

Angry Zia slams government in court

An angry former Bangladesh prime minister Khaleda Zia slammed the caretaker government during a courtroom trial, denying graft charges against her and her associates as 'politically motivated'.

Zia utilised a five-minute opportunity given to her by the judge Wednesday to make a 17-minute statement, rebutting charges and making her own.

'Those who are committing corruption now must be punished. The people will bring them to trial,' The Daily newspaper Thursday quoted Zia as saying.

She is being tried in a corruption case slapped against her, her youngest son Arafat Rahman Koko and 22 others.

The courtroom witnessed emotional scenes as a tearful Zia hugged her ailing businessman son.

'My entire family has been ruined. See my son's condition... My son who was physically quite well has been made ill,' she told the court, demanding that he be sent abroad for proper treatment.

Arafat was brought to the special jail in an ambulance and was given oxygen for 45 minutes before being produced in the courtroom.

The trial brought together political friends and foes.

Mohammed Nasim, a former home minister in the government of Zia's rival Sheikh Hasina, was seen hugging Jamate-e-Islami chief Matiur Rahman Nizami.

Nizami and Nasim's Awami League have rarely shared any political platform.

Zia has been the immediate past prime minister, ruling the country for 10 years in 1991-1996 and 2001-06.

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