



## US moves to confiscate Koko's stashed money

Forfeiture action sought against Koko's accounts in Singapore

REZAUL KARIM

The US Department of Justice has moved to confiscate nearly \$3 million from bank accounts in Singapore, which are allegedly linked to a bribery scandal in Bangladesh, involving Arafat Rahman Koko, younger son of former prime minister Khaleda Zia.

The justice department is seeking a forfeiture action against the accounts that are alleged to be the proceeds of a wide-ranging conspiracy to bribe public officials in Bangladesh and their family members, in connection with various public works projects, said Acting Assistant Attorney General Matthew Friedrich of the Criminal Division on Friday in Washington DC.

The forfeiture action against the funds, held by multiple account holders, was filed on Thursday in a US district court in the District of Columbia.

The complaint relates primarily to alleged bribes paid to Koko, in connection with public works projects awarded by the



government of Bangladesh to Siemens AG, a German industrial conglomerate, and China Harbour Engineering Company.

The complaint said at least one payment to each of the purported consultants was paid from a US bank account.

Koko was arrested in Bangladesh along with his mother Khaleda Zia on Sept 3, 2007 after a bribery case had been filed by the country's Anti-corruption Commission (ACC). He was however later released on parole on grounds of ill health, and is now reportedly undergoing treatment in Bangkok.

The ACC on December 18 of last year disclosed that Koko has foreign currencies worth around Tk 11.43 crore deposited in a Singapore bank. With help from the Singapore government, the ACC of Bangladesh unearthed information that Koko has 20.61 lakh Singaporean dollars and 2.61 lakh US dollars.

The Singapore government also froze the account and sent necessary documents to the ACC.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4



## Shahid picked as chief whip

Hamid likely to be speaker

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Vice-Principal Abdus Shahid, Awami League (AL) lawmaker of Moulvibazar-4 constituency, has been tapped to serve as the chief whip in the newly constituted parliament.

Prime Minister and Leader of the House Sheikh Hasina has picked him for the post.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 5

## EC sits on election of 45 women MPs

JS may go into session without lawmakers elected to reserved seats

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The ninth parliament may convene without the 45 women lawmakers in reserved seats as the Election Commission (EC) does not seem to have any plans to hold election to the seats before the inaugural session on January 25.

It means the new legislature might have to go into session before its full formation.

According to the constitution, parliament shall consist of lawmakers elected both directly and indirectly.

Citing a High Court (HC) ruling and constitutional provisions, legal experts said the establishment of parliament is never complete without members in the seats earmarked for women. They argue that sittings of the assembly should not commence before the election to reserved seats.

Speaking in return for anonymity, a noted jurist yesterday told The Daily Star that the EC

should immediately hold election to the seats to avoid legal crisis in future.

Since restoration of parliamentary democracy in 1991, all parliaments excepting the eighth opened with the women lawmakers in reserved seats.

The eighth parliament had to begin without women lawmakers as operation of the constitutional provision for reserved seats had expired with dissolution of the seventh.

However, a constitutional amendment in 2004 set aside 45 seats for women for the next 10 years and soon as many lawmakers joined the national assembly.

As per the constitution, parliament shall consist of 300 members to be elected in direct vote from single territorial constituencies and 45 reserved seats to be allotted to the political parties on the basis of their proportional representation in parliament.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

## EC sits today to finalise upazila polls security

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) will hold a high-level meeting today to finalise steps to ensure law and order during the January 22 upazila parishad election.

Chiefs of police, Bangladesh Rifles (BDR), Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), Ansar and representatives of the Armed Forces Division will attend the meeting to be chaired by Chief Election Commissioner ATM Shamsul Huda.

The meeting to be held at 11 am at the National Economic Council Auditorium at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar in the city will also finalise other essential prerequisites to successfully hold the election to 481 upazila parishads in a free, fair and credible manner.

The meeting will review the law and order situation in the run up to the election and take necessary steps to maintain it during the post-election period by cracking down on criminals, musclemen and extortionists.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3



PHOTO: SHAFIQU ALAM

Eleven-year-old Zumman works at a balloon factory in Kamrangirchar of Dhaka for as little as Tk 180 a week. He is one of the four child labourers who work there for eight to nine hours a day. Despite being at the age when one should be going to school and playing with balloons, Zumman has to work in a factory that uses chemicals to make balloons.



