

Khaleeda lands in jail

Court hands her 5 years in prison; bail prayer likely Sunday; Tarique, 4 others get 10 years in Zia orphanage graft case

CHAITANYA CHANDRA HALDER, TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY and WASIM BIN HABIB

BNP Chairperson Khaleeda Zia landed in jail yesterday after a special court sentenced her to five years' rigorous imprisonment in a graft case, dealing a severe blow to the party ahead of the upcoming national elections.

The three-time prime minister is the second former head of government after ex-dictator HM Ershad to have been convicted on corruption charges.

The verdict in the Zia Orphanage Trust corruption case came amid heightening tension that kept people's nerves on edge over the last few days.

The BNP chief's conviction could have significant political implications as it makes uncertain her participation in the next national polls slated for later this year.

"As the prosecution has been able to prove the charges against Khaleeda Zia, she has been awarded five years' rigorous imprisonment, considering her social status and physical condition," said Judge Md Akhtaruzzaman of the Special Court-5 in Dhaka, delivering the much-talked about verdict in a packed courtroom.

The court cancelled Khaleeda's bail and sent her to prison. Law enforcers then took her to the old Central Jail on Nazimuddin Road in the capital amid tight security around 3:00pm.



Khaleeda Zia being taken to prison after yesterday's verdict. The BNP chief was jailed for five years after she was found guilty in the Zia Orphanage Trust graft case.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

I'll be back

Khaleeda tells family, party; appears quiet, in control all the way from home to jail

"There is no need to cry. I will be alright. You all wait, I will be back. Don't worry and be strong."

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA and RASHIDUL HASAN

Khaleeda Zia woke up early in the morning yesterday.

By 9:00am, she had her breakfast -- roti, vegetables and fruit juice -- prepared by domestic help Fatema.

The BNP chief appeared quite composed as she was talking to family members after breakfast. Some of them helped her get ready and packed her suitcases.

It was not just any other day.

Close relatives, BNP leaders and lawyers were waiting at her Gulshan house -- some to say her goodbye and some to accompany her to Bakshibazar in Old Dhaka.

While comforting them, Khaleeda said, "There is no need to cry. I'll be alright. You all wait, I'll be back. Don't worry

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Sporadic violence on a day of alarm

STAR REPORT

People across the country were fearing widespread violence and were panicking as tension built up ahead of yesterday's verdict in the Zia Orphanage Trust graft case against BNP Chairperson Khaleeda Zia.

Much to their relief, it was not as bad as feared.

There were incidents of violence in the capital, Chittagong, Sylhet and a few other places. One person was killed and around 100 others were injured across the country yesterday.

An Awami League supporter was killed as two groups of the ruling party men had a gunfight at Rupganj of Narayanganj over showing off muscle power ahead of the verdict delivery. At least 50 people, including AL activists, police and journalists were wounded.

The usual bustling capital was almost



A gun-toting BCL man during the clash with BNP men in Sylhet yesterday.

deserted yesterday. Very few vehicles were seen on the streets since morning. Many shops and schools were closed.

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Her first few hours in jail

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

For many years, it was an office room of the jail superintendent before it was turned into a VIP prison cell yesterday.

The room inside the country's oldest central jail is now BNP chief Khaleeda Zia's accommodation.

She was taken there around 3:20pm, after a Dhaka court sentenced her to five years in prison in a corruption case.

Once she reached there by a Sports Utility Vehicle (SUV), jail officials took her to the 300 square feet room on the ground floor of the administrative building. At the time, she exchanged pleasantries with them.

A physician checked her soon afterwards and found her well, said jail sources.

Khaleeda will be kept there for the time being and the authorities will decide if she will be taken in some other jail, Towhidul Islam, deputy inspector general (DIG) of prisons, told The Daily Star.

"She will be under the supervision of the jail superintendent. But a deputy jail super and a nurse will be on duty round-the-clock to provide her assistance," he said, adding

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Where's she now?

Asks Hasina about Khaleeda, seeks vote at a rally in Barisal

AGENCIES

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has lashed out at BNP Chairperson Khaleeda Zia for "instigating violence" in 2013-2015.

"Where is she [Khaleeda] today? The Throne of Almighty Allah gets shaken when one carries out repression against people. Those who burnt people to death face such consequences. And that justice is being done," she said.

Hasina was addressing a public rally at Bangabandhu Udyan in the city yesterday, hours after a Dhaka court jailed Khaleeda for

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What next for BNP?

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA and RASHIDUL HASAN

Khaleeda's son Tarique Rahman, also senior vice chairman of BNP, is supposed to run the party in her absence. But he has been in London since 2008 facing multiple charges of corruption.

Nevertheless, BNP leaders hope that Tarique will run the party as it is not necessary to remain physically present to do that in the era of technology.

"He [Tarique] can run the party from anywhere," Nazrul Islam Khan, BNP standing committee member, told reporters yesterday.

Meanwhile, Tarique, now the acting chairman of BNP, in a statement issued after Khaleeda was taken to jail, said the verdict was politically motivated and demanded her immediate release.

Commenting on how the BNP would function in the coming days, Nazrul said Tarique would run the party in consultation with the standing committee members.

"He is the second most powerful person in the party." Tarique was made the BNP senior vice-chairman at a council of the party in 2009. He had already left the country when the council took place.

According to BNP constitution, senior vice-chairman is its second-highest post. In the absence of chairperson, the senior vice-chairman can call for meetings of the standing and executive committees and can also exercise the powers vested in the chairperson.

BNP leaders hope that Khaleeda would be released on bail soon and no major issues will arise during her absence.



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অভিনন্দন



জনাব মো: আবদুল হামিদ

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