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## Khaleda to lead BNP for life

Standing committee decides unanimously, okays expulsion of Bhuiyan and Ashraf, scraps October 29 meeting; talks with EC, govt approved

ABUL KALAM AZAD and RASHIDUL HASAN

In an unprecedented move, BNP yesterday decided that its Chairperson Khaleda Zia will lead the party for life.

The decision came at a meeting of the standing committee, the party's highest policy-making body, late in the afternoon.

Briefing journalists afterwards, Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain said Chowdhury Tanvir Ahmed Siddiqui proposed that Khaleda should be given the party helm for keeps. The proposal was accepted unanimously.

Tanvir said they firmly believe she will be in a sound physical and mental state to lead them for life. "The party will never be minus her."

Political observers say granting Khaleda lifetime mantle of BNP will undermine the caretaker government's efforts to end the culture of the same old faces being in charge of the political parties.

It also goes against electoral



Senior BNP leaders sit next to party chief Khaleda Zia during the party's Standing Committee meeting held at its office at Naya Paltan in the city yesterday.

reforms espoused by the Election Commission (EC) and the recently revised Representative of the People Order (RPO).

Khaleda, also former prime minister, was let out on bail Thursday after a year in detention on graft charges.

She convened the meeting to discuss the latest political developments and the party's preparations for dialogue with the government.

Before yesterday, the standing committee last met with Khaleda in the chair in February last year. Delwar said, "The committee

has decided to join talks with the government and the EC. Schedules and agenda for the dialogue will be fixed up at a meeting of the four-party alliance."

The meeting that went on for over an hour beginning at 4:40pm cancelled the controversial October 29 decisions appointing M Saifur Rahman acting chairperson and Major (ret) Hafizuddin Ahmed acting secretary general.

Held at the party headquarters at Naya Paltan, it also approved the expulsion of former secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan and joint secretary Ashraf Hossain.

Khaleda expelled the two a day before her arrest on September 3 last year.

However, it could not be known if Tarique Rahman's resignation was discussed.

Tarique, the BNP chief's elder son, tendered resignation as the party's senior joint secretary general Thursday. The same day he left the country for treatment abroad.

Eight of the 11 current members

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## Tailbacks stop Dhaka dead in its tracks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

He could have gone to Comilla and even started back home by the time he reached his Karwan Bazar office from Uttara. She could have visited her ancestral home in Tangail instead of heading for the midtown office from Banani.

And Rafique could just have stayed back at home and slept the day through rather than spending Tk 1,000 on his taxi cab and make only Tk 425 on two trips during the whole day.

Dhaka yesterday was like this--a city choked on its Eid festival traffic tailbacks, overruled by the impossibility of inching forward. From a distance it was as well a dead city as cars after cars stood still just like from the aftermath of a mysterious

disease attack that stopped everything in its track. The sun beat down mercilessly on the simmering tops of vehicles, boiling the passengers inside. The Bhadrat heat was literally ripening the palms on a windless day.

And as it happened, a young woman in her labour pain could not hold it any longer--it was already about two hours on the road--and the baby was born inside the ambulance.

Many came out of their homes yesterday, thinking they might face a light traffic on a Saturday, it being a weekend. But they knew they were wrong when met with the unappetising fact that when Eid comes, Dhaka traffic goes haywire. It looked as if nobody wanted to stay home on this particular day,

and all of about 3,70,000 vehicles--cars, buses, taxis and three-wheelers--had come onto streets.

Anxious relatives suffered terribly while rushing their patients with emergency need to hospitals, ambulance sirens filling the air on many jam-packed roads to make ways to hospitals.

Everyone in the family of the 17-year-old woman were excited as she was going to give birth for the first time. They made no delay to call an ambulance from Ad-deen Hospital at Moghbazar to take her to hospital.

"The ambulance started from Uttara at 11:00am and was supposed to arrive at the hospital at 11:35am, but at 12:45pm it just reached the Satrasa intersection when the young woman gave birth

to her child," said Shamsur Rahman, assistant supervisor of the hospital.

He said all their ambulances faced severe trouble during the whole day yesterday.