## Gaza-blitz on

UN chief disappointed at Israel offensives; 15 militants, 22 civilians killed in fighting, airstrikes

AP, AFP, Gaza City

Israeli forces pounded rocket-launching sites and smuggling tunnels in Gaza yesterday and planes dropped leaflets warning of an escalation in attacks, as Palestinian militants fired at least 10 more rockets at Israel.

Egypt hosted talks aimed at ending the violence.

Flames and smoke rose over Gaza City amid the heavy fighting. The Israeli threat to launch a "new phase" in its two-week-old offensive that has already killed more than 800 Palestinians came in defiance of international calls for a ceasefire.

Israeli planes sent a cloud of white leaflets fluttering across the Gaza City skyline warning residents it would soon step up its war on Hamas and other militant groups.

The airforce also carried out more than 40 air strikes overnight and into Saturday, targeting arms manufacturing sites, weapons depots and smuggling tunnels, the army said.

And ground troops, who entered Gaza a week ago, continued to clash with Palestinian fighters across the territory.

In the day's bloodiest incident, an Israeli tank shell killed nine people in a garden outside a home in the northern Gaza town of Jebeliya. Separately, a woman was killed by tank fire in the nearby town of Beit Lahiya.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

## Dhaka protests

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh has condemned the ongoing Israeli attacks on Gaza as flagrant violation of human rights and international humanitarian laws.

"These atrocities are mediaeval carnage in modern times,"

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

## Bush phones Hasina to congratulate

BSS, Dhaka

US President George W Bush telephoned Sheikh Hasina yesterday and congratulated her on her assumption of the office of prime minister of Bangladesh.

President Bush, who made the phone call at 6:40pm Bangladesh time, termed Hasina's success in the parliamentary election a "landslide victory", an official handout said.

He said the verdict of the people of Bangladesh to establish non-communal democracy is notable.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina thanked the US president on behalf of the

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

## No more politics of vengeance

Hasina asks partymen to stay above personal interests

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday urged her party men to forget personal interests and devote themselves to the service of the common people who overwhelmingly voted Awami League to power.

"This is not the time for reckoning what we have got and what we haven't...The main consideration is what we could give to the people," she told a discussion marking Bangabandhu's Homecoming Day at Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference centre.

Hasina said people have given the Awami League a big responsibility through the

December 29 elections. "We must fulfil their hopes and aspirations," she said.

"We've got the opportunity to serve the people getting over innumerable hurdles," she said with firm optimism that if all could work sincerely, the Awami League government will succeed in implementing the pledges made to the people.

Hasina, whose AL-led grand alliance won almost a three-fourths majority in the crucial polls that put an end to a two-year emergency rule, reassured that a balanced development throughout the country would be ensured disregarding who voted for Awami League and who didn't.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 5

## BNP, Jamaat on their own now

Says Delwar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami will now work from their own standpoint as the four-party alliance was formed for elections only, BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain said yesterday.

He also said efforts to rebuild the party have already begun, and they will culminate in fresh leadership coming up through councils.

He was speaking to reporters at his NAM flat in the afternoon.

Criticising the Election Commission's decision to deploy army in the January 22 upazila election, Delwar said, "It's not a good sign. The

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

## BNP ready to accept JS roles

RASHIDUL HASAN

The BNP would accept chairmanship of parliamentary standing committees and reserved seats for women in parliament in addition to the "offer" for the post of deputy speaker.

The party which suffered a humiliating defeat winning only 29 seats in the December 29 polls may pick Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury as the deputy leader of the opposition.

BNP may also propose the names of two MPs-elect -- MK Anwar and Mosharraf Hossain -- to the ruling party for the post of deputy speaker if the treasury bench offers, say party insiders.

It will also nominate qualified women this time for the reserved seats for women in parliament, party sources add.

"The BNP Parliamentary Party will sit on the day of its oath taking and choose parliamentary leader and deputy leader and names for the deputy speaker," MK Anwar said.

The party abstained from taking oath on January 3 but may take oath on January 25, the first day of the first session of the ninth parliament. Those formalities are likely to be completed then, party insiders say.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

## Call for not to pick war criminals for key JS posts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of Sector Commanders Forum and Muktiyoddha Oikya Parishad yesterday urged the government not to nominate any war criminals for key posts in parliament.

In separate statements the leaders of the two organisations said the first session of the ninth parliament would be held on January 25 and as per the prime minister's commitment, an MP from the opposition bench would be made deputy speaker.

