



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina poses for photographs with police high-ups at the PMO yesterday to mark the Police Week 2015.

PHOTO: BSS

## Qulkhwani of Koko tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The qulkhwani of Arafat Rahman Koko, younger son of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, will be held at Gulshan Azad Mosque in Dhaka after Asr prayers tomorrow, Maj Gen (retd) Fazle Elahi Akbar, defence affairs adviser to Khaleda, told The Daily Star.

Koko died of heart failure at his rented house in Kuala Lumpur of Malaysia Saturday afternoon.

The body was flown back home in a Malaysia Airlines flight around 11:40am on Tuesday.

Thousands of mourners joined the namaz-e-janaza of Koko at the Baitul Mukarram National Mosque in the afternoon.

Party activists yesterday visited Koko's Banani grave and offered fatha and munajat seeking salvation of the departed soul.

## US CRITICISM Thai junta chief 'upset'

AFP, Bangkok

Thailand's junta chief said yesterday he was "upset" by comments from a senior US diplomat during a recent visit criticising the military regime, as Washington's top envoy in Bangkok was summoned for a meeting with Thai officials.

On Monday US Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Daniel Russel urged Thailand's generals to implement a "more inclusive political process" after meeting ousted former premier Yingluck Shinawatra.

He added that moves against Yingluck since the military takeover could be perceived as being "politically driven".

But the visit and Russel's decision to meet Yingluck have hit a raw nerve with Thailand's junta rulers.

"I have instructed the foreign ministry to convey the message that we are upset over the comments and that they (the US) have not understood how we work," junta chief and premier Prayut Chan-O-cha told reporters yesterday, placing his right hand on his heart as he spoke.

## Hartal

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Even though the 20-party alliance earlier announced that Dhaka city would remain out of the hartal purview, it thought the better of it later.

Meanwhile, Jamaat-e-Islami yesterday called for a 36-hour hartal in Rajshahi from Saturday protesting killing its local leader Nurul Kabir Shahin.

He was killed in a so-called shoot-out with police in the early hours of Wednesday.

BNP chief Khaleda and 31 other leaders of the BNP and Jamaat were sued on Sunday night for torching a covered van in Chaudhagram upazila of Comilla.

The Anti-Corruption Commission has also prayed to the High Court to revive the Gatco graft case against Khaleda filed seven years ago.

On the other hand, a court on Tuesday for the first time placed Fakhrul on a three-day remand in a case filed for torching a vehicle of the public administration ministry on December 28 last year.

The 20-party alliance also announced to organise special prayers after the upcoming Juma prayers at different mosques for all those opposition men "killed by the law enforcers" across the country.

BNP Joint Secretary General Rizvi Ahmed in a press release asked all leaders and activists of the alliance to join the prayers.

## KHALEDA'S GULSHAN OFFICE PM deplores denial of access to her

*Khaleda thanks all for condolences*

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said denying her access to Khaleda Zia on the day Arafat Rahman Koko died was insulting.

"It was an insult to me," Hasina told parliament, five days into the incident in which she was not allowed to enter Khaleda's Gulshan office to console the BNP chief after her younger son's death in Malaysia.

"When her son died, I rushed to console her. You know the entrance to her office was kept locked and I was not allowed to enter," the PM said.

"As my motorcade could not enter the office as its main entrance was locked, I got out of my car without caring about my security and tried to go through the small [pocket] gate.

"As I took a few steps forward, I was informed that the small gate was locked as well. That means I wouldn't be allowed to get in," the leader of the House said.

She also said she was shocked to see that someone, in the cultural context of the country, could behave in such a way following anyone's death.

Censuring the BNP for blockade violence, Hasina said Khaleda Zia could not bear the pain of her son's natural death and had to be sedated. "Can she now feel the pain of a mother whose son has been burnt to death, of a wife whose husband is burned dead, and of those children who lost their fathers [in arson attacks] during the blockade?"

On a different note, the PM told the House that 26 people were killed, 133 burnt, and 382 vehicles torched and vandalised while 14 attacks on railways and 85 attacks on police and magistrates took place between January 5 and 26.

**KHALEDA THANKS SYMPATHISERS** BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia last night thanked all for their condolences and sympathies following her son Arafat Rahman Koko's death.

"I would like to thank and express my gratitude to all the leaders and activists of different political parties including the BNP and its allies, professionals, civil society members, dignitaries, business leaders, sportsmen and cultural activists who came to my office and expressed condolences and sympathies," she said in a statement signed by her Press Secretary Maruf Kamal Khan.