Traffic policemen said the gridlock was caused as thousands of people came out in the morning for Eid shopping at the New Market, Elephant Road, Bashundhara City Shopping Complex and the shopping malls in Dhanmondi area since it was weekly holiday.

Passengers of CNG-taxi cabs and auto-rickshaws had to count more than double the normal fare while cabbies and CNG-run auto-rickshaw drivers still said they could not even earn their deposit money during the whole day.

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## Jalil finally opts for 'political' rest

Ashraf to act as secretary general; Hasina won't sit for talk on parole

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) General Secretary Abdul Jalil has finally decided to stay away from politics for now following party President Sheikh Hasina's advice due to his ailments.

Jalil's latest decision ends AL's recent quandary for now, about who is going to be the general secretary, letting Joint General Secretary Syed Ashraful Islam keep acting as the general secretary until the party chief, now in the US for treatment, returns home.

Meanwhile, the party's Acting President Zillur Rahman yesterday

said Hasina will not sit for any dialogue with anyone before her release on parole is made unconditional and permanent.

"As party President Sheikh Hasina advised me to take rest for a few days, I will do so," Jalil told reporters in his Gulshan residence in the capital yesterday.

Earlier he had announced that he would be back in politics as the general secretary of AL after the High Court had granted him a 40-day ad interim bail on September 10.

But yesterday he visited Zillur Rahman in the latter's Gulshan

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## Serial blasts in Delhi kill 20

Militant group claims responsibility

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

At least 20 people were killed and 70 injured as a string of explosions in a space of 20 minutes ripped through crowded shopping areas in the Indian capital yesterday.

Indian Mujahideen, an Islamic militant group, claimed responsibility for the coordinated blasts that took place at Gaffar Market in Karol Bagh, Connaught Place and Greater Kailash between 6:15pm and 6:35pm.

At least 16 people died at Gaffar Market, a popular bazaar for foreign goods, and four in Connaught Place.

An e-mail sent to local media outlets just before the blasts read, "You are going to get message of

death." Three unexploded bombs were recovered near India Gate, Regal Cinema hall and Connaught Place Central Park, said Joint Commissioner of Police Ajay Kashyap.

Indian Mujahideen was unknown before May when it claimed responsibility for a series of bombings in Jaipur city in Rajasthan that killed 61 people.

The group also said it was responsible for July 26 blasts that killed at least 55 in Ahmedabad, the commercial city of western state of Gujarat.

Two of the explosions in New Delhi occurred just 300 yards (meters) apart in Connaught Place, the

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## CA flies to China today

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Adviser (CA) Fakhruddin Ahmed leaves for Beijing tonight on a four-day official visit to China at the invitation of Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao.

CA's wife Neena Ahmed is accompanying him on the tour.

The head of the caretaker government will hold official talks with Chinese Prime Minister Jiabao at the Great Hall of the People on Tuesday.

He will call on Chinese President Hu Jintao at the Great Hall of the People on Tuesday and also have a tête-à-tête with Vice-president Xi Jinping at the State Guesthouse.

The CA will attend the closing ceremony of Paralympics Beijing 2008 at the Bird's Nest on Wednesday. Paralympics are Olympic-style games for the physically challenged athletes.

The other members of the chief

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## SEXUAL HARASSMENT

### JU teacher exonerated

Students reject syndicate decision

A CORRESPONDENT

The Jahangirnagar University (JU) teacher for whose dismissal students went on fast unto death programme last month was cleared of sexual harassment charges last night at a special syndicate meeting.

The agitating students, however, rejected the syndicate decision right away, starting a sit-in at the university Shaheed Minar to realise their demand.

Earlier in the evening, the syndicate meeting cleared Associate Professor Sanowar Hossain Sunny, chair at the drama and dramatics department, of the charges after reviewing a probe report in this regard.

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Ponds have now become rare in Dhaka. The water of the few surviving ones is also unbelievably polluted due to sheer negligence of the authorities. This picture depicts the condition of the Gendaria DIT pond which serves as a dumping ground. Floating plastic bags, however, have "business appeal" to street urchins like these two who collect them for recycling.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

## Anti-graft drive loses moral ground with Tarique's release

Dialogue told

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The caretaker government not only failed to fulfil the promises it had made at the time of 1/11 change-over, but also suffered a moral defeat, said speakers at a dialogue yesterday.