They claimed that a number of the war criminals have

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

## Titumir students go berserk

Damage over 150 vehicles, block roads for one and a half hours over death rumour

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Irate students of Titumir Government College yesterday vandalised over 150 vehicles in the capital's Mohakhali, Gulshan and Banani following a rumour that a female student of the college was killed in a road accident.

Following the mayhem, vehicular movement in the areas remained suspended for one and a half hours causing untold sufferings to hundreds of passengers.

Police said Shamima Sultana, a first

year student of Daffodil College at Mohakhali, sustained minor injuries after a private car hit her near the main entrance of Titumir College while she was crossing the road to meet her elder sister studying at the college.

Sultana was rushed to the Metropolitan Hospital and released after receiving first aid.

When the rumour of death of a college student spread on Titumir College campus, angry students took to the street and went on a rampage at Chairmanbari,

Banani rail crossing and Mohakhali bus terminal at around 9:30am.

They damaged over 150 vehicles, mostly buses.

On information, police rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control.

College Principal Prof AKM Zafar Hossen told The Daily Star that state minister for home affairs Tanjim Ahmed Shohel Taj and he visited Sultana at her residence at Mohakhali.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

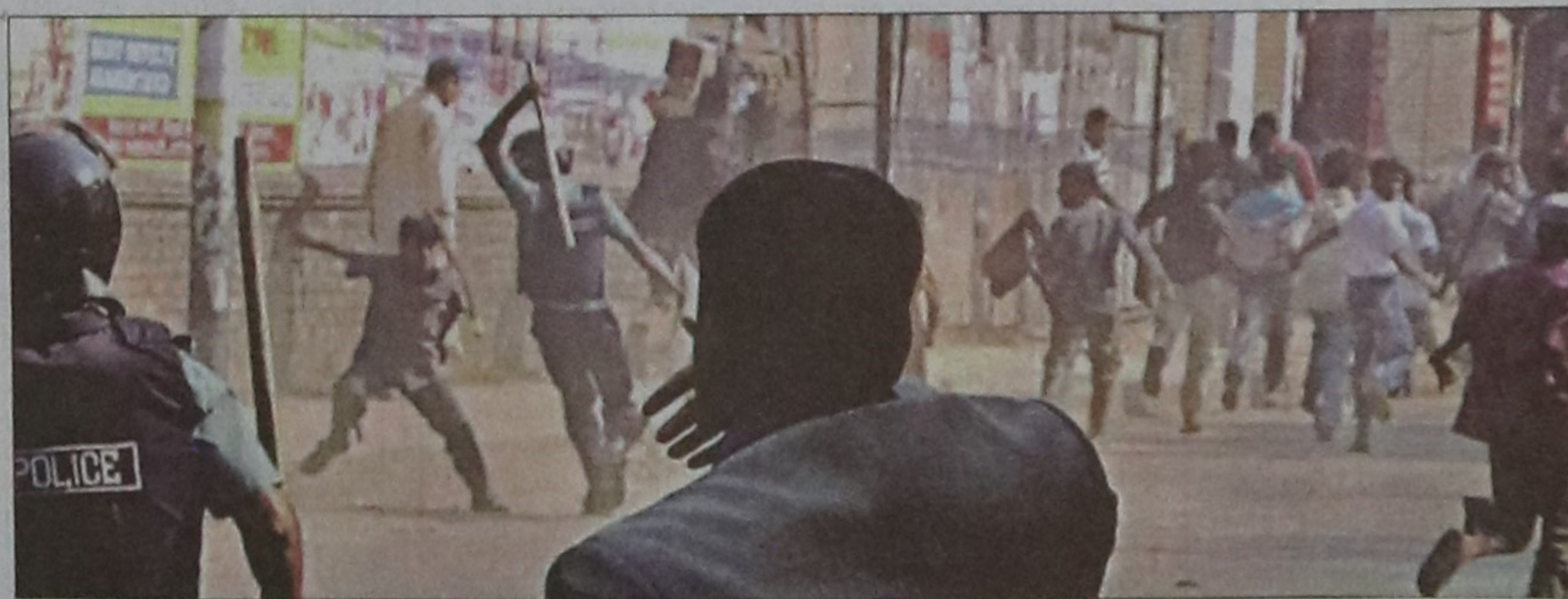


PHOTO: BANGLAR CHOKH

Police try to control agitating students of Titumir College in Dhaka yesterday as they went on a rampage and vandalised 150 vehicles following the rumour of a fellow student's death in a road mishap.