She also expressed her gratitude to the representatives of different international organisations and diplomatic missions.

However, she made no reference to the prime minister's abortive visit to her office.

Rather, she made a general apology to all those who had to go back without meeting her.

"I am extremely sorry as they could not meet me...", she said in the statement.

## Dudu taken on two-day remand in arson case

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday placed BNP leader Shamsuzzaman Dudu on a two-day remand in connection with an arson case.

The case was filed with Mirpur Model Police Station on December 28 last year for torching vehicles in the capital's Rokeya Sarani.

Metropolitan Magistrate Md Asaduzzaman Nur passed the order after Sub-inspector Syed Asaduzzaman of the police station had produced Dudu, an adviser of BNP chairperson, before it with a seven-day remand prayer.

In the remand prayer, Asaduzzaman, also the investigating officer of the case, said Dudu was directly involved in torching vehicles, and he needs to be remanded to find out other culprits.

The defence opposed the prayer, saying their client was named in the case to silence him criticising the government.

On January 18, Dudu, also general secretary of Jatiyatabadi Krishak Dal, was shown arrested in the case even though his name was not included in the first information report of the case.

On the same day, the BNP leader was sent to jail in a vandalism case during the BNP-led alliance's ongoing indefinite blockade.

He was put on a five-day remand in the case.

## Cabinet body gives nod to appointment

*China Harbour to build water treatment plant*

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is going to appoint two consultants to draw up the 20-year fresh detailed area plan (DAP) for Dhaka Metropolis to ensure planned urban development.

The Cabinet Committee on Public Purchase yesterday approved the appointment at a cost of Tk 25.99 crore for preparing the DAP covering an area of over 1,500 square kilometres for the period of 2016 to 2035.

A joint venture of Sheltech (Pvt) Ltd and The Decode Ltd will prepare the DAP for 753 square km area while The Development Design Consultants Ltd will work up for 764 square km, dividing the city by a line drawn along the New

Airport Road.

The first DAP was finalised twice, and a gazette was published on the plan in June 2010. Its tenure expires this year.

The plan remains unimplemented in the face of opposition from influential realtors.

The cabinet committee okayed the selection of companies for constructing a 12-storey building of the National Board of Revenue at a cost of Tk 99 crore.

Project Builders Ltd, GK Builders and GB Ltd have jointly got the job.

The committee also selected Chinese company China Harbour Engineering Co Ltd for building the Surface Water Treatment Plant of Khulna Water Supply and Sewerage Authority costing Tk 535 crore.

## Do whatever needed

FROM PAGE 1

She asked cops to take stern action to curb terrorist acts after talking to common people, public representatives and other law enforcement agencies like the Ansar, VDP and Rab.

Hasina questioned if BNP chief Khaleda Zia, after losing her younger son, could feel the pain of those mothers whose sons suffered severe burn injuries in petrol bomb attacks.

She instructed the police to discharge its duties with a strong determination to establish the rule of law, protect democracy, human rights, rights of women and children, elderly people and religious minorities.

About her government's plan to raise the number of administrative divisions to 10, she said this would increase the scope of work of the administration and police.

The PM said she did not assume office to relish power, rather she believed it was her duty and responsibility to ensure people's welfare and betterment.

The war crimes trial, she added, is going on properly and this has to be continued to free the country from a stigma.

On the demands raised by police officials, Hasina said some five Grade-1 posts have been created in the police. "The number of Grade-1 posts in the police will be raised gradually."

She also assured cops of providing them with necessary vehicles, including speedboats, enhancing their manpower, building new police barracks in phases as well as setting up four new police lines in the capital.

She thanked members of the police and other law enforcement agencies for their role in holding the January 5 polls and tackling the current law and

### WHAT THEY SAID



"I will ask my party leaders -- give us permission, there is no need for police, BDR or the army ... lakhs of Awami League men will take to the streets to eliminate Khaleda, her party and the defeated forces."

**AL MP Shamim Osman in parliament on January 21**

order problems in the country.

State Minister for Home Asaduzzaman Khan, Senior Home Secretary Mozammel Haque Khan and IGP AKM Shahidul Hoque, among others, spoke on the occasion.

## Sangsad misses

FROM PAGE 1

Ali Farazi to term the current House a positive parliament. He was talking to The Daily Star correspondent.

Khaleda Zia and her party the BNP appear unfortunate. For the first time since 1991, she and her party were out of parliament. This happened as the BNP boycotted the January 5, 2014, parliamentary election.

