

Barapukuria lacks

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any payment. In other words, in absence of working capital the mine is gradually becoming a huge liability of the government," he said.

The mine built under a grossly flawed Chinese supplier's credit deal remains shut down since October last year. As a result, the coal-fired 250megawatt power plant at the site is also facing uncertainty. The mine was built under a Tk 1,700 crore credit and the power plant was built under another \$260 million Chinese supplier's credit deal.

The BCMCL intends to resume operation from February 27. "We are importing some mining equipment from China. If these arrive in time, we will resume the mine's operation from February 27. Otherwise this might be delayed by a week or so," said the source.

Right now, the BCMCL is recovering from a financial mess that led to its suspension in October last year.

The mine's Chinese developer, which is a consortium led by CMC, stopped production not only for non-payment of the fifth instalment of the supplier's credit but also for the non-payment of mining equipment supplied outside the purview of the contract.

Sources said the contract, spearheaded by Khandakar Mosharraf Hossain, energy minister of the previous BNP government, is full of glitches that it did not even say how mining equipment would be supplied. According to Hosaf chief Moazzem Hossain his company promoted the credit scheme. Hosaf has been representing the builder of the mine, power plant and the consultants of both the projects; making it impossible for the government to ensure their quality implementation.

"The mining equipment are mostly Chinese and we can't buy them from any other source. The mine developer is not obliged to supply them. We must buy these separately under separate contract," said a BCMCL source.

As a result, since it started partial commercial operation from 2005, the BCMCL started procuring mining equipment from CMC without making any payment. At the same time, it refrained from paying the fifth instalment of Tk 62 crore which was due in October 2005. The CMC stopped all activities in October last.

The BCMCL paid the fifth instalment in October 2006 and by mid January 2007, it paid another Tk 30 crore for the purchase of mining equipment and \$1.5 million for CMC's annual operation charge.

With these payments done, the company expects to resume its operation. However, the challenge of paying the next instalment is already affecting the spirit of the company.

"The fact is, the company and the project had been grossly neglected by the government. The BCMCL is the first of its kind in operation in Bangladesh. But the government did not think of a minimum financial package to help kick-start its operations on its own," said a senior official.

The main buyer of the mine's coal is the Power Development Board (PDB), which owns the flawed 250megawatt power plant at the site. When the PDB buys the coal, it does not pay Value Added Tax (Vat), instead this job goes to the BCMCL. Again, the PDB also deducts 2.4 percent of payments as income tax in advance. The BCMCL must also pay the government an annual royalty and the debt service liability related to the project loan. Again, the PDB does not always make its payments timely, which affects the financial discipline of the BCMCL.

With so much financial pressure, the BCMCL was unable to pay huge amount of Vat, putting the company into another legal and operational mess. The company still owes the National Board of Revenue Tk 3 crore.

"Somebody should pay attention here. Every enterprise needs some financial rules, guidelines and incentive to move on. Private investors get incentives. Even if the BCMCL is not given an incentive, it needs the basic minimum working capital to move on and survive," says a Petrobangla senior official.

During its operation, the BCMCL is expected to produce around 80,000 metric tons of coal a year with the help of CMC, which in exchange gets about \$1.5 million for operation maintenance.

Sakhawat

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Neither any CEC nor any election commissioner had ever disclosed the accounts of their wealth in the past.

"I had informed the chief election commissioner that I was going to disclose my wealth statement. It depends on them whether they will disclose theirs," the newly appointed election commissioner said in reply to a query.

"I expect those who are in the civil service will declare their wealth statements. In future, politicians might be asked to disclose their wealth statements," he said.

Sakhawat, the first former military bureaucrat in the EC, said, "I know my responsibilities as an election commissioner. I will try my best to present a free and fair election. My hands are free and my mind is clear. I am not afraid to call a spade a spade."

Chief Justice Syed JR Mudassar Husain swore the new election commissioner into office, who had been appointed to the post on Tuesday.

Over 1 lakh to get

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officials from the ministries of foreign affairs, labour and employment, civil aviation, home and the Department of Passport and Immigration, Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training, and Bangladesh Overseas Employment and Services Ltd (BOESL) to resolve problems in sending skilled manpower abroad.

