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Caught political bigwigs given 30-day detention

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Fifteen high-ranking leaders of BNP and Awami League (AL) along with four others were sent to 30-day detention yesterday on charges of anti-state activities, sabotage and corruption.

Former state minister Ruhul Qudus Talukder Dulu, and former BNP lawmakers Mosaddak Ali Fahu and Abdul Wadood Bhuiyan, who had been arrested along with other high profile politicians of both the major parties during the joint forces' drive early Sunday, however were not produced before court.

The court turned down the bail petitions of all the 19 arrestees and ordered their detention after security personnel had produced them before the court yesterday afternoon with detention proposal under the Special Powers Act, without specifying the charges against them.

Although the court did not specify the duration of detention,

lawyers said the arrestees might primarily be put under a one-month detention.

The order came a day after seven former ministers and several other top politicians from both the parties were rounded up from their houses in the capital in an army-led joint forces' drive to hunt down corrupt politicians and businessmen as part of the interim government's 'ways to curb corruption'.

Some of the arrestees alleged that they were tortured 'inhumanely' during their stay in custody at 'places they do not know'.

Meanwhile, a home ministry press note issued last night acknowledged the roundup of high profile politicians saying that the arrests had been made in a bid to strictly suppress criminal activities which endanger national security and the economy.

After their arrests in the early hours of Sunday, former communications minister Nazmul Huda, parliamentary affairs adviser to the immediate past prime minister

Salauddin Quader Chowdhury, former state ministers for labour and employment, civil aviation, and power--Amanullah Aman, Mir Nasir and Iqbal Hasan Mahmud, AL adviser Salman F Rahman, Shwechhasebak League General Secretary Pankaj Devnath, former BNP lawmakers Naser Rahmand and Manjurul Ahsan Munshi, and

BNP-backed BTB trade union leader Firoj Mia were taken to undisclosed locations.

Former home minister Mohammad Nasim, former state minister for planning Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir, and Lotus Kamal of AL were also taken to undisclosed locations after their arrests during

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Ex-minister Tariqul held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The joint forces arrested BNP leader and former forest and environment minister Tariqul Islam, and another former lawmaker of the party Rashiduzzaman Millat from their houses last night.

The forces raided Tariqul's residence in Jessore town around 10:30 last night soon after he had returned home after a day in hiding.

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BNP leaders wary of Hawa Bhaban contact

Tarique under strict surveillance

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Senior leaders of BNP are now avoiding their superiors, they are even hesitant to keep contact with the party chairperson's office following the recent arrests of high profile political leaders on charges of corruption.

Sources said Tarique Rahman

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Fida M Kamal made new attorney general

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday appointed Barrister Fida M Kamal as the attorney general (AG).

The position of the state's chief law officer fell vacant after Al Mohammad Ali resigned on January 24 in the wake of growing clamour for 'depoliticisation' of the AG Office.

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New CEC pledges major electoral reforms

Vows to restore public confidence in EC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Newly appointed Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) ATM Shamsul Huda yesterday said his first task would be devising an action plan for major electoral reforms in consultation with the political parties and other stakeholders.

On the first day in office, he told reporters that he would make the Election Commission (EC) an institution in which every citizen can take pride.

"The commission must restore public confidence in it by ensuring transparency in all its activities. A level playing field should be created so that all can participate in the polls," he added.

Earlier in the day, Huda, former water resources secretary, was sworn in as the CEC while Mohammad Sohul Hossain, another former bureaucrat, as election commissioner. Chief Justice Syed JR Mudassir Husain administered the oath at his Supreme Court chamber in a simple ceremony.

The caretaker government on Sunday appointed the two as the CEC and election commissioner.

The new poll chief said he regards the new assignment as a

big challenge. "I'm not here [EC] to take it as a mere job. I've been in that for the last 34 years. Now I want to serve the nation with my intelligence and wisdom," he observed.

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PHOTO: STAR

Newly appointed Chief Election Commissioner ATM Shamsul Huda, left, and Election Commissioner Mohammad Sohul Hossain speak to the media after being sworn in at the chief justice's office yesterday.

RUPALI BANK Govt to sell its remaining shares to Saudi prince

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The government yesterday approved a proposal to sell out its remaining 26 percent shares in Rupali Bank to Saudi Prince Bandar for \$128 million, which would give him 93 percent ownership of the state-owned bank.

The Saudi prince had earlier bought 67 percent shares of the bank from the immediate past BNP-led coalition government. The bank is, however, yet to be handed over to him.

The Advisers' Committee on Economic Affairs headed by Finance Adviser Mirza Azizul Islam approved the proposal.

"The committee decided to sell out the remaining shares of Rupali Bank," Azizul said adding that the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) and the Privatisation Commission would process the sale through appropriate measures.

The government's remaining stake in the bank would be sold to

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Shattered, they arrive at jail gate

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Most of the arrested leaders of BNP and Awami League (AL) were looking pale and jittery as they were being hauled to Dhaka Central Jail yesterday evening after a court sent them to detention.

Some of them however flashed unenthusiastic "V" signs to waiting relatives, journalists and onlookers at the jail gate.