All verbal attacks in the House in the last one year were aimed at Khaleda and her BNP. Treasury and opposition bench MPs were in chorus blasting the BNP, spending a huge amount of time of the House. It seemed as if Khaleda, not Raushan Ershad, was leading the opposition bench.

The current parliament was constituted through a one-sided election with more than half its MPs elected uncontested. The House, the 10th parliament, was formed on January 9, 2014, even though the ninth parliament was still there, something unprecedented in contemporary history of parliamentary democracy.

The prime minister then inducted some opposition MPs in her cabinet, setting another bizarre precedence. Even Jatiya Party chief Ershad was appointed as the special envoy of the premier with the status of a minister.

The dual role of Jatiya Party, being the main opposition and being in the cabinet, triggered enormous controversy. But neither the government nor the opposition cared.

The parliament began its journey on January 29 last year.

Thanks to the friendly opposition, the government emerged more powerful as it had full control over the legislature.

It was easy for the government to make the House amend the constitution in August last year empowering parliament to remove Supreme Court judges on the grounds of misbehaviour and incapacity.

The amendment abolished the chief justice-led Supreme Judicial Council.

There was an outcry outside of parliament following the amendment. But inside, there was not a single voice against it. The main opposition Jatiya Party, which had announced it would oppose

the bill, finally voted for the amendment.

Even the parliamentary standing committee on the law ministry had dropped its plan to seek opinions from jurists when it was scrutinising the bill. It withdrew as the government did not want the opinions.

The parliamentary standing committees also failed to perform their overseeing functions effectively. Most of the committees did not even sit regularly, paying no heed to the rules of procedure of Jatiya Sangsad.

In last one year, each of the parliamentary standing committees on the various ministries was supposed to hold 10 meetings as per the rules of procedure. But only the committee on the law ministry held 11 meetings.

One of the major obstacles to the committees functioning properly was the appointments of a dozen former ministers as chiefs of the committees on ministries they headed during the last government.

The committees refrained from probing allegations of corruption in the ministries even when there were charges.

Some senior incumbent ministers were also irregular in the committee meetings.

Parliamentary affairs expert Prof Nizam Ahmed, a teacher of Chittagong University, said it was a one-sided parliament and he had lost interest in watching the functions of the current parliament due to its unusual characteristics.

One redeeming feature, however, was that Speaker Shirin Sharmin Choudhury and AL MP Saber Hossain Chowdhury were elected chiefs of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and Inter-Parliamentary Union respectively.

The parliament passed 22 bills last year. It had 91 sittings until yesterday.

The parliament was constituted following the deadliest ever election on January 5 last year. The country was going through a political crisis for more than a year before the election. The parliament could not do anything to improve the political situation. And prior to completion of its one year, the country is again plunged into another political turmoil.

## No progress in economic

FROM PAGE 1

year though it made improvements in labour freedom, freedom from corruption, and monetary freedom outweighed by notable declines in investment freedom and business freedom.

Launched in 1995, the Index evaluates countries in four broad areas of economic freedom: rule of law, regulatory efficiency, limited government and open markets.

Based on its aggregate score, each country graded in the Index is classified as "free" (combined scores of 80 or higher), "mostly free" (70-79.9), "moderately free" (60-69.9), "mostly unfree" (50-59.9) and "repressed" (under 50).

The Index covers 10 freedoms: property rights, freedom from corruption, fiscal freedom, government spending, business freedom, labour freedom, monetary freedom, trade freedom, investment freedom and financial freedom.

Over the last five years, Bangladesh's economic freedom hovered around the lower end of the "mostly unfree" category, said the report.

Modest score improvements have occurred in just four of the 10 economic freedoms (financial freedom, labour freedom, freedom from corruption, and trade freedom), and overall policy reform appears to have stalled.

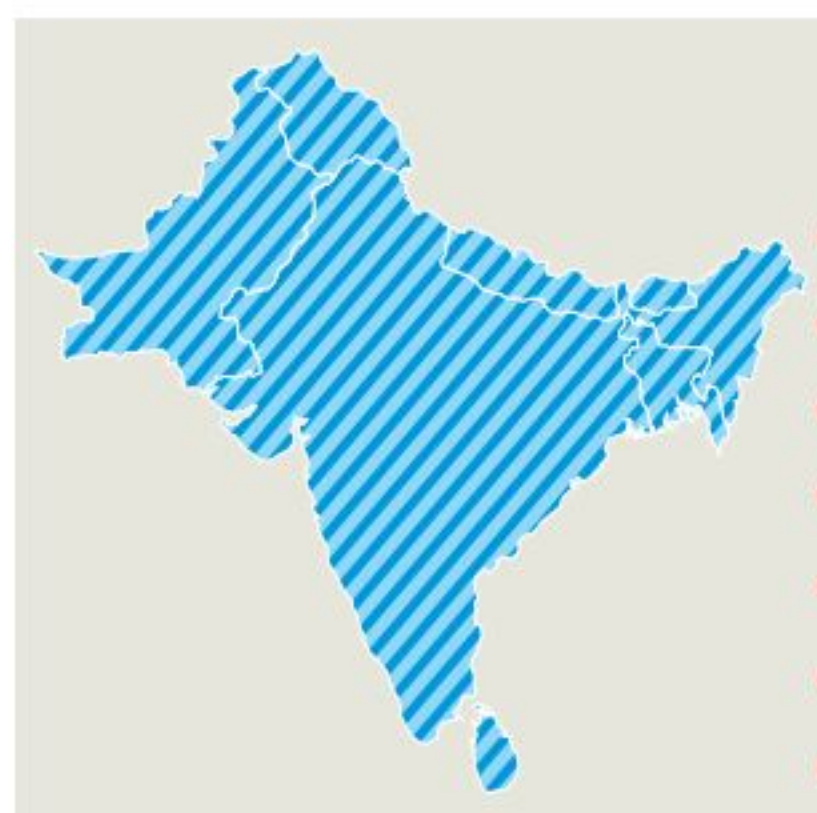
A general disregard for the rule of law, rampant corruption, and a judicial system that suffers from political interference provide a weak foundation for economic modernisation.

Lack of a national consensus on the direction of future policy changes has diminished the momentum for economic reforms, and deteriorating prospects for near-term improvements in economic freedom make it unlikely that the relatively high growth rates of recent years can be maintained.

Most data used in the 2015 Index covers the second half of 2013 through the first half of 2014.

Bangladesh scored 20 in property rights on a scale of 0-100 as it couldn't improve its position in the area. The score in freedom from corruption indicator is 27.

Institutional accountability is not well



### ECONOMIC FREEDOM RANKING

COUNTRY	2015	2014
● Sri Lanka	101	90
● Bhutan	115	116
● Pakistan	121	126
● India	128	120
● Bangladesh	131	131
● Maldives	134	145
● Nepal	152	149

established in Bangladesh, and the judiciary is not clearly separated from the executive, according to the report.

"Government effectiveness is undermined by pervasive graft. Contract enforcement and dispute settlement procedures are inefficient. Antiquated real property laws and poor record-keeping systems complicate land and property transactions. Poor governance is one of the main barriers to foreign direct investment."

Bangladesh has improved in the areas of labour and monetary freedom, scoring 63.7 and 67.7 points respectively. Business freedom, however, went down to 62.2 points.

The index said reform measures in recent years have streamlined the procedures for establishing a business, but other institutional deficiencies such as pervasive corruption and poor access to credit discourage start-ups. The labour market remains underdeveloped, and the enforcement of labour rules is ineffective.

Both trade and financial freedoms remained unchanged at 59 and 30 points, and investment freedom dipped to 45.

It said Bangladesh has a relatively high 13 percent average tariff rate.

"Efforts are underway to improve customs processes. Foreign investors face bureaucratic hurdles. The financial sector remains underdeveloped despite modernisation efforts. State-owned commercial banks account for over 30 percent of total banking system assets. Stock market capitalisation is low."

The country scored 92 points in government spending indicator and 72.7 points in fiscal freedom.

Despite relatively high income and corporate tax rates (25 and 45 percent), the country's tax revenue remains low at around 10 percent of gross domestic product, said the index.

Public expenditures account for 16.3 percent of domestic economy, and public debt has grown to a level equal to about 40 percent of the GDP.

Globally, economic freedom has increased for the third year in a row, it said.

The Index, once again, demonstrates that countries with higher levels of economic freedom substantially outperform others in economic growth, per-capita incomes, health care, education, protection of the environment, reduction of poverty and overall well-being.

Hong Kong has maintained its status as the world's freest economy, a distinction that it has achieved for 21 consecutive years.

Despite the global progress recorded since the Index's inception in 1995, the number of people living without economic freedom remains disturbingly high: 4.5 billion, or 65 percent of the world's population. And more than half of these people live in China and India.

While structural reforms in the two countries sometimes boosted growth, the governments have failed to institutionalise open environments that promote broad-based and sustained improvements in the economic well-being of the population as a whole.