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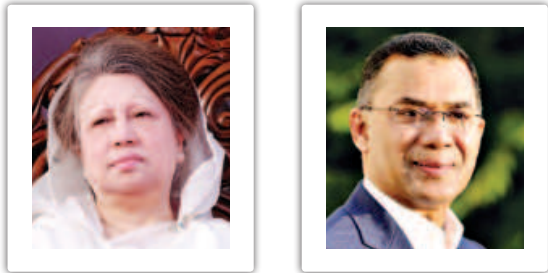
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Khaleda, Tarique cleared of 4 graft, extortion cases

HC acquitted the ex-PM in Zia Charitable Trust case



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court and three lower courts yesterday cleared BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and acting chairman Tarique Rahman in four cases of graft and extortion. The HC acquitted Khaleda in the Zia Charitable Trust corruption case. The bench of Justice AKM Asaduzzaman and Justice Syed Enayet Hossain scrapped the trial court's verdict that sentenced the BNP chief and two others to seven years. It delivered the judgement after hearing appeals filed by the three challenging the trial court verdict. Khaleda and two others were cleared of the charges in

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Bangladesh pacer Marufa Akter (R) celebrates one of her two wickets against Ireland, helping the home side to a 154-run victory -- their biggest-margin victory in ODI format – during the first match of a three-match series at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Tigresses notch record win against Ireland

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh women's team notched their biggest-margin victory in ODIs with a 154-run win against Ireland in the first of the three-match series at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. Powered by Sharmin Akhter Supta's career-best 89-ball 86, the win was also Bangladesh's first win in this format this year following the disappointment of the 3-0 series loss against Australia at home. Sharmin narrowly missed out on what would have been a first ODI ton and the fastest for Bangladesh women. However, her aggression allowed the Tigresses pick up the scoring rate and eventually led them to their highest score of 252 for four. Opener Fargana Hoque contributed with 61 while Murshida Khatun struck 38. With the ball, Marufa Akter bagged back-to-back wickets to push Ireland on the back foot early before Sultana Khatun and Nahida Akter bagged three wickets

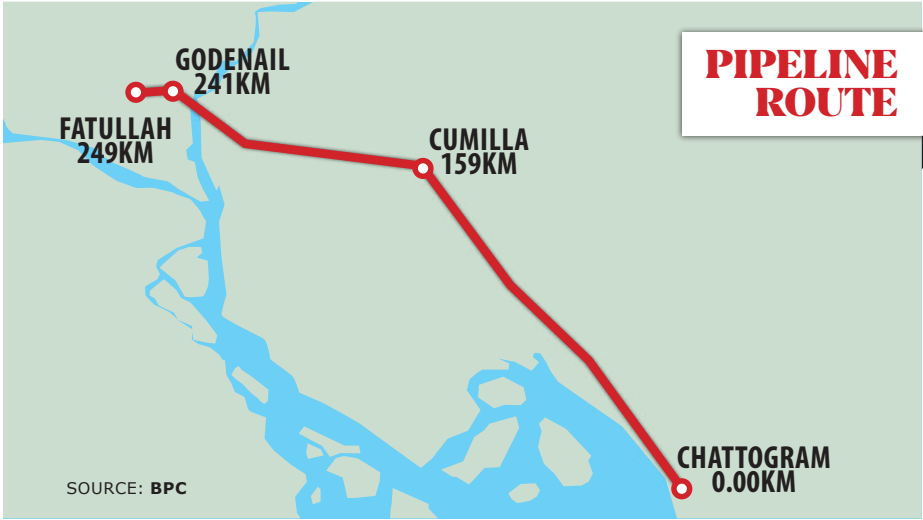
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Diesel to flow thru 250km Ctg-Dhaka pipeline mid-Dec

MD. NAZRUL ISLAM, Chattogram

Bangladesh is set to reach a milestone in fuel transport with the commissioning of the 250-kilometre Chattogram-Dhaka diesel pipeline in the middle of December. The launch of the first underground pipeline -- from the port city's Patenga area to Godnail and then to Fatullah on the outskirts of the capital -- is expected to save about Tk 230 crore every year in fuel transport costs, according to officials of the Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation. At present, diesel is transported from Chattogram to the rest of the country by river, rail and road, which causes frequent

pipeline from Godnail to Fatulla. The pipeline from Patenga to Godnail has touched the bottom of 22 rivers and canals. Out of these, 10 are large rivers. A new depot with a capacity of 21,000 metric tons has been built in Barura, Comilla. The storage capacities at the Godnail and Fatullah depots have also been increased, said Aminul Haque, who is acting as the project director on behalf of BPC. The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council approved the 'Fuel Supply from Chattogram to Dhaka Pipeline' project at a cost of Tk 2,861.31 crore in October 2018.



