

50 given 72 hours

FROM PAGE 1
The government was likely to begin serving the notices last night in the first ever initiative to make public the names of "corrupt" influential politicians, bureaucrats and businessmen and bring them to book.

Although the government officially does not describe the 50 as "corrupt", the ACC is sure that these people hoarded unauthorised wealth, which will be confiscated after the court disposes the cases.

"The primary conclusion of enquiry says these people have acquired huge property. Legal incomes of these people do not match their wealth," ACC Secretary Mohammad Delwar Hossain told reporters after disclosing the names of the 50 persons.

"More names will be disclosed soon," he said.

Sources also confirmed that names of another 370 corrupt suspects will be disclosed soon.

The government has also decided not to engage government law officers in the trial of the corruption cases against these bigwigs in lower court, fearing they may not play expected role in it. A panel of lawyers will be recruited for the task.

Although the ACC officially published the list, it had been prepared during a secret investigation initiated by different government intelligence agencies on February 4.

POLITICIANS ON THE LIST
The former ministers and lawmakers of the BNP-led four-party coalition government and top BNP leaders on the list include former communications minister Nazmul Huda, former environment minister Tariqul Islam, former housing and public works minister Mirza Abbas, former prime minister Khaleda Zia's parliamentary affairs adviser Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury, and Khaleda's political secretaries Mosaddak Ali Falu and Harris Chowdhury.

There are also alleged militant patron Ruhul Quddus Talukder Dulu and Mufti Shahidul Islam, former Jamaat-e-Islami MP Shahjahan Chowdhury, Giasuddin Al Mamun's brother Hafiz Ibrahim, and former finance minister Saifur's Rahman's son Naser Rahman.

The leaders and former ministers of the AL include former home minister Mohammad Nasim, former chief whip Abul Hasnat Abdullah, AL Adviser Salman F Rahman, and former bureaucrat and state minister for planning Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir.

Former secretary ANH Akhter Hossain, former member of the National Board of Revenue Zahurul Haque, and businessman Nurul Islam Babul are also on the list.

The home ministry published a gazette notification on February 13, saying the properties of the persons, who have been asked to submit their wealth information, will be confiscated if they do not submit it in person in 72 hours.

The 50 will have to appear in person before four assigned ACC directors at the ACC office at Segunbagicha in the capital and submit the information.

However, the government did not publish any list or disclose any name, saying the persons will be contacted individually.

The ACC will despatch the notices to their latest available addresses. If no one is found at those addresses, the notices will be hung there.

While talking to reporters at his office, the ACC secretary disclosed the names of the 50 persons, 22 of who have already been arrested by the joint forces.

The 22 arrested persons who have been kept in jails will be served with the notices at the prisons and will be allowed to appoint representatives for submitting their statements.

Asked if the others on the list will be arrested, the ACC secretary said, "Nowhere in the notice it has been mentioned that they will be arrested, and there is no question of arresting them."

But sources said the joint forces during their crackdown searched for them.

The ACC will lodge FIRs (first information report) against those, who will fail to provide reasonable explanations, to initiate their trial, said the ACC secretary.

The government will appoint administrator to keep running the trading firms or factories of those whose properties will be attached.

After declaring state of emergency, the government promulgated Emergency Power Ordinance, 2007 and issued a number of rules under the ordinance.

According to the notice served as per the rules and the ACC Act, the 50 will have to submit a detailed statement of all movable and immovable properties under their ownership or possession, or under their family members or anyone else on behalf of them within 72 hours from receiving the notification.

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

WHAT NEXT
Four ACC directors--Tankin Haque Siddique, Abdul Wadood, Jahanara Parvin and Nasrin Ara Surat Amin--will receive the statements at the ACC office.

After the 72-hour time expires, the ACC will scrutinise the statements to find whether they have submitted any false information.

MORE NAMES TO BE DISCLOSED
Names of others on the list of suspected corrupt people will be disclosed in phases soon.

"Disclosing names of 50 today is just the beginning, and these 50 cannot be termed 'top most corrupt people'. The person whose name comes last in the list may also be the top among them," said ACC Secretary Delwar Hossain.

Although he declined to specify the number of more names to be disclosed, sources said there are 420 names on the list, which may increase later.