Of the 1,05,000 workers to be recruited, 26,000 workers received clearance from the Malaysian authorities and 18,000 have already left for Kuala Lumpur. The government has fixed Tk 85,000 for each worker who wants to work in Malaysia.

Currently, around 3,00,000 Bangladeshi workers are employed in Malaysia.

The foreign affairs adviser said as the present caretaker government is now engaged in combating corruption, appropriate steps are being taken against unscrupulous manpower agencies who committed forgery and harassed workers while sending them abroad.

Iftekhar said the labour wings in Bangladesh missions abroad are being strengthened while consul generals or honorary consuls would be appointed wherever necessary to boost the export of the country's workforce.

He told newsmen that Bangladesh earns remittance of more than \$ 5 billion annually from the expatriate workers.

Identifying three obstacles--lack of skilled manpower, inadequate coordination among government bodies and procedural problems--in sending manpower in abroad, the adviser said steps have been taken to provide necessary and timely training for the workers to meet the demands of foreign countries.

He said the government has also taken steps to make the BOESL more effective, so that the workforce could be sent with minimum cost and with government supervision.

"We are considering about signing short and long-term agreements with the countries, which are eager to employ workers free of cost," he said adding, "Diplomatic efforts have started to send workforce through BOESL under the 'G to G' system with several

countries, including South Korea." Asked about sending housemaids on jobs to foreign countries, Expatriates Welfare and Overseas Employment Secretary Kamal Uddin Ahmed said there is a demand for housemaids from Bangladesh in Muslim countries. "We want to send housemaids but before taking the final decision, we are examining various aspects of the matter," he added.

About Bangladeshi travellers' requirement of visa from Hong Kong, who earlier enjoyed on-arrival visa, Acting Foreign Secretary Touhid Hossain said the Hong Kong authorities introduced the visa system not only for Bangladeshis but also for other neighbouring countries to stop the entry of dishonest people.

"However, we have taken up the matter and a delegation might be sent to Hong Kong for discussion and to ease the travelling-hassles of businessmen going to Hong Kong," he said.

Intelligence

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Meanwhile, the joint forces approached the Dhaka Stock Exchange recently for information about Salman Rahman's investment in the capital market.

They also requested the Office of the Registrar of Joint Stock Companies to release documents pertaining to the 12 companies owned by former BNP lawmaker Mosaddak Ali Falu, who too was detained recently.

The companies include private satellite television channels ntv and Rtv, Amar Desh Publications Ltd, Brotherhood Enterprise Ltd, Brotherhood Securities Ltd, Buildtrade Structures Ltd, Buildtrade Engineers Ltd, Dhaka-Shanghai Ceramics Ltd, MB Agroproducts Ltd, Daiper Ltd, IFIC Bank, and Shahabuddin Medical College Hospital.

Sources in the government said the intelligence agencies' communication with the stock exchange and the central bank is to frame criminal charges against the recently arrested politicians.

The government will also launch a fresh drive to detain others on the basis of financial crimes.

GOLD SMUGGLING

Verdict in case against Ershad today

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court will deliver today the verdict in the gold smuggling case filed 16 years back against former president and Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad.

Judge SM Mujibur Rahman of the First Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court will pronounce the verdict at 11:00am, court sources said.

The judge on February 6 last adjourned the delivery of verdict in the case as he could not complete preparing the judgement.

Earlier, the prosecution and the defence had completed their arguments and the court recorded statements of eight prosecution witnesses including the complainant and investigation officer (IO) of the case.

A team of customs officials held four people including two foreign nationals from Zia International Airport on July 17, 1990 when they were attempting to smuggle around 3.6 kg of gold worth around Tk 2.5 crore into Bangladesh.

A smuggling case was filed with the Cantonment Police Station the same day against the four -- Bernhard Rudiger of Germany, David Anthony Chalmar Chaker of England, then manager of the Zia International Airport Major (ret'd) Ashraf Uddin Sekender and Abu Taher, an airport security guard.

During the investigation, the IO found evidence of Ershad's involvement in the smuggling and his name was included in the charge sheet on August 31, 1991.

The trial against Ershad did not start due to a High Court stay order.