The speakers observed that the government also impaired its anti-corruption drive by releasing from detention graft suspects like Tarique Rahman, through which move it lost the moral ground for keeping any other person in jail on charges of graft.

They however observed that bringing Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia to a table for a dialogue might help to initiate a new

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## Top suspects skipping corruption confession

Politicians in question 'bargaining' with govt for polls 'concession'

EMRAN HOSSAIN

None of the high-profile graft suspects, especially politicians arrested, accused or jailed, has applied for voluntary disclosure before the Truth and Accountability Commission (Tac) as it would bar them from contesting polls for next five years.

Sources involved in the anti-corruption drives told The Daily Star the politicians are bargaining with the government for a "concession" to amend the provision in Tac so that they can contest the polls even after making voluntary disclosure.

In accordance with section 26 (1) of Voluntary Disclosure of Information Ordinance, 2008, politicians making voluntary disclosure about ill-gotten wealth won't be able to take part in any elections -- parliamentary, zila parishad, upazila parishad, union parishad, and municipality polls -- for five years.

Section 26 (1) (Ga), however, says the 26 (1) would be flexible for the politicians making disclosure directly to Tac being self-inspired and who are not accused in any graft case.

Sources in the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) and National

Coordination Committee (NCC) to Combat Corruption and Serious Crimes say some politicians are secretly trying to have the provision of the Voluntary Disclosure of Information Ordinance, 2008 amended.

The fact that high-profile graft-accused are obtaining bail or securing stay orders in the cases also encourages some politicians and businessmen, who see a future in politics, to wait and look for a stay until the upcoming national election is held.

The ACC, NCC and Tac, however, expect the politicians who see

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## BNP top brass hails decision on Tarique

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Most policymakers and senior leaders of BNP said Khaleda Zia's decision to keep away her son Tarique Rahman from party position and politics would revamp the party and remove the long-standing conflicts between the older and younger leaders.

Talking to The Daily Star in the last two days, a number of top BNP leaders expressed happiness about Khaleda's decision, saying now it would be easier for them to guide the party chairperson in taking decisions and bring the party back in track.

There would be no more influence from the Hawa Bhaban-based "immature" young people who ruined the party and made fortunes, they said.

"Possibly this is her [Khaleda's]

wisest decision... Only if she could control him [Tarique] long before... I am sure there would not be such debacle for BNP that took place following 1/11," said a BNP Standing Committee member, requesting anonymity.

The leaders said the party chief has advised senior leaders to proceed in a peaceful manner and lay utmost importance on uniting the party first and bring back leaders and workers sidelined for long. She also suggested being more accommodative to consolidate the party.

They said Khaleda is much eager to remove the indiscipline created within the party following her arrest on September 3 last year.

Her first step would be to unite the party that split over reforms issue and she is confident about bringing all in the mainstream fold

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## Scheme to speed up projects lacks speed

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

A planning ministry project to speed up sluggish donor funded projects has itself gone into hibernation after failing to kick off.

The project styled Strengthening Project Portfolio Performance Project was scheduled to be completed during fiscal 2000 to 2002, but ironically, it began limping in late 2002.

This was revealed in the Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Division's (IMED) report on projects completed in fiscal 2005-06, prepared last month.

The report exposed gross anomalies in implementation of various projects. It said the projects took unusually longer time than planned, raising the costs drastically. In one project, the cost went

up by 580 percent than the original estimate.

Vehicles were purchased for a project and left unused, and funds for a project were embezzled by officials showing construction of a building, which was not constructed.

The IMED report said under the Tk 6 crore planning ministry project, foreign consultants were appointed with too high salaries only two months before expiry of its implementation period. Expenditure for the consultants was around 60 percent of the project cost.

The consultants submitted a report containing their recommendations along with modules and database haphazardly and hastily. They failed to explain the modules meant to enhance performance of

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