Asked why former prime minister Khaleda Zia's son Tarique Rahman's name was not on the list despite the fact that he is facing several allegations of corruption, he replied: "We're disclosing the names of those whose names have come up in the primary inquiry."

When asked whether those who conducted inquiry failed to find any evidence of corruption against Tarique, he said names of several, whose names were linked with corruption on different occasions, did not appear in the list. "More names will come out in the future," he added.

Talking about the cases of those who have been learnt to be under arrest but the government has not officially disclosed the matter, the ACC secretary said, "I don't have any such information. We'll serve notice according to the rules."

APPOINTMENT OF LAW PANEL
The advisory council committee on anti-corruption yesterday decided to recruit a high-profile panel of lawyers to deal the corruption cases in the lower court, sources said. The law ministry will appoint the panel consulting the ACC.

"The public prosecutors and government pleaders working in the existing traditional set up in the lower court will not be able to perform up to the expectation," said one source.

Since they were appointed during the previous government regime and many of them are incompetent, they may become biased towards the leaders of the previous government, he added.

The government already has information that the bigwigs will appoint top lawyers and will spend huge amount of money to fight for them.

"To contest them properly, the government needs some competent and high-profile lawyer," the source added.

To monitor progress of the cases, the government will form a monitoring cell.

The government will bring some changes to the ACC Act to increase the number of offences in the schedule.

According to the act, property of only the accused can be confiscated. The participants of the advisory council committee discussed bringing changes to the ACC Act to enable the confiscation of illegal wealth of a person from his inheritors in case he or she dies.

Talking to reporters emerging out of yesterday's meeting of the advisory committee, Adviser Mainul Hossain said, "If they do not provide information, their property will be attached, they'll be tried in absentia and be punished."

List of 50

FROM PAGE 1
Chief Whip Abul Hasnat Abdullah (AL), former political secretary to the prime minister Harris Chowdhury (BNP), Tarique Rahman's close friend Gias Uddin Al Mamun, former political secretary to the prime minister Mosaddak Ali Falu (BNP), former MP Shamim Osman (AL), Engineer Mosharaff Hossain (AL), Akhteruzzaman Chowdhury Babu (AL), former Environment Minister Tariqul Islam (BNP), Salman F Rahman (AL), former state minister Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya (AL), former MP Ali Azgar Lobi (BNP), Jahangir Kabir Nanak (AL), former MP Dr HBM Iqbal (AL), former State Minister Amanullah Aman (BNP), former MP Joinal Hossain (AL), former State Minister Mir Nasir Uddin (BNP), former State Minister Salauddin Ahmed (BNP), former whip SM Mostafa Rashid Suja (AL), former State Minister Iqbal Hasan Mahmud Tuku (BNP), former State Minister Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir (AL), former MP Mirza Azam (AL), former State Minister Ruhul Quddus Talukder Dulu (BNP), former MP AHM Mostafa Kamal (AL), former MP Nasir Uddin Ahmed Pintu (BNP), former MP Haz Selim (AL), former MP Salauddin Ahmed (BNP), former MP Magbul Hossain (AL), ward commissioner Chowdhury Alam (BNP), former MP Hafiz Ibrahim (BNP), former MP Abdul Wadud Bhuiyan (BNP), former MP Gias Uddin (BNP), former MP Mufti Shahidul Islam (IOJ), former MP Rashiduzzaman Millat (BNP), former MP Shajahan Chowdhury (Jamaat), former MP Manjurul Ahsan Munshi (BNP), Pankaj Debanath (AL), ward commissioner Abdul Quayum (BNP), Ariful Haque Chowdhury (BNP), former MP Naser Rahman (BNP), Mohiuddin Ahmed (AL), Jamuna Group chairman Nurul Islam Babul, former secretary ANH Akhter, Basundhara Group chairman Ahmed Akbar Sobhan (Shah Alam), former NBR member Jahurul Haque, Sonali Bank CBA president BM Bakir Hossain and T&T CBA president Firoj Miah.

Govt to reign

FROM PAGE 1
Adviser Mirza Azizul Islam also indicated the same steps at a meeting with the representatives of Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry at his ministry.

He said he asked the commerce ministry to review the anti-hoarding regulations and other related laws to bring discipline in the consumers market.

As part of the initiatives to check prices of essential commodities, the commerce ministry met with the trade bodies, importers, wholesalers and retailers.