Another Dhaka court on January 17 this year freed Ershad from serving out the sentence given by the High Court on December 14 last year in connection with a case concerning purchase of Japanese boats.

He was also acquitted and discharged of four graft cases in August and September last year after his announcement to join the four-party alliance. But he finally joined the grand alliance comprising 14-party and its allies.

Falu

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police filed the case against Falu and several other unnamed officials and employees of the factory.

On Monday, Falu was shown arrested in the case.

According to the prosecution, the joint forces came to know that Falu, owner and chairman of the Dhaka Shanghai Ceramics Factory, built 40 by 50 feet houses for accommodation of the workers.

The joint forces dismantled six such houses constructed on the factory premises with corrugated iron (CI) sheets. Six hundred and fifty pieces of CI sheets worth around Tk 4 lakh bear inscriptions, "Relief materials of Relief and Rehabilitation Department: Not for sale".

The BNP-Jamaat-led alliance government bought the CI sheets manufactured by PHP Arabian Horse Ltd for rehabilitation of the poor and distressed through government assistance.

Falu, also the owner of private satellite television channels ntv and Rtv and the daily Amar Desh, is now in jail on a 30-day detention. He was charged with anti-state activities, obstructing public safety, and illegally erecting hoardings.

Railway frees

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The BR authorities also partially knocked down a four-storey house on Tejgaon Station Road, a portion of the Karwan Bazar fish market and other establishments beside the railway tracks.

In another drive, the DCC recovered the three-storey Charuta Market located beside Mahanagar Mohila College at Sutrapur.

Sources said a few politically powerful people of Sutrapur and old Dhaka areas grabbed the market for years.

The DCC officials were reluctant to mention the names of the grabbers. "We did not give importance to who the grabbers were. We just recovered the market," Shamsul Alam, deputy estate officer of DCC, said.

The DCC eviction team also demolished a one-storey structure built on an encroached space for car parking, sources said.

The Rajdhani Unnayan Kartipakkha (Rajuk) did not conduct any drive yesterday.

PABNADRIVE

An eviction team recovered 40 decimal (1.25 bigha) land worth Tk 10 crore demolishing the Pabna bus stand illegally built on the land of the local health department about 35 years ago.

Magistrate Arif Ahmed led the drive jointly conducted by the army and police.

Two associations of Pabna motor owners and labourers grabbed the land during the Liberation War, health department sources said.

The district administration tried to demolish the bus stand on several occasions earlier but failed due to protests from the motor owners and labourers.

Detention cases

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meeting yesterday, also decided not to allow any political rally, gathering or meeting in any auditorium, community centre or hall taking advantage of 'indoor politics,' meeting sources said.

This decision however will not be applicable to religious functions. The meeting, chaired by Law Adviser Mainul Hossain at the law ministry, asked for monitoring the drive to ensure its success.

In this connection, the advisory committee asked the law enforcers to remain careful about cases lodged on political consideration.

Discouraging arrest on suspicion under Section 54 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, the committee said explanation has to be given for such arrests.

"We've asked them (law enforcers) to focus on big criminals, and the nature of cases filed against them since a major objective of the present government is bringing to trial the perpetrators of crimes and corruption," Mainul told reporters after the meeting.

In reply to a question, he said permission must be taken to arrange any programme in the name of cultural function.

From now on, officials will have to inform the committee prior to evacuation of big slums. It will then take decisions so that poor slum dwellers are not victimised, meeting sources said.

The committee rather directed the

law enforcers to arrest influential people who are making money by building large slums.

It asked Rajuk to study whether the evicted poor slum dwellers can be rehabilitated on government lands freed from illegal grabbers. If found feasible, Rajuk will build low cost houses on these lands with the help of members of the armed forces.

On rehabilitation of hawkers evicted from the city pavements and illegally set-up markets, the committee asked the authorities to study allowing hawkers to run their business every day on some open fields like Paltan Maidan, Muktangan and Osmany Udyan and on roads after office hours.

It also asked the commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police to look into this immediately so that the hawkers can resume normal life.

Responding to a question, the law adviser denied that the authorities are arresting leaders of both Awami League and BNP to ensure a balance. "Those who face charges of crime and corruption are being arrested irrespective of their political identities," he said.

