

# Freed Khaleda to join talks, contest polls

## Asks govt to hold JS polls first, lift emergency

M ABUL KALAM AZAD and RASHIDUL HASAN

BNP Chairperson and former prime minister Khaleda Zia was freed yesterday from her yearlong detention amid huge celebration and a grand reception given by thousands of party leaders, activists and supporters.

Just-released Khaleda announced to join the dialogue with the government and take part in the upcoming elections but asked the caretaker government to hold the stalled parliamentary

elections first and withdraw the state of emergency.

Later at a press conference, she also announced that her eldest son and the party's Senior Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman would remain out of politics for two to three years as he would be abroad for treatment.

"You must be thinking that I am very happy that I am free now. But I am not because we as well as the country are not well," a weeping Khaleda told the jam-packed press conference at the party's central office at Naya Paltan yesterday

afternoon. Khaleda, who was detained by the joint forces on September 3 last year, walked out of the makeshift special prison on the parliament building complex at about 11:30am upon getting bail in all the four corruption cases filed against her.

The BNP and its allies have since been demanding her release along with that of Tarique, who was released on bail on September 3.

With Khaleda's release, both the former prime ministers of the country detained in the caretaker government's much-hyped anti-

corruption drives are now freed and back to their folds.

Their release is considered important for bringing an end to the deadlock with the government and ensuring their participation in the parliamentary elections slated for December.

More than 100 high-profile politicians, mostly from the BNP and the Awami League (AL), landed in jail in the government's anti-corruption drive. However, despite the drive's aim of curbing corruption and bringing reforms in

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## 4 pledges secured release?

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and her elder son Tarique Rahman's release through seemingly transparent legal procedures, was actually part of a 4-point deal with the government, authoritative sources claim.

They say the army-backed caretaker government had a lengthy negotiation with Khaleda Zia who was totally cold towards the present regime but finally gave in and agreed to cooperate with them.

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## Arrest, release

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

September 2, 2007: The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) files its first case against Khaleda Zia, her younger son Arafat Rahman Koko and 11 others, on charges of violating tender rules by awarding Gatco container-handling work in Dhaka and Chittagong, causing a loss of Tk 1,000 crore to the state.

September 3: The joint forces arrest Khaleda and Koko at their Dhaka Cantonment residence in

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## AL, Jamaat hail release

Mixed reaction among parties

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Political parties gave mixed reaction to the release of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia yesterday, with the Awami League and the Jamaat-e-Islami welcoming it.

"We're always against political persecution. But our concern is that our leader Sheikh Hasina and other senior leaders did not get

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## Mainstream leaders move for BNP unity

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A group of former BNP lawmakers, mostly the mainstream leaders, are trying to remove the divide in the party as Khaleda Zia has been released on bail.

Party insiders say the reformist BNP leaders are also eager to be reunited with the mainstream leaders, some of who are opposing the initiative.

"We are proud that our leader Khaleda Zia has walked out of prison through legal process

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# Tarique quits party post, flies to UK

## Khaleda says he would be out of politics until recovery

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former prime minister Khaleda Zia's son Tarique Rahman last night flew to the United Kingdom for treatment hours after his just-freed mother's announcement that he will stay off politics until he recovers fully.

Earlier, he tendered resignation as the senior joint secretary general of BNP party sources said.

Meanwhile, a statement made available after midnight says he has "retired from active politics with effect from September 11" [yesterday]. Authenticity of Tarique's signature in the statement however could not be verified as of filing this

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Khaleda Zia visits her ailing son Tarique Rahman at the BSMMU Hospital yesterday after being released on bail.

# Anti-corruption drive to go on

## Asserts ACC, plays down opposing views

EMRAN HOSSAIN

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) plays down the recent string of releases of high-profile graft suspects, while the cross-section of people express disappointment with the manner they obtained bail out of the blue in such a large number.

The releases gave rise to a number of questions regarding the fate of anti-graft drive and people consider it as another nail in the

drive's coffin.