The much talked about import syndication system was discussed in the meeting where the commerce secretary said businessmen did not complain about import syndication.

"Importers who can import a large amount of goods at a time generally get some price competitiveness. It cannot be termed syndication," he said.

"Under the existing import policy there is no barrier to anybody importing any goods of any quantity. So we cannot create barrier to any importer. But we should introduce more competitiveness in order to make the price situation reasonable."

He said initiative will be taken so that more importers feel free to import more products.

Opening of letter of credit (LC) has not reduced, rather statistics show that the LC opening has increased during the last three months compared to the previous three months, he said.

Businessmen told the reporters that production of some essential commodities including onion, garlic and wheat has decreased this year in India and some other countries from where Bangladesh imports.

Prices of onion, garlic and wheat may increase in three to four months when the local production will be used up, they said.

Biman

FROM PAGE 16
According to an insider, Biman is now encumbered with a mountainous amount of debt to state-owned Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC)-a whopping Tk 1,500 crore in outstanding fuel charges.

The BPC supplied aviation fuel of around Tk 45 crore on credit to Biman every month, but recently it decided to stop providing fuel to Biman for non-payment of the arrears for long.

Due to the decision of BPC, Biman has been compelled to reduce its number of flights, raising an apprehension among the staff members of Biman of massive retrenchment.

Yunus

FROM PAGE 1
Nobel peace prize-winner has proposed that his party activists would work as 'volunteers' and bear all costs of electing nominees for their constituencies.

"If locals want to see good people elected, they will have to spend their own money," he added.

Asked to comment on Awami League President Sheikh Hasina's remarks on micro-credit, Yunus said "I do not want to get into a politics of war of words. We have had enough of divisive politics. I want to be in politics with everyone."

"There is no way I can continue to stay away from politics. I am determined...and it does not matter who says what about me," the Nobel laureate said in his reply to the reporters' questions on supposedly veiled allegations made against him in the past few days.

On February 22, Yunus is set to send a second open letter to follow up on last week's open letter to all Bangladeshis urging them to give their opinion on whether he should join politics and launch a party. His aides have refused to provide any statistics of the responses till date, but have termed the feedback as "positive".

Money whitening

FROM PAGE 1
He, however, did not say if a list of such people will be disclosed.

A new chairman and two new commissioners for the Anti-Corruption Commission will be named in a day or two by a newly formed selection committee, he said.

The selection committee comprises one judge each from the Appellate Division and the High Court Division, among other officials.

"We want the hearing and disposal of corruption cases to be completed as quickly as possible," said Mainul, adding that those who are being arrested on corruption charges will be judged under the current laws.

"We will not touch the laws," he said, adding that a political government promulgated these laws, so no one can say we changed them specifically for their trial.

Shopping malls

FROM PAGE 1
The adviser assured them of placing the issue at the next advisory council meet.

The shop owners also demanded publication of a white paper on corruption by the power division people and also take initiatives to reduce systems loss.

Electoral reforms

FROM PAGE 1
"After considering their [political parties and the civil society] opinions, we will finalise the draft and send it to the law ministry for changes in the laws," said Huda, who was appointed on February 4 as the new CEC following resignation of MAAziz from the post.

The EC in a news release yesterday said it is proceeding with an action plan for holding a free and 'meaningful' election and it is considering reforming all election laws on a priority basis.

"The required time will be taken to complete the task," the release said.

Regarding other election laws and rules, the EC news release said those will also be examined and decisions will be taken.

After reviewing Representation of the People Order 1972, the EC will start reviewing the Political Party Registration Act and Electoral Roll Ordinance, the CEC said.

Referring to his predecessors' moves for electoral reforms, Huda said it is unfortunate that only a small number of proposals for reforms had been brought. "We are optimistic, we will be able to bring necessary reforms," he said. Emphasising the need for implementation of the laws, the CEC

Orion chief blames

FROM PAGE 1
quoting a Special Probe Report of Bangladesh Shree, he submitted specific facts and figures supported by documentary evidence to the honourable chief adviser, the honourable finance adviser and the honourable governor of Bangladesh bank and prayed an independent/judicial enquiry to unearth the actual state of affairs regarding Oriental Bank."

