

Who is a habitual defaulter?

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information in favour of his/her non-existent companies will also be considered habitual defaulters as well as those who divert loans by not investing in the sector mentioned in their credit proposals.

NBFIs will also consider those habitual defaulters who hand over his/her mortgaged assets by dodging the institutions.

A list of habitual defaulters will be prepared by NBFIs, which will be sent to the central bank.

The Bangladesh Bank will subsequently submit the list to the government to take punitive measure against them.

NBFIs will have to take legal action within one month after enlisting a habitual defaulter.

If required, criminal cases will be filed against wilful defaulters with prior approval from the respective NBFIs board.

The government will soon impose embargo on habitual defaulters from travelling abroad after it receives the list from the central bank.

Habitual defaulters will not get any trade licence and they will not be allowed to register their home and vehicles.

Besides, they will not hold any post of executive committee of political, social, professional and business organisations.

Habitual defaulters will also be barred by the Registrar of Joint Stock Companies and Firms from opening new companies.

The draft act also said a person or his/her companies will be collectively allowed to hold a

maximum of 15 percent shares of a NBFi from the previous ceiling of 20 percent.

The central bank, however, will take decision for a foreign entity or a person on how much shares they can hold.

The BB will also permit NBFIs to merge with each other. A NBFi will have to hand over a portion of its business to another one for completion of the merger.

The government has moved to revise the draft act at time when the country's NBFi sector is struggling to survive from the rising default loans due to a lack of corporate governance.

At present, 33 NBFIs are running their business, of which at least 10 are finding it impossible to repay their depositors money.

In July last year, the BB was forced to start the process of liquidating People's Leasing and Financial Services as the NBFi failed to repay depositors' money despite maturity of funds.

On September 30 last year, Rupali Bank alleged that 10 NBFIs have failed to pay back its funds amounting to Tk 933 crore.

The bank has repeatedly asked them to repay the money, but they were unable to. Subsequently, the state-run bank sought the central bank's intervention.

At the end of September, the total defaulted loans in NBFIs amounted to Tk 6,838 crore, up 25.23 percent from six months earlier, according to data from the central bank.

"This is a good initiative," said Salehuddin Ahmed, a former

governor of the central bank, while calling for such initiatives for banks as well.

The NBFIs' owners and management, who are alleged to be involved in fraudulent activities while disbursing loans, should also be brought to book, he said.

There have been many provisions in the existing act to take punitive measures against them, but those articles were never implemented.

He went on urge the authority concerned to follow the rules and regulations against the vested quarters responsible for the existing haphazard situation in the financial sector.

Ahsan H Mansur, executive director of the Policy Research Institute, echoed the same.

"In principle, the move is commendable. But we know that many habitual defaulters take part in the election frequently by using loopholes of the act. So, the act will have to be implemented properly to tackle them."

A tragic farewell

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years ago and his wife died just nine months back.

Speaking to reporters, he said his son was excited about the farewell programme and talked to him the night before about what they would do during the programme in school the next day.

"How will I live now? I escorted him to Joy Kali Temple intersection. Had I known, I would have escorted him up to the school," the father, wiping tears from his checks, said.

"My son wanted to be a businessman someday. For this, he chose to study commerce," Hanif was saying to himself.

The victim's friends said the driver did not stop even after hitting him.

"The driver ran him over even after he collapsed. Had he stopped, Abir could have been saved," said Kazi Fahad, Abir's classmate.

Students and teachers demanded that the driver be punished to the full extent of the law.

Jahir Hossain, sub-inspector of Wari Police Station, said the driver was reckless on a road usually used by pedestrians.

Tigers return

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finally agreed to after a lot of discussions over security issues in Pakistan, helped Pakistan hang on to their number one ranking in T20Is and skipper Babar Azam credited his bowlers for the triumph. Meanwhile, Bangladesh captain Mahmudullah Riyad admitted yesterday that their performance in the series was disappointing.

Bangladesh will travel to Pakistan again on February 5 to play the first of two Tests in Rawalpindi. In the third phase of the tour, the Tigers will play an ODI on April 3 in Karachi, before playing the second Test starting April 7.



Police vans are parked in a field at the capital's Motijheel Government Colony recently. The law enforcers have been using it as a parking lot for the past few months, preventing children in the area from playing there. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Tabith pledges 'intelligent city'

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city's public transport and waste management systems.

Tabith said a corruption-free and habitable model Dhaka will be established with the firm belief in nationalism, democratic values and communal harmony.