Those present at the meeting included members of the committee Communications Adviser Maj Gen (ret'd) MA Matinn, Education Adviser Ayub Qadri, and the inspector general of police and top officials of the ministries concerned.

5 acid traders jailed

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The mobile court led by Magistrate Rokon-ud Doula found three acid importers and distributors guilty of storing nitric acid and sulphuric acid in amount more than they are allowed to, not maintaining the buyers' logbook, not having licence from the energy ministry and operating business with an expired licence from the fire department.

At Maya Chemical and Company at Gual Nagar Lane under Kotwali Police Station, the mobile court found 17 tons of acid stored in its warehouse although its licence permits the storage of 10 tons maximum.

The company also failed to maintain any logbook of buyers, which is mandatory for an acid seller. It was also accused of other aforesaid irregularities.

The court sentenced co-owner of the factory Hannan Bhuiyan, his brother Rafiqul Islam and manager of the company Abul Hossain to six years imprisonment and fined them Tk 3 lakh each. The mobile court later handed them over to jail authorities.

The court also issued an arrest warrant against co-owner of the company Sultana Raffia.

The mobile court raided Vanish Chemical and Company in the same area afterwards. The court sentenced owner of the company Niyamat Ali and manager Tarique Hossain to six years imprisonment and fined them Tk 3

lakh. They were accused of all aforesaid irregularities including not having license from the energy ministry. They were handed over to jail authorities as well.

Raiding HK Chemical and Company at Tantibazar in the capital the mobile court issued arrest warrants against Abul Kalam and Kanu Saha of the company for not storing acids properly.

The court found around 800 containers and 42 barrels of various types of acids, including nitric acid and sulphuric acid, under open sky even though it is mandatory to store acids securely in a warehouse.

The mobile court ordered the local police station to seal off all the three warehouses and arrest the accused people.

"Hundreds of people especially women become victims of acid violence because of such irregularities and carelessness," Rokon-ud Doula said, adding, "We will take more bold step against such businessmen."

60 children

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Six of the 10 posts of doctors in the children's ward have remained vacant while doctors are often found busy with private practice outside even during their duty hours, sources said.

Politics poses biggest

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percent people bribed the police and 29-41 percent policemen affirmed that they accepted bribes while policemen at courts, immigration services and different police stations and the traffic police are most prone to taking bribes.

The Police Reform Programme (PRP) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) conducted the survey among households, police personnel and other professional groups during May-December 2006.

Additional Deputy Inspector General Mazharul Hoque said until and unless a sense of dignity is created among the police, particularly those in the lower rank, people will not get a better behaviour and positive attitude from the policemen.

"We are the protectors of human rights, but sometimes our own human rights are violated," Deputy Inspector General of Armed Police Battalion Nazibul Islam said, referring to the heavy workload of the police. "Policemen have to work for 14-15 hours a day despite depriving their families," he said.

The survey was conducted on more than 6,000 people from households, police personnel, lawyers, teachers, doctors, business persons, woman leaders and professionals, elected local representatives, civil society members, youths and media representatives.

The survey report identified lack of sufficient payment and skill of the investigation officers (IOs), bribery, negligence, and corruption of IOs as some of the 12 different types of hindrances to getting fair justice.

The report found that the poor and weak and the females are more prone to police maltreatment.

Over 70 percent of household respondents participating in the survey perceive that the police are overworked while 100 percent of them said the police remain busy controlling political activities like hartals and agitation programmes.

Majority of the respondents at households (72-77%) and the police (72-75%) said external interferences, influence or pres-

sure--both political and social--obstruct the performance of the police.

Around 50-71% police consider hoodlums, fear of transfer and being implicated in cases, political leaders and cadres, pressure groups like doctor, lawyer, trade union as well as the local ones, and trade union leaders as the most frequent sources of these external influences.

The respondents advocated for stopping the use of police for political purposes, the survey report said, adding that this is an issue of critical importance and needs to be handled positively and with due sensitivity.

The PRP undertook the survey to analyse the present situation of Bangladesh Police so that a comparative analysis can be conducted over time to measure the degree of change, assess intended benefits and ensure that the programme is meeting its goals and objectives.

The survey was conducted in areas under 11 model police stations to be established under the PRP in seven districts, two metropolitan units and two randomly selected areas.