Karim is wanted by the police in different graft and criminal cases for swindling Tk 594 crore from the Oriental Bank. The charges were based on an investigation of the central bank at the tag end of the alliance government's rule.

Instead of appearing before the court with his arguments to clear his position, Karim in his letter tried to convince the PDB that he is clean and blamed the press for his situation.

"With all news articles published in the dailies on Oriental Bank over the last two weeks under different headlines continuously ignoring our rejoinders, our reputation and image groomed over long period of time got hurt. As a result, our day-to-day business activities were adversely affected. In addition, our shareholders and clients have been observing wait-and-see approach in making payment transactions which temporarily affected our Group's cash flow situations," he wrote.

"Specially our shareholders are closely monitoring the political development of our country. One would appreciate that the political chaotic situation prevailing in the country from the end of October 2006 until January 12, 2007 made any local or foreign investors concerned and worried, and made them follow a go-slow mode. This shall be evident from the dailies published during the period," he added.

He argued that because of these impacts, the cheque it gave to the PDB in January for land rental and initial development had bounced.

Karim claimed that in spite of

said there are many election laws, but there is a lack of enforcement.

About the recommendations from the civil society, the CEC said the EC received a large number of suggestions regarding electoral reforms which include separation of the EC Secretariat from the Prime Minister's Office, and disqualification of black money holders.

Replying to a query, the CEC said the EC is thinking about introducing transparent ballot boxes in the election.

VOTER LIST
The CEC said there are some options regarding the voter list, like a voter list with photographs or voter identity cards or national identity cards.

"We will take a decision after examining all options," the CEC added.

About the army's offer to consider their expertise in preparing voter identity cards, Huda said the army is highly professional and very efficient, and they have the required expertise.

"We have no reservation in seeking assistance from the army," he said.

The EC had moved to introduce voter identity cards for the first time in 1994-95, but failed. "We want to succeed," the new CEC said.

this negative development, the BON Consortium made significant progress in financial closing of the project and two financial institutions had committed it more than 470 million dollars.

"Considering national interest for the project under present power crisis, we would request you to kindly allow us some more days in making due payment on account of Rent and Initial Development Payment," Karim's letter said.

The BON Consortium is supposed to be led by German power company Steag with only an officially unannounced 20 percent stake, Karim told The Daily Star early January. Orion has only 16 percent share and Belhassa holds the remaining share. But in reality the consortium is actually headed and run by Obaidul Karim as its managing director. Karim was known for his connection with the Hawa Bhaban and bagging many known and unknown deals worth several thousand crores of taka from the government.

Orion never actually gave the bid selected for this power project and it actually submitted its name as one of the two partners of a Japanese bidder Nisso Eiwi, which has the experience to qualify for building such a power plant. But Nisso disappeared from the scene in 2004 and Orion brought in the German company Steag showing it as the lead bidder.

The government initially rejected such a gross anomaly, but then with pressure from the Hawa Bhaban the government accepted and approved the bid in August 2005.

Orion signed a series of contracts with the PDB and other authorities for the power project and signed the LLA, the final deal, on October 11 last year. The cancellation of the LLA automatically terminates the other contracts.

Over 1,000 tonnes

FROM PAGE 16
authorities concerned. Shamsul Chemical and Company, owned by him, also failed to maintain any log-book of buyers, which is mandatory for an acid seller.

Shamsul was sentenced to eight months imprisonment and was fined Tk 3 lakh for violating the Acid Control Act.

The court also sentenced owners of six other importers and distributors to one-month imprisonment and Tk 50 thousand fine each. The traders are - Monowara Trading, National Supply Company, Jharna Chemical and Supply, Faruque Chemical, Bhuiyan Chemical and Supply and National Chemical Industries.

They were found guilty of storing nitric and sulphuric acids beyond permitted, not maintaining the buyers' logbook and not having licence from authorities concerned.

As the owner of Rupali Chemical and Supply Shahidul was paralysed, the mobile court did not sentence him to jail on humanitarian grounds. The court, however, fined him Tk 10,000.

The court issued warrant against the owners of Cornilla Chemical Industries and Janata Chemical Industries as they escaped closing their shops while the driveways going on.

The same court also fined owner of Tah Electric Company Abdur Rahim and owner of Sima Enterprise Aijbur Rahman in Nababpur Road area Tk 1 lakh each for marketing fans and cables without BSTI approval.