incidents of oil theft. Besides, problems arise in fuel transportation due to the navigability crisis on waterways during the dry season. This often leads to disruption in fuel supply. BPC is implementing the project at a cost of Tk 3,600 crore through the 24th Engineer Construction Brigade of the Bangladesh Army. The pipeline has already gone through a hydro test with water successfully transmitted from one end of the pipeline to the other, according to Colonel Jahangir Hossain, the project director of the 24th Engineer Construction Brigade. There are nine pumping stations in the pipeline and the equipment of the stations are being tested. "I hope we will be able to commission the pipeline by mid-December," Hossain added. The pipeline can transport 2.7 to 3 million metric tons of diesel annually, which can be increased to 5 million metric tons in stages. In fiscal 2023-24, 5.4 million metric tons of fuel were transported by waterways across the country, according to BPC. Of this, 2.7 million metric tons were transported from Chattogram to Godnail and Fatullah depots in Dhaka. Currently, 110 ships carry fuel on this route every month. The long-awaited pipeline has two segments: a 241.28-kilometre 16-inch diameter pipeline from Patenga to Godnail depot in Narayanaganj through Feni, Cumilla, Chandpur and Munshiganj and an 8.29-kilometre 10-inch diameter

After amending the development project proposal several times, the cost has now reached Tk 3,600 crore. The project implementation period has been set until December this year. It is the second underground fuel pipeline project after the 110-kilometre Single Point Mooring (SPM) Project from the deep sea in Maheshkhali to the Eastern Refinery in Chattogram. Although the trial transmission of the twin pipeline for diesel and crude oil was completed on February 29 and March 9 respectively this year, commercial operation has been stalled in the absence of an operator. The SMP was built to transport fuel to the depot directly from a deep-sea mooring. Currently, imported fuel from Chattogram Port is transported to the depot through feeder vessels. During the previous Awami League government, the single-source tendering method was followed in appointing an operator for the SPM project, according to BPC officials. The interim government has now started the process of appointing an operator for SPM following the open tender method. Contacted, BPC Chairman Md. Amin ul Ahsan told The Daily Star that the current government has decided to appoint the Chinese company that built the project as the operator on a government-to-government basis. The operator will soon start the SPM project after completing the due process, he added.

HIGH COURT Lawyers hurl eggs at judge for remark on Ziaur Rahman

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A group of lawyers yesterday threw eggs at Justice Md Ashraful Kamal and forced him to end the session of a High Court bench for allegedly making "negative comments about late president Ziaur Rahman in a verdict". The bench of Justice Ashraful and Justice Kazi Waliul Islam was hearing and disposing of cases in the packed courtroom-32 at Bijoy 71 High Court Building on the Supreme Court premises after lunch. Around 2:30pm, the lawyers entered the courtroom and told Justice Ashraful that he has no right to hold the office of a judge anymore as he made negative comments about proclaimer of independence Ziaur Rahman in a judgement, an official on duty at the HC bench told The Daily Star, requesting anonymity. The lawyers also told the justice that they have tolerated him for several years, the official said. At one stage, a few of the lawyers hurled eggs at

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Israel-Hezbollah truce takes hold

Civilians head back to south Lebanon; Hamas welcomes truce, hopes for one in Gaza

REUTERS, Beirut

A ceasefire between Israel and Lebanese armed group Hezbollah held yesterday after both sides accepted an agreement brokered by the US and France, a rare victory for diplomacy in the Middle East wracked by two wars for over a year. Lebanon's army, which is tasked with helping to ensure the ceasefire holds, said it was preparing to deploy to the south of the country. The military asked that residents of border villages delay returning home until the Israeli military, which has waged war against Iran-backed Hezbollah on several occasions and pushed around 6 km (4 miles) into Lebanon, withdraws. While the ceasefire largely held yesterday morning, Israel said it identified Hezbollah operatives returning to areas near the border and had opened fire to prevent them from coming closer. The agreement, which promises to end a conflict across the Israeli-Lebanese border that has killed thousands of people since it was ignited by the Gaza offensive last year, is a major achievement for the US in the waning days of President Joe Biden's administration. Hamas official Sami Abu Zuhri told Reuters that the group "appreciates" Lebanon's right to reach an agreement which protects its people, and hopes for a deal to end the Gaza offensive. Iran, Turkey, other Arab states, UN and world leaders welcomed the Lebanon truce. A senior Hezbollah official told Lebanon's Al Jadeed TV that while it supported the extension of the Lebanese state's authority, the group would emerge from the war stronger.

- Lebanon's army preparing to deploy to the south
- Israel pushed Hezbollah back decades: Netanyahu
- World leaders, UN welcome the truce

ISLAMABAD MARCH Imran Khan's followers end demos after crackdown

954 protesters arrested

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan police said yesterday they had arrested nearly 1,000 protesters who marched on the capital demanding the release of jailed ex-prime minister Imran Khan, after crowds were evicted from the city centre in a sweeping security crackdown. Khan has been jailed since August 2023, sidelined by dozens of legal cases he claims were concocted to prevent his comeback in elections this year marred by rigging allegations. Since the February vote, his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party has defied a government crackdown with regular rallies, but Tuesday's gathering was by far the largest to grip the capital since the poll. More than 10,000 protesters surged into the city, defying a lockdown and a ban on public gatherings to skirmish with 20,000 security forces enlisted to turn them back. Islamabad Police Inspector General Ali Nasir Rizvi said 954 protesters had been arrested between Sunday and Tuesday, when crowds came within one mile (1.6 kilometres) of a public square they aimed to occupy.

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Cheering crowds gather as vehicles drive near damaged buildings in Beirut's southern suburbs after a ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah took effect yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS