidnapper and set her on fire as her family refused their marriage proposals.

With 30 percent of her body burned, Nur-e-Jannat Roni, daughter of Abdur Rouf of Monohorpur village in Rangpur, is now struggling for life at Burn Unit of Dhaka Medical College



Roni lies in a bed at Dhaka Medical College Hospital with almost a third of her body burnt.

Hospital (DMCH).

"Shuvo [alleged member of Directorate General of Forces Intelligence] is now threatening to kill all of our family unless we withdraw the case," Shahidul Islam Bidyut, her uncle, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Police could not arrest Shuvo and don't know his whereabouts.

When Roni was a school student, local thugs started teasing her on her way to school.

"The harassment increased after my SSC examinations in 2004. People started coming up with marriage proposals," Roni

said, lying on the bed at DMCH.

Her parents had turned down all the proposals saying she was too young to be married off.

Refused, a group of local thugs led by Shafiqul Gani Swapan abducted her from in front of their house in Monohorpur, family members say.

Roni's relatives rescued her in a few hours and moved to Rangpur town.

Though police arrested three including Swapan, they came out on bail within two and a half months and started putting pressure on the family for withdrawing the case against them.

"While we were confused about what we should do with these people, we met Shuvo who introduced himself as a DGFI field-level constable and came forward with assurance of help," Bidyut said.

But in six to seven months, Shuvo himself proposed to marry Roni. "We said we won't marry her off at this young age, which made him very angry," said Bidyut.

Shuvo also started teasing Roni on her way to Collectorate School and College in Rangpur, and joined hands with the kidnappers about a year ago, the uncle said.

"He started threatening us over phone saying he would kill us and destroy the entire family."

Shuvo gave a "reminder" about six months ago that we still have

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Dhaka, Delhi close to investment deal

Talks end with call for cooperation on trade, terrorism

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

India and Bangladesh are in the final stages of negotiations for a Bilateral Investment Promotion Agreement (BIPA) which is expected to be clinched soon.

This emerged after a three-hour talk between foreign secretaries of India and Bangladesh Shivshankar Menon and Touhid Hossain at the Hyderabad House yesterday.

Briefing reporters after the talks, which were also held over a working lunch, Menon and Hossain said BIPA "is in final stages [of negotia-

tions] and it would be clinched soon".

They also said the joint technical committee on river embankment would meet soon in view of the seriousness of the problem of soil erosion along the river banks affecting India and Bangladesh.

The BIPA would provide national treatment for foreign investment, most favoured nation treatment for foreign investment and investors, free repatriation or transfer of returns on investments and recourse to domestic disputes

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EC won't call in army for city polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) yesterday decided not to ask the government to deploy the army alongside police forces for duties of the August 4 city corporation and municipality elections.

The joint forces will launch a combing operation ahead of the polls to recover illegal arms and arrest criminals and goons to prevent them from muscling in on the polls, sources said, quoting decisions taken at a high level meeting yesterday.

The combing operation in the city corporation areas of Rajshahi,

Khulna, Barisal and Sylhet and nine municipalities will be launched a few days before the polling day and continued for a few days after the polls.

The EC proposed that the joint forces for the combing operation should comprise the army, Bangladesh Rifles and police.

Senior officials of the LGRD and home ministries, police administration, Armed Forces Division and the National Security Intelligence attended the meeting held at the National Economic Council auditorium.

The army was deployed as a

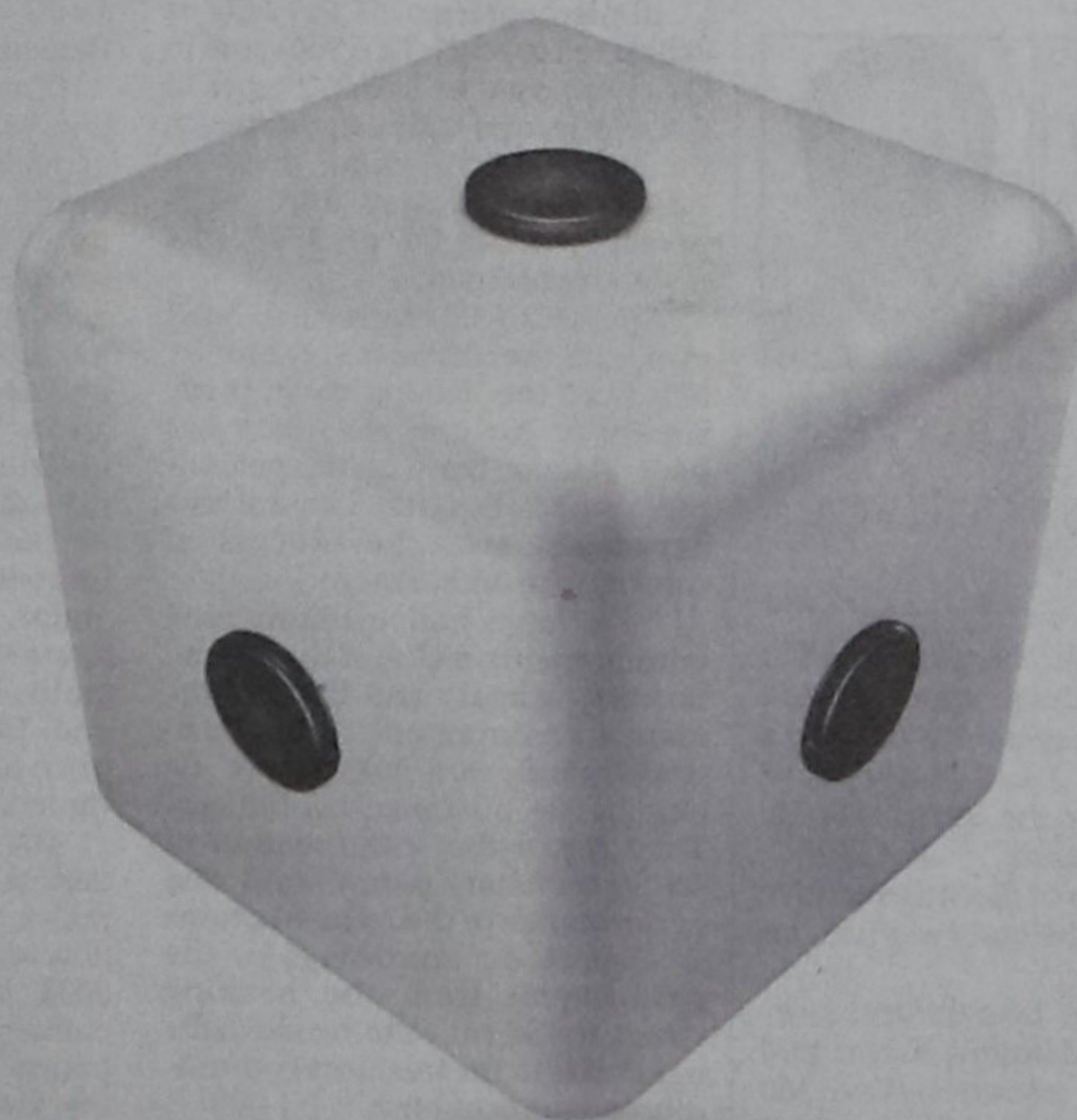
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