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New rule to bar the corrupt from polls

Convicts cannot contest any polls until proven innocent in appeal; suspected corrupt have to report wealth within 72 hours or face property confiscation

JULFIKAR ALI MANIK and SHAMIM ASHRAF

The government has barred corrupt people from participating in any parliamentary or local government election by amending the rules of Emergency Power Ordinance (EPO).

Any person, convicted of corruption by a trial court, will be disqualified from contesting in any election until adjudication of his or her appeal against the verdict and no convicted person will ever be able to hold any job related to the government, according to the amendments to the rules.

The amendments also dictate that if a person is identified by the authorities as possessing or occu-

pying properties which does not conform to his or her legal source of income, the government can order the person to submit a wealth statement to the authorities in person. If he or she does not do so or deliberately avoids contact with the authorities for more than 72 hours after notification, the government can confiscate his or her moveable and immovable properties by obtaining a magistrate's order.

The government can sell such confiscated properties through open auctions with court's approval and will submit the earned money to the public exchequer.

The caretaker government promulgated the rules of EPO on

January 25. The amendments were brought to some of the clauses of EPO bringing a new dimension to it.

The amendments that came in the form of a gazette notification of the home ministry on Tuesday night also issued some specific instructions regarding trials of corruption cases which even the Supreme Court (SC) and High Court (HC) will have to follow.

According to the amended rules, the HC cannot stay a lower court verdict on corruption cases or release on bail such a convicted person until the adjudication of his or her appeal.

The amendments will only be applicable in cases filed under the rules of EPO.

The rules also lay out a host of stringent measures against persons accused of corruption and misuse of power.

Presently if someone is convicted of corruption at a lower court, he or she can participate in elections by filing an appeal with a higher court or even by obtaining a stay order on the lower court verdict.

"A person shall be disqualified for election as, or for being, a member of parliament who has been, on conviction for a criminal offence involving moral turpitude, sentenced to imprisonment for a term of not less than two years unless a period of five years has elapsed since his release," says the constitution.

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Sakhawat sets a rare standard
Discloses his wealth voluntarily

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Newly appointed Election Commissioner Brigadier General (ret'd) Sakhawat Hossain in a rare move yesterday disclosed a detailed account of his wealth.

"As a soldier, I want to set an example. I will also disclose another statement of my wealth on the day of my departure from the Election Commission," Sakhawat, who was sworn in as an election commissioner earlier in the day, SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

Detention cases for petty crimes to be reviewed

No programme under cover of 'indoor politics'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The caretaker (CG) government yesterday decided to review the cases of those detained on suspicion and charges of petty crimes and to release them gradually from crammed jails.

It directed the law enforcers to SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

Intelligence gathers info on 50 defaulters

Central bank also provides papers of dubious bank transactions

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Intelligence agencies have collected information from Bangladesh Bank (BB) about top 50 loan defaulters, including detained Vice-Chairman of Beximco Group and Awami League leader Salman F Rahman.

Sources in the central bank said the intelligence men also collected documents of suspicious bank transactions and a list of cases filed under the Money Laundering Act.

As per the Money Laundering Act, the bank concerned is bound to notify the BB about any transaction over Tk 50 lakh.

"We have provided the intelligence men with last two years' bank transaction data as well as records of defaulted loans of Salman F Rahman," a BB official said.

"They have also collected information about other top 50 loan defaulters," he said.

Sources said the total amount of classified loans in the banking sector was Tk 20,000 crore as of December 2006. Besides, different banks have written off more than Tk 11,000 crore defaulted loans in the last three years.

"That means the volume of bad loans is over Tk 30,000 crore," a

source said, adding that 60 percent of these bad loans were taken by 100 top defaulters.

Central bank sources said although the intelligence agencies did not explain the reasons for collecting information about the top loan defaulters and money laundering cases, it is assumed that the government will take action against these people.

"The caretaker government should make some exemplary instances by taking stern actions against some top loan defaulters when regular methods are unable to recover the money," one official said. SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

BNP demands immediate release of leaders, workers

Urges govt to hold polls without delay

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP yesterday demanded immediate release of its leaders and workers, people's representatives at the field level as well as the general people arrested "without specific allegations".

The party's highest policymaking body National Standing Committee in a press release also urged the government to announce a specific date for holding election without delay under the reconstituted Election Commission to handover power to an elected representative.

A meeting of the committee

yesterday discussed the latest political situation and party affairs and termed the massive arrest of political leaders and general people without any specific charges "illogical", said the press release.

The committee, however, did not make any comment on the new rule issued yesterday by the interim government to bar corrupt people from election.

The meeting was held at the party chairperson's office Hawa Bhaban with Khaleda Zia in the chair. All committee members except KM Obaidur Rahman and Chowdhury Tanveer Ahmed SEE PAGE 15 COL 8

The Daily Star Opinion Poll

Log on to our online edition (www.thedailystar.net) to take part in the opinion poll on Prof Muhammad Yunus' plan to form a political party.



(See page 11 for comments from our online readers in response to Prof Yunus' open letter to all seeking their views on his plan.)



A mobile court found around 800 containers and 42 barrels of various types of acid stored improperly under the open sky at HK Chemicals and Company at Tantibazar in the capital yesterday. PHOTO: STAR

Barapukuria lacks working capital

Govt to pay \$100m more to China by 2012 for the flawed mine

SHARIEF KHAN

Faced with severe liquidity crisis that led to suspension of coal production, the Barapukuria coal mine immediately needs a minimum working capital of Tk 30 crore for its survival, a highly placed Petrobangla source said.

With almost no fund in its account, the Barapukuria Coal Mine Company Ltd (BCMCL), under Petrobangla, faces the immediate challenge of paying China Tk 100 crore as the sixth instalment of the supplier's credit that was signed in '95. This instalment must be paid in early March.

As per the deal with China, the

government guarantees the payment of this instalment, the source pointed out. It means if the BCMCL is unable to pay, it would become the finance ministry's headache.

"From this point on, the BCMCL will have to pay China more than \$100 million by 2012 in 11 more instalments," he added. Each of these instalments has a gap of six to eight months. Upon these payments, the mine becomes free of the liability of the supplier's credit.

It has already paid China Tk 662 crore in five instalments.

"Sadly, the BCMCL does not even have any working capital to keep its wheel running and arrange

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

Power-cut to shopping malls from next week

Business community agrees to 6:30pm-11:00pm load management plan

UNB, Dhaka

The government is set to halt power supply to the shopping malls during the peak hours (6:30pm to 11:00pm) from next week as the business community agreed to a load management plan.

Power and Energy Adviser Tapan Chowdhury disclosed the government decision after a meeting with a delegation of Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI) at the secretariat yesterday.

"We've got support from the business community to our load management plan... We're hopeful

that this will come into effect from next week," he told reporters.

The adviser, however, said the plan will be implemented after more discussions with the business community next week.

Power ministry recently designed a load management plan to be implemented across the country aiming at saving about 400MW in power consumption against a forecast of 2,000MW shortfall in the coming summer.

The plan will also help reduce about 500MW in load shedding.

"We've accepted the load management plan", said DCCI SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Over 1 lakh to get jobs in Malaysia

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Affairs Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury yesterday said Malaysia has given approval for recruiting over one lakh workers from Bangladesh.

"It's a very good news and the

process for sending the workers has already started," he added while addressing a weekly press briefing at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

He said the government has set up a coordination committee with

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

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Dhaka, February 2007

This announcement appears as a matter of record only