Two white minibuses of

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1,482 more arrested, 20 arms seized

STAR REPORT

The joint forces arrested 1,482 people on various charges and seized 20 firearms and 26 bombs in the last 24 hours, ending at 6:00am yesterday.

Besides, the army personnel arrested general secretary of BNP Sharsha upazila unit Khairuzzaman Modhu with a pistol at his house in the upazila in

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20,000 sacks of rotten wheat, sugar seized

STAR REPORT

The joint forces in separate drives all over the country yesterday seized over 20,000 sacks of spoiled wheat and date expired sugar and huge quantities of fake products including over 3,400 sacks of fertilizer.

The forces raided and sealed off a warehouse in Gazipur owned by Partex Group after they recovered 5,000 sacks of date expired sugar to be used in popular soft drink RC Cola.

Former BNP lawmaker MA Hashem is the chairman of Partex Group.

Our Gazipur correspondent reports, the joint forces found that the sugar stored in the warehouse of RC Cola factory has been expired in 2005 and early 2006.

General manager of the factory BK Dutta admitted of storing wet sugar inside the warehouse, but refused to make any comment on its expiration.

Earlier, on Saturday night, Rab had seized 1,448 sacks of date expired powder milk and 200 sacks of spoiled sugar from Danish Condensed Milk factory in

Narayanganj -- another concern of Partex Group.

Rab filed a case against M A Hashem, his son and also Partex Group director Aziz Al-Mahmood, factory general manager Mokbul Hossain and warehouse manager Lokman Hossain.

The joint forces recovered 14,000 sacks of spoiled wheat worth Tk 175 lakh from four warehouses of Mitali Food Industries at Shiromoni under Khan Jahan Ali thana of Khulna and arrested two people, reports our staff correspondent.

Haji Ishtiaque Ahmed Romel owns Mitali Food Industries -- a gold medal winner for export in 2004. Its products include different grades of flour and various bakery items.

Metropolitan magistrate Atiqul Haque led the operation and sealed off the four warehouses.

The arrestees were identified as warehouse in-charge Moazzem Hossain and an Islamic Bank officer M Mosaddek Billah.

The army-led joint forces yesterday unearthed six factories and

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Dhaka to sign anti-graft UN convention

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The caretaker government yesterday decided to ratify the United Nations Convention Against Corruption to bring the country's anti-corruption measures up to the international standard.

The decision was taken in a council of advisers meeting that was chaired by Chief Adviser (CA) Fakhruddin Ahmed, where they

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ACC chief, 2 commissioners invited today at Bangabhaban

UNB, Dhaka

Amidst high speculation of resignation, Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) Chairman Sultan Hossain Khan, two commissioners Moniruzzaman Miah and Monir Uddin Ahmed have been invited by President Iajuddin Ahmed at Bangabhaban today.

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Power price to go up by 5pc

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Electricity costs in urban areas will go up by five per cent per unit above 100 units of consumption, decided the Advisers' Committee on Economic Affairs yesterday.

A meeting of the Advisers' Committee on Economic Affairs chaired by committee Chairman Finance Adviser Mirza Azizul Islam took the decision yesterday.

The procedures to make the new rates effective will be initiated immediately, the finance adviser told reporters after the meeting.

For up to 100 units of consumption, electricity charge per unit would remain at the current rate Tk 2.5.

But per unit electricity cost between 101 and 400 units will be increased to Tk 3.15 from the current cost of Tk 3 per unit while it will be Tk 5.25 per unit for above 400 units of consumption, the current rate of which is Tk 5.

The previous government had issued a gazette notification that stated this price rise would become effective from January 1, 2007,

which was later stalled, Azizul Islam said, adding, "We only revaluated the gazette."

It is not fair that rural electricity consumers would pay more than urban consumers and the gazette re-validation only established equity between the two categories of consumers, he said.

As 80 per cent of electricity consumers use below 100 units, ordinary people would not be affected by the price rise, Energy Adviser Tapan Chowdhury said.

It is also learnt that the Asian Development Bank (ADB) is set to approve a \$465 million loan to Bangladesh in the power sector, for which the electricity price was a condition.

Asked whether electricity prices were increased to meet the ADB condition, the finance adviser said the government has to take a lot of decisions out of necessity and there is nothing wrong if those decisions also happen to meet some conditions of the donors.

4th Death Anniversary



Late Shah Rafiqul Islam (Titu)

Death: 6th February, 2003

This day in 2003, we lost our beloved & honorable Director Late Shah Rafiqul Islam (Titu). We mourn his pre-mature death. With our distressed heart, we pray to Almighty Allah for his eternal peace. May Allah bless him. Ameen.

All Employees

ABUL KHAIR GROUP

In 2003, on this very day, you left us at the will of Almighty Allah the Beneficent. Your pre-mature departure has put us and many of your relations overwhelmed with grief. It is straining that you are not in this mundane world with us. But we are feeling your existence by remembering the tender-aged days of your life.

We pray to Almighty Allah for the salvation of your departed soul and request all friends, relatives, well-wishers to pray for you from the core of heart.

May Allah the Beneficent bless you with the eternal bliss of paradise. Ameen.

Bereaved members of the family