DRIVE-IN NARAYANGANJ
Titas authority in association with the army-led joint forces launched a drive against the gas bill defaulters in Fatullah industrial area yesterday to collect arrears bill amounting to Tk 96 crore.

They arrested six people in this connection and cut off lines of at least

three industries for not paying bill.

The team disconnected three gas line connections to Afsar Drum Factory for non-payment of Tk 2.69 crore gas bill and arrested four workers.

Two owners of Jilani Dyeing Factory at Fatullah were arrested for tampering with gas meters and not paying Tk 1.80 crore. The forces disconnected gas connection to the factory.

Gas connection to Hamid Re-rolling Mills was also snapped for defaulting Tk 43 lakh.

DRIVE-IN BARISAL
The joint forces cut off power connections to houses owned by four ward commissioners and a BNP leader for using illegal connections and meter tampering during a drive started on Saturday.

The commissioners, also the BNP leaders, are Syed Zakir Hossain Jalal, Zahidul Karim, Atiqur Rahman and Ziauddin Sikder Zia while the BNP leader is Sheikh Abdul Rahim, also vice president of Barisal Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Law enforcers also fined Tk 80,000 to Hotel Gulbag on Sadar Road in the city for not paying electricity bill.

Moudud

FROM PAGE 1
Ahmed, counsel for the petitioners.

According to press reports, the caretaker government, smelling a rat in the process of recruitment, cancelled the appointments and postings of the police personnel made at the tag end of the immediate past BNP-led alliance government.

Pranab Mukherjee

FROM PAGE 16
at Bangabhaban.

He will also call on Chief Adviser of the caretaker government Fakhruddin Ahmed, who is expected to lead the Bangladesh delegation to the Saarc summit.

"Let me say unequivocally that this caretaker government wishes to place Bangladesh's relations with India on a firm footing so that future governments of both countries can build on the progress we make," Foreign Affairs Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury told the media on the eve of Mukherjee's daylong visit to Dhaka.

He said: "We are looking forward to our meeting and talks with Pranab Mukherjee...We sincerely believe, this can only be to our mutual benefit."

During his stay in Dhaka, the Indian minister will also meet BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina.

Revenue

FROM PAGE 16
Bangladesh Bank (BB) said imports have not yet seen any drastic fall despite the anti-hoarding measures of the caretaker administration. But they might dip in the next two months.

A steep decline in imports will leave negative impact on the price of essentials, the bank said and called on the adviser to raise the issue before the chief adviser so that immediate steps could be taken to that end.

The meeting however observed that healthy amounts of foreign currency reserve, remittance, and export earnings bode well for the economy.

According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), the inflation rate on point-to-point basis was 6.13 in December and 6.37 in November of FY 06-07.

The foreign reserve reached \$3.97 billion on 14 February 2007. It was \$3.48 on June 30, 2006.

The exchange rate on 14 February 2007 was on average Tk 69 to the greenback while it was Tk 69.70 on June 30, 2006.

14-party

FROM PAGE 1
responsible for polluting politics," said Abdul Jalil, general secretary of Awami League (AL) and co-ordinator of 14-party alliance.

Those who entered politics for other reasons, apart from serving the nation, have become corrupt politicians and they have been arrested, he added.

Jalil, however, hailed the law enforcers' current drive to arrest corrupt politicians saying, "We were not successful in doing that for many reasons."

Welcoming the army's offer to prepare the voter ID cards, AL leader Amir Hossain Amu said this initiative, if taken, would bring hope to many people.

Welcoming Prof Muhammad Yunus for declaring the likely name for his party, Amu said by declaring the name of his party and by getting involved with politics, Prof Yunus has discarded his earlier comment about politicians.

"Politicians should control politics," said Hasanul Haq Inu, president of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) adding, "Neither the army nor any 'self-declared guardian' would be able to rescue the country from the present 'disaster'."

The present caretaker government is trying to put 'derailed democracy back on tracks' Inu observed adding that if the caretaker government wished to sit on the driving seat of the country, it would be a disaster for politics.

"If the normal flourishing of politics and democracy is hindered, there will be disaster for us," Rashed Khan Menon, president of Workers Party, said.