Addressing the function, former inspector general of police (IGP) and former caretaker government adviser ASM Shahjahan said, "We are transforming into the democratic policing culture from the colonial culture."

He stressed the need for bringing reforms in the police department.

"The Police Reform Programme intends to enhance the capacity of Bangladesh Police and key stakeholders to contribute in a collaborative manner to the creation of a safer and more secure environment based on respect for human rights, equitable access to justice and rule of law in accordance with a multi-party democracy," UNDP Country Director Manoj Basnyat said at the programme.

Syed Jahangir Haider, managing director of READ, presented the findings of the survey at the programme chaired by Additional IGP Dr Shamsuddoha Khondoker.

Coal mine movement leader Nuruzzaman released

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Dinajpur leader of National Committee to Protect Oil, Gas, Mineral Resources, Electricity and Port M Nuruzzaman, who was arrested by the army-led joint forces on Sunday, got released the next day.

Nuruzzaman, who had led people of Phulbari in Dinajpur during their movement against Asia Energy Corporation last year, was handed over to Phulbari police after his arrest.

Police on Sunday implicated him in a case filed earlier for stealing a motorcycle.

Following demands from different rights organisations, environmentalists and left-leaning parties along with National Committee to Protect Oil, Gas, Mineral Resources, Electricity and Port, the government ordered immediate release of Nuruzzaman.

He was released from Phulbari Sadar Police Station at 8:15pm on Monday.

Gunfight again on Satkhira border

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) and Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) traded gunfire on Chanduria border in Kalaroa upazila and Gazipur border in Debhata upazila early yesterday.

BDR sources said the BSF of Gobordanga camp under Swarupnagar Police Station of 24 Parganas district fired six bullets targeting the Chanduria BDR camp at about 2:30am, forcing the BDR to retaliate by firing over 28 shots.

On Gazipur border, the Indian border guards of Pakiridanga camp under Basirhat Police Station of the district fired eight shots at Gazipur BDR camp at about 3:00am. In reply, BDR fired about 35 bullets, the sources added.

After the incidents, the BSF reinforced its strength at all outposts and increased patrols, according to a report received from across the border.

BDR personnel have also been put on alert on the Satkhira border.

When contacted, Lt Col Mohammad Asif Abdur Rouf, commanding officer (CO), 41 Rifles Battalion, confirmed the border skirmishes.

Power-cut

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President Hossain Khaleel, who led the delegation in the meeting.

He mentioned that as a leading chamber of the country, DCCI also had interaction with other groups of the business community like shop owners. "Others have also extended support to the plan and accepted it," he said.

The DCCI leaders discussed with the adviser various issues, including the present anti-adulteration drive, illegal structure-eviction drive and import of electricity from India.

They urged the adviser to intensify the ongoing drive as the unscrupulous businessmen are tarnishing the image of the business community.

"Those involved in adulteration of food and medicine should be given capital punishment," said a DCCI leader.

The business leaders also urged the government to ensure that no genuine businessman is harassed during the ongoing drive.

Responding to the appeal, the adviser said this has already been communicated at all level that no genuine businessman becomes victim.

About the proposition on power import from India, he said if the price is competitive, reasonable and unconditional, only then the government will consider it, otherwise this will not happen.

The adviser informed the business leaders that the expert committee on voter ID card would place their recommendation next week and on that basis, the government will move.

14-day

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directed the jail authorities concerned to produce Salahuddin before the court on that date.

Earlier on Monday, Salahuddin, a lawmaker from Demra, surrendered before the CMM's Court and sought bail in connection with the cases filed against him under the Arms Act and Special Powers Act. The prosecution opposed the bail petitions.

Hearing both the sides, the court ordered to send the lawmaker to Dhaka Central Jail rejecting his bail prayers.

The security forces on February 4 seized weapons and foreign currencies along with nine diplomatic passports and eight other Bangladeshi passports, 23 mobile phone sets, videocassettes, compact discs, shotgun licence during a raid at Salahuddin's house at Kadamtola in Shyampur in a bid to arrest him.