He further said the incumbent government and mayors have failed to tackle the mosquito issue.

"If elected, I will carry out mosquito repellent activities throughout the year. I will also work for reducing traffic jam and will take effective steps to stop air pollution in the city," he said.

Dhaka ranked third in the list of cities with worst air. The capital city has been grappling with air pollution for years.

Tabith said night-markets or farmers' markets will be established at the access points of the city and other significant places.

He also said "Food Courts" will be established in public places to monitor the quality of food.

He plans to introduce modern city school-bus services on specified routes for safe transportation for students.

Tabith said he will introduce city "scholarship" awards each year for

talented students who are successful in their primary, junior and secondary school certificate examinations.

He will arrange at least one day-care centre in each ward.

To reduce road crash, Tabith plans to construct more footbridges in many intersections across the city and add automated escalators on the footbridges.

To reduce traffic congestion, Tabith promises build multi-storied parking facilities or parking lots in busy areas of the city.

For commuters' smooth movement, Tabith plans to introduce hi-tech commuter train services from Tongi to Kamalapur.

He said he will take initiatives to introduce sky-walkways for easier movement of pedestrians at various places.

To manage the city's waste, Tabith said he will introduce popular and scientific concept of waste disposal system called 3R (Reduce, Re-use and Re-use) and emphasise on "source control" to serve the purpose.

He will from an advisory council, which will include both elders and younger resource persons concerned in city development, environment

protection, modern technology, and to implement work plans.

Tabith plans to introduce "One Stop Service" to provide instant services to all kinds of citizen's privileges, including issuance of birth and death certificates, trade licences and others.

He will introduce recreational boating, angling and cable-car rides on limited scale to make Hatirjheel area more attractive and also begin river cruise around the city as a medium of recreation by re-excavating and renovating river routes around the city.

For public safety, CCTV cameras will be installed lane-by-lane on each street in multiple phases.

When reporters asked whether it will be possible to implement the manifesto even if he is elected, given that he belongs to the opposition party, Tabith said, "It will be [possible], if the people remain by my side."

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal President ASM Abdur Rab, Nagarik Oikya Convener Mahmudur Rahman Manna and Gonoshasthaya Kendra founder Dr Zafullah Chowdhury, among others, were also present at the manifesto unveiling.

No level playing field

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Apart from this, AL men are removing BNP candidates' publicity materials like posters and banners in their areas, the BNP leader said.

He also criticised the activities of the executive magistrates who were deployed to monitor such violations and said their activities are not visible.

"Our candidates are abiding by the electoral code fully while Awami League men are breaching it."

He also lambasted the EC for allowing some observer groups ahead of the elections. "They will work in favour of a party in the election and on election day, they will say the poll was held in a free and fair manner."

AL CANDIDATES FOLLOWING CODE

Co-chairman of AL's national election conducting committee and the Prime Minister's Political Advisor HT Imam, however, denied the BNP's allegations saying, "Our candidates are following the electoral code of conduct."

While talking to reporters after meeting the CEC yesterday, he said the attack on BNP candidate Ishraque Hossain was "a pre-planned and staged incident".

"We have informed the commission and handed over evidence proving that the incident was pre-planned and

staged," Imam said.

AL presidium member Jahangir Kabir Nanak urged the EC to take steps to arrest "outsiders and goons" gathering in the capital ahead of election for the sake of security and safety of the citizens.

LEVEL-PLAYING FIELD PREVAILS: CEC

CEC KM Nurul Huda said that only two incidents have taken place during electioneering and there are no chance of the election atmosphere being spoiled.

He said that police and executive magistrate are investigating the attacks on Dhaka south city corporation mayor candidate Ishraque from BNP. "We are yet to get the investigation report. We will take action against those involved after investigation," he said while talking to reporters.

On BNP's allegation that the ruling party has set up election camps on footpaths and roads, the CEC said they don't have any information in this regard. "But we will evacuate all camps on roads and footpaths," he added.

Regarding AL's allegations of BNP goons gathering in Dhaka ahead of the polls, Huda said, "We told them [Awami League] that they have to come up with specific allegations."

Don't panic, take caution

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with 245 Bangladeshis in Wuhan. The Chinese authorities allowed them to go to their closest stores and get groceries yesterday.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, at a cabinet meeting yesterday, also directed all to stay alert.

"The prime minister asked us to be more alert ... those who are coming through or from China should also be taken care of specially," Cabinet Secretary Khandker Anwarul Islam told journalists later.