Nurul Islam, president of Ganatantri Party, Abdus Samad, president of Gana Azadi League, Dilip Barua of Samyabadi Dal also spoke.

16 army camps

FROM PAGE 16
Phiskichhara BDR camp, Bamulpur BDR camp and Labishchhara BDR camp under Barkal zone, Basantapara Army camp under Ranganamati zone, Ujachhari BDR camp under Marishya zone, Haruntula BDR camp and Gorochhara BDR camp under Chhotohorina zone.

According to sources in the region, to comply with the provisions of the CHT peace treaty, a total of 187 temporary camps of the army, BDR, Ansar and APBn have been withdrawn after signing of the treaty. However, PCJSS claimed that only 47 different types of camps had been withdrawn so far.

2 outlaws killed

FROM PAGE 16
According to Rab, at around 3:00am, a team of Rab 12 from Pabna camp acted on a tip off and raided Char Gochpur village where the criminals belonging to the outlawed party gathered to commit criminal acts.

As soon as Rab reached the spot, the criminals opened fire on Rab. The law enforcers also returned fire prompting a gunfight that lasted around 40 minutes. The two outlaws were found dead after the gunfight was over, claimed Rab.

Habilder M Saifulah and soldiers Shakhawat and Abdus Sattar of Rab were injured in the gunfight.

Rab recovered an Italian 9mm pistol, a Russian rifle, a shutter gun and 12 bullets from the scene.

The dead were accused in several criminal cases, Rab said.

Relief goods seized

FROM PAGE 1
Municipality Chairman Jamilur Rahman Miron had surrendered to the army on Saturday night. Besides, the crack forces arrested two union parishad (UP) chairmen in Sirajganj and Bagherhat yesterday.

Apart from these arrests the joint forces of army, police and Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) arrested 1,616 people across the country and seized 11 firearms, five homemade bombs and 110 bullets in the 24 hours preceding 6:00am yesterday.

On Friday night, former UP member and also a rice trader Reza Miah Chowdhury filed a case with Rangunia police station accusing nine people including former lawmaker Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury, a high ranking BNP leader and parliamentary affairs adviser to the immediate past prime minister.

NATORE
Our Natore correspondent reported that acting on secret information a police team raided the house of former deputy minister for land Ruhul Quddus Talukder at Ramshakazipur village under Naldanga upazila in the district and seized 44 pieces of CI sheets of government relief fund, which had been used in the veranda of his drawing room, the shallow water pump room and the employees quarter. The law enforcers could not find the former deputy minister there.

PABNA
Our Pabna correspondent reported that the joint forces recovered CI sheets of government relief fund from the educational institution established by former BNP lawmaker from Shujanagar upazilla in Pabna, Selim Reza Habib, yesterday afternoon.

The forces raided Selim Reza Habib Degree College at Malfia village under Shujanagar upazilla and recovered 342 CI sheets from there.

The law enforcers also raided Selim's residence but could not find him there. The forces arrested a college peon for interrogation.

DHAKA
Our Staff correspondent reported that police produced Salahuddin Ahmed, former lawmaker from Dhaka-4 constituency, before two metropolitan magistrate's courts for hearings of three petitions filed earlier, seeking 21 days of remand of the detained BNP leader.

After hearings, Magistrate Mohammad Shamsul Alam granted two days of remand in each of two cases filed in connection with illegally possession of foreign currencies and arms, while Magistrate MA Salam granted a one-day remand in connection with land grabbing and extortion case.

Earlier, he had been shown arrested in those cases and the law enforcers had sought seven days of remand in each of the three cases. The courts had directed the authorities of Dhaka Central Jail, where he had been detained since his surrender to a court on February 12, to produce him before the courts yesterday.

The former lawmaker was taken to the court in a prison van from the jail under tight security.

Besides, Salahuddin was shown arrested in four other cases - three for extortion and one for assault.

The defence lawyers submitted three separate bail petitions along with a petition for scrapping the remand prayers.

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

HABIGANJ
The joint forces yesterday arrested Madhabpur Upazila Assistant Commissioner (Land) M Shahadat Hossain on charges of corruption and bribery, reports UNB.

A team of the joint forces went to the office of Shahadat Hossain at 11:00am and took him into custody.