11 dead in car bomb on Iran elite force

AFP, Tehran

Eleven people were killed yesterday when a car bomb ripped through a bus carrying members of Iran's elite Revolutionary Guards in a sensitive southeastern border province, official media reported.

The bus was taking the Guards from their housing compound in the city of Zahedan to a military base when gunfire forced it to stop in front of the booby-trapped car, which then exploded.

An attack of this size and nature - a bomb strike on an elite force in broad daylight in an open street -- is unprecedented in Iran.

Television pictures broadcast on Iran's Arabic-language station Al-Alam showed that the bus had been blown away to a twisted frame of wreckage by the blast and a large crowd had gathered at the scene.

"In the bombing this morning in Zahedan, 11 people were martyred in a thoughtless action," said local Guards commander Mohammad Javad Ethna Ashari, blaming bandits and outlawed groups opposed to the Islamic republic.

It was not immediately clear whether all the dead were from the Revolutionary Guards, Iran's elite ideological army. Ethna Ashara said 31 people were wounded.

IRNA's correspondent in Zahedan quoted witnesses as saying that militants placed a booby-trapped car in the path of a bus carrying Revolutionary Guards ground forces and detonated the explosives when the bus drew near.

The witnesses said that among the militants were motorcyclists who shot at the bus to force it to stop. The bomb inside the car, a standard Iranian Peykan model, was apparently detonated by remote control, they added.

Afghan bandits in March year last year shot dead 22 people travelling

between Zahedan and the neighbouring border city of Zabol.

IRNA reported that two of the militants found carrying grenades and camcorders had been apprehended by the public and arrested while three others were detained later.

Zahedan is the capital of Sistan-Baluchestan province which borders both Afghanistan and Pakistan and has been hit by a string of attacks and kidnappings blamed on a Sunni group called Jundallah (Allah's Brigade).

The province has a substantial Baluch community, a minority Sunni Muslim group.

Zahedan, a dusty and tense border city, has been the centre of low-level unrest in the region over the past months.

Earlier this year, four members of the Iranian security forces were killed in the city when armed men opened fire on their vehicle. In December, a car bomb exploded in Zahedan, killing one person.

Hossein Ali Shahriari, a deputy representing Zahedan in parliament, blasted the police and military for failing to take appropriate security measures, the ISNA agency reported.

"Why does our diplomatic apparatus does not seriously confront the Pakistani government for harbouring bandits and regime's enemies? Why do security, military and police officials not take a more serious action?"

"I have no choice but to take my plea to the supreme leader (Ayatollah Ali Khamenei) and ask his eminence to ask the officials to make every effort to restore security," he said.

The upsurge in unrest in Sistan-Baluchestan also comes after violence in Iran's oil-rich southwestern province of Khuzestan, which has a minority Arab population.

New rule to bar

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The amended rules dictate that a higher court must adjudicate any appeal against a lower court verdict on a corruption case within 90 days of filing.

Presently a special judge's court handles corruption cases. If anyone is convicted, he or she can file an appeal against the conviction with the HC and the appeal can move up to the SC. The process can continue for years. The amended rules now put a time limit for the HC and SC to for adjudicating such cases.

The amended rules say till an appeal is adjudicated, all kinds of properties, cash and other assets under a convicted person's name should remain frozen or confiscated, even if those are under someone else's name on behalf of the convicted.

The rules categorically point out that if a person is convicted in a case filed under this rule and if an appeal petition is filed against that conviction, that person will be considered as disqualified from participating in any election ranging from the national parliament election to local government polls.

When a person convicted of corruption will complete serving his or her term of punishment, he or she will be considered disqualified from holding any post in the government, semi-government organisations, statutory bodies, or in any organisation that has government affiliation.

Following a written appeal from the government, a magistrate can order to freeze or confiscate properties of a person, accused of or arrested for getting financial benefits from a government, semi-government, or an autonomous organisation through misuse of power or corruption, during the hearing or before the start of the hearing of the case.

If the authorities find reasons to believe that a suspect might liqui-

date or handover his or her properties or assets with an ill-motive before filing of charges or a case, the authorities will be able to confiscate or freeze the assets of the person with permission from a magistrate. Such properties and assets will remain frozen or confiscated until the case is adjudicated.

According to the amended rules, the government will appoint an administrator, with permission of a court,