Apprehension about the future of the anti-corruption drives became even stronger with the release of former premier Khaleda Zia yesterday, a week after her elder son Tarique Rahman, who is accused in 14 graft and corruption cases, was released.

"Such a large number of graft suspects have obtained bail as the matter of creating a friendly atmosphere for upcoming elections and

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# Climate seminar could sensitise int'l community

Says Aziz

UNB, London

Finance Adviser Mirza Azizul Islam said the UK-Bangladesh climate conference was successful in sensitising the international community about the danger facing Bangladesh due to perilous impact of climate change.

"Our intention was to make the international community aware about the danger facing Bangladesh and about its determination to meet challenges of the climate change despite resource constraints," he told a post-conference reception at Royal Geographical Society Wednesday evening.

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PHOTO: STAR

BNP chief Khaleda Zia waves to the crowd gathered in front of BNP central office at Naya Paltan in the city yesterday following her release. (More photos on page 14)

# Move on to get two leaders into talks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Commerce Adviser Hossain Zillur Rahman said yesterday the government has taken steps to bring political arch rivals Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia to sit across the table to help pull the country out of the prevailing political crisis.

"The two leaders, Hasina and Khaleda, have a major role in politics and we hope they will contribute more for qualitative changes in politics in the future," the adviser said while talking to reporters.

He was answering questions on the country's latest political situation at the communications ministry yesterday. Communications

Adviser Ghulam Quader and Law Adviser AF Hassan Arif were also present at the time.

Khaleda Zia has been released on bail, and with this her participation in the elections is ensured, Zillur said.

"We want to take the nation forward and have begun a new chapter," Zillur said, referring to Khaleda agreeing to participate in the elections. "The government hopes the two leaders will not only respond to this move but also take initiatives on their own to this end," he added.

The chiefs of the two major political parties of the country have

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# EC to relax rules for registration

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The Election Commission (EC) is working to have some changes to the new electoral provisions to make it easier for the political parties to meet the criteria for registration.

It has already firmed up proposals for amendments to the recently revised Representation of the People Order (RPO) so the parties could make do with provisional changes to their constitutions to fulfil the conditions for registration.

However, they must give an undertaking that they will ratify the

necessary amendments to the [party] constitutions at national councils within six months after formation of new parliament, EC sources said.

The EC move is part of efforts to break the impasse over registration of the political parties before the long-stalled ninth parliamentary polls tentatively planned for December.

According to its time limit, a political party must apply to the commission by October 15 for registration, now mandatory for those seeking election to parliament.

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# City schools, colleges close from Sept 16

UNB, Dhaka

All schools, colleges and madrasas, including private English medium schools, in the city will remain closed from September 16 until government

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# Padma ferry service improving

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The situation at Paturia-Daulatdia ferry ghats started improving yesterday night as Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC) brought a ferry from Mawa ferry ghat for operating in the route.

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# The protest of BFFEA President Kazi Belayet Hossain against the news item "EU asks shrimp exporters to ensure quality" published in a section of Media on August 23, 2008

Kazi Belayet Hossain, the President of Bangladesh Frozen Foods Exporters Association (BFFEA) has strongly refuted the recently published news that EU sent back 300 containers of shrimp in the last few months following detection of harmful antibiotics. BFFEA president termed the news as false, baseless and fabricated. He challenged the report of UNB as saying that this reporter did not take any official statistics from the Government of Bangladesh or even from the BFFEA. BFFEA President opined that the country has been severely damaged in retaining the image of the exportable fisheries with such baseless news. BFFEA President has pointed out that the exporters have been launching various programmes including elimination of child labour from the shrimp & fish processing plants, improve facilities of labours and other compliances of EU and USA. BFFEA President has requested the Government of Bangladesh to protest the news and asked for immediate withdrawal of this false report published in different English dailies on August 23, 2008. BFFEA President Kazi Belayet Hossain has further requested the international buyers of Bangladesh shrimp & fish products not to be misguided by such false report.

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