He said the PM directed installation of special quarantine facilities at all ports of entry.

Authorities of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport have screened 2,610 people entering Bangladesh from China since January 20, but found no suspected coronavirus infections.

"The number of passengers from China has gone down drastically. We are maintaining all precautionary measures when screening the passengers from China," said Dr Jahir, assistant health officer at the airport.

Meanwhile, despite the calls for calm and not to panic, villagers of Jasaldia in Munshiganj's Louhajang started panicking after a woman and her nephew died following high fever.

The district civil surgeon said they, following preliminary probe, believe the two died neither of coronavirus

nor nipah virus.

Prof Meerjady Sabrina Flora, director at the Institute of Epidemiology Disease Control and Research, told The Daily Star, "Our team is investigating the area. They [victims] had no history of travelling to China; the symptoms don't go with nipah virus infection either. We would be able to know the cause of death after complete investigation."

The IEDCR also said they do not believe that a Chinese patient at a Dhaka hospital was infected with coronavirus. They, however, would conduct tests for good measure.

In China, the number of cases has reached nearly 3,000 and at least 81 people have died so far.

Since the outbreak in China around a week ago, Nepal has confirmed a coronavirus case while India has quarantined four people for observation.

Experts suggested that the government take all precautionary measures so that the virus, which can be transmitted from human to human, does not enter Bangladesh.

"All entry points should be brought under necessary screening; especially those through which people from China or countries with reported coronavirus cases enter Bangladesh," Prof Saif Ullah Munshi of BSMMU's virology department told The Daily Star.

He suggested that people maintain good habits, like using masks, covering cough, and washing hands often.

"This virus could remain incubated inside a body for a period [14 days]. It is tough to identify such a person. In such a situation, it is important that our preparations are methodical," Prof Saif said.

Colds do not necessarily mean coronavirus infection. "However, we would urge people to stay alert and inform us via our hotline +8801937000011," Flora of IEDCR told The Daily Star.

The number of people killed in China by the new coronavirus has risen to 81 as the hard-hit province of Hubei announced 24 new fatalities.

The first death was recorded in Hainan province; an 80-year-old woman.

Outside China, at least 44 cases have been confirmed in Thailand, the United States, France, and Australia. There have been no deaths outside China.

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Draconian travel curbs needed

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and killed 81 others.

While the epicentre remains in Wuhan and the central Chinese province of Hubei, it has since spread to some of the country's biggest cities -- including Beijing, Shanghai and Chongqing, and the southern cities of Shenzhen and Guangzhou.

"We are expecting to see epicentres of self-sustaining epidemics in these other major city clusters on the mainland," Leung predicted.

Given those cities have major regional and international transport links it was "highly likely" they would spread the virus further afield once those cities have self-sustaining outbreaks, he added.

The Wuhan virus has been detected in a dozen other countries -- as far afield as North America and Europe -- but only via a handful of people who travelled primarily from the epicentre in Wuhan.

The latest models from HKU warned that the number of actual infections was likely to be much higher than the official tolls, which only account for those who have been found and have tested positive.

HKU believes as many as 44,000 people may have been infected as

of Saturday after evidence emerged suggesting people may be infectious even when they are not showing symptoms.

Leung said the number of infections would likely double every six days, peaking in April and May for those places currently dealing with an outbreak, although effective public health measures could bring that rate down.

The Chinese government has sealed off Wuhan and neighbouring cities, effectively trapping tens of millions of people, in a bid to contain the virus.

But some experts have warned those measures came too late, with millions leaving the region for the annual Lunar New Year holiday before the lockdown.

Leung said the lockdowns implemented by China were "absolutely correct", although he said the measures "may not be able to substantially change the course of this epidemic in the other major city clusters".

The HKU team is part of the World Health Organization's Collaborating Centre for Infectious Disease Epidemiology and Control, a network of academics around the world that help monitor new virus outbreaks.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM

WHO

Frequently clean hands by using alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water;

When coughing and sneezing cover mouth and nose with flexed elbow or tissue – throw tissue away immediately and wash hands;

Avoid close contact with anyone who has fever and cough;

If you have fever, cough and difficulty breathing seek medical care early and share previous travel history with your health care provider;

When visiting live markets in areas currently experiencing cases of novel coronavirus, avoid direct unprotected contact with live animals and surfaces in contact with animals;

The consumption of raw or undercooked animal products should be avoided. Raw meat, milk or animal organs should be handled with care, to avoid cross-contamination with uncooked foods, as per good food safety practices.