A source in the joint forces said allegations of taking bribes were brought against Shahadat during a recent eviction drive in Madhabpur upazila. "The allegation was proved in an investigation."

Allegations have it that Shahadat, in the last month and a half, transferred about Tk 9.5 lakh to his

account in Majidee Court branch of Krishi Bank in Noakhali from its Madhabpur branch.

The source also said the government official did not cooperate with the joint forces during the eviction drive and took money from encroachers.

"He did not evict those who had given bribes, rather identified for demolition the structures of those who had refused to bribe him," the source said.

Land offices, especially the AC (Land) Offices, are identified as among the most corrupt outfits of the government administration.

RANGAMATI
Joint forces arrested PCJSS central committee Secretary Satyabir Dewan with a pistol and some ammunition raiding his Bolpeya Adam residence in the town early yesterday, our Rangamati correspondent reports.

Family members of Satyabir Dewan, however, denied keeping any arms at their house.

Satyabir Dewan was arrested in charge of killing Kina Mohan Chakma, who worked as a leader of Somo Odhiker Andolon, a platform of Bangalee settlers in CHT, intelligence sources said.

The crack forces also arrested four other PCJSS leaders from different villages of Jurachhari upazila the same night. The arrestees are PCJSS central committee Member Plaban Chakma, Jurachhari upazila PCJSS President Ranjit Chakma and Secretary Maya Chan Chakma and PCJSS activist Ujjal Chakma, PCJSS sources said.

The joint forces handed them over to Jurachhari police yesterday evening, sources said.

However, Satyabir Dewan remained in the custody of joint forces as of 7:30pm yesterday.

KUSHTIA
General Secretary of Bheramara unit BNP and Chairman of Bheramara municipality Tohidul Islam surrendered to the joint forces in the town yesterday, our Kushtia correspondent reports.

Tohidul, who is also a brother of Kushtia district BNP President former BNP lawmaker Shahidul Islam, had been on the run.

Joint forces sources said they were on a hunt for former lawmaker Shahidul and Tohidul, against whom five cases were recently filed.

Tohidul, who used to lead the gang of Shahidul's men to conduct misdeeds, is also accused in a number of earlier filed cases including a few for graft and murder.

TANGAIL
Tangail municipality Chairman Jamilur Rahman Miron surrendered to army men on Saturday night, reports our Tangail correspondent.

Later the joint forces searched Miron's residence at Thanapara in the town and seized his bank cheque book, insurance papers and some other documents.

Tangail district joint convener of Krishak Sramik Janata League Miron is accused in eight criminal cases including one for murder.

MEHERPUR
The army-led joint forces recovered 66 pieces of CI sheets of government relief from the houses of two union BNP leaders and a thana unit JCD leader at Chitila village in Gangni upazila of the district yesterday noon, reports our Meherpur correspondent.

Our Sirajganj correspondent adds: The joint forces yesterday arrested a local union parishad chairman and BNP leader along with some relief goods from his house at Kamosuti village in Kamarkhanda upazila of Sirajganj district.

The joint forces recovered 10 bundles of CI sheets of government relief from Patharghata upazila BNP office in Barguna during a raid yesterday.

UNB adds: Ten bundles of CI sheets given by the government for distribution as relief to the distressed people were recovered from the house of Kaklapura UP Chairman of Sreebordi upazila and union BNP President Ailuddin, UNB adds.

8 US troops die

FROM PAGE 16
Zabul is a rugged and mountainous area that sees regular clashes between security forces and fighters from the Islamist Taliban movement.

The chopper was on a transport mission and not a combat mission at the time of the crash, coalition spokesman Lieutenant Colonel David Accetta told AFP.

"The loss of these servicemembers is felt by all of us here in Afghanistan, and we offer our deepest sympathy to the families of those who were killed," he said in the statement.

The coalition would not release the exact location and details of the incident until the recovery operation was completed.

The coalition is made up of 11,000 mostly US troops who are in Afghanistan to help the government round up Taliban insurgents and their allies, including al-Qaeda militants, and to train the fledgling Afghan security forces.

There are altogether about 27,000 US soldiers in Afghanistan, some working with a separate NATO-led International Security Assistance Force.

There have been several deadly helicopter crashes, most of them accidents, involving foreign forces and other groups that deployed here after the fall of the Taliban regime in late 2001.