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SPA amended reinstating trial provision

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government on Sunday brought an amendment to the Special Powers Act (SPA) 1974 with a provision to put any person on trial who is under preventive detention on suspicion of being a perceived threat to the state.

According to the amendment the person on trial can be imprisoned for a maximum of five years or fined, or both.

President Iajuddin Ahmed
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CTG AIRPORT OPERATIONS Council decides to review handover deal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The council of advisers yesterday decided to review the 2005 deal to hand over the operational management of Chittagong Shah Amanat Airport to Thai Airways in light of the airport's recent adoption of the new Open Skies system.

The weekly council meeting also decided to ratify the Saarc (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) agreement on mutual administrative

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Huda, 9 other BNP leaders denied bail

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday rejected bail petitions of detained former communications minister barrister Nazmul Huda and nine other BNP leaders arrested for their alleged involvement in activities against the state.

Judge Mohammad Momin Ullah of Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court passed the order following ten separate criminal appeals filed by the defence lawyers against the rejection orders of the lower court and also seeking bails for Huda and others.

The nine others are Salauddin Quader Chowdhury, parliamentary affairs adviser to the immediate past prime minister, three former state ministers Amanullah Aman, Mir Nasir and Iqbal Hasan Mahmud, four former BNP lawmakers M Naser Rahman,

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Voter ID card to take one year, cost Tk 430cr Says expert body

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Preparing voter ID cards by visiting door to door would take at least one year and cost around Tk 430 crore, according to a report of an expert committee.

The 9-member committee submitted its report to the Ministry of Energy and Power recently.

Explaining the total process of the ID card preparation, Jamilur Reza Chowdhury, the committee chief, yesterday told BBC Bangla Service that four months would be needed for mobilisation and procurement while the rest of the eight months would require for data collection and process.

The committee prepared the report assuming 10 crore voters in Bangladesh, Chowdhury said.

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Delhi for power links with Dhaka, Colombo

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

India is exploring the prospect of establishing power transmission links with Bangladesh and Sri Lanka as part of regional energy cooperation within the Saarc, Indian Power Minister Sushilkumar Shinde said in New Delhi yesterday.

At the inauguration of the two-day Saarc Energy Dialogue, Shinde said India already has grid interconnections with Nepal and Bhutan and technical studies were being conducted to explore the feasibility of similar transmission links with these two countries.

"We have several examples in the world where countries of a region have pooled their energy sources on the basis of

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Banks to freeze accounts of Moudud, family

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) yesterday directed banks to freeze the accounts of former law minister barrister Moudud Ahmed and his wife.

It also instructed them to suspend the accounts of BNP leader Mazidul Islam and his wife and their two children.

The central authority for tax administration, the NBR asked for bank statements of those by March 8 and said the records should cover all transactions since opening of the accounts.

The decision was taken in the light of an ongoing investigation into their alleged tax evasion, according to the NBR directive to the banks.

However, sources said the move is part of the caretaker government's drive against politicians, bureaucrats and businessmen suspected of corruption.

Earlier on March 1, the NBR

asked all commercial banks to suspend immediately transactions of accounts of the 53 graft suspects. "Accounts of more corruption suspects will be suspended soon," said an NBR source.

Identifying Moudud and Mazidul by tax identification numbers (TIN), in two separate letters



Moudud Ahmed

to the banks the NBR said that lately its Central Intelligence Cell (CIC) has been investigating alleged tax evasion by these two, their wives and children.

Besides the BNP leaders, it mentioned names of Moudud's wife Hasna Moudud, Mazidul's wife Rawnak Jahan Islam, his children Jamilul Islam and Ashfia-E-Mazid.

The CIC is convinced that if all confidential and yet-to-be-published information about the accounts held by them or their family members or under joint names is made available, these people might finish up owing the government huge sums in tax.

In this situation, the NBR requests the banks to suspend all types of withdrawal and transfers from the accounts.

It asks them to take the matter as a priority revenue collection activity.

Besides, the letters direct the

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PHOTO: SHAFIQ ALAM

Bed covers used in different hospitals and clinics in the capital are washed in the dangerously polluted water of the Buriganga River. The photo was taken at Kamrangirchar.

Faizee 'de-listed' from judicial responsibility

Law adviser sees no option for him but to resign; the judge applies for 2-week leave

JULFIKAR ALI MANIK

Controversial High Court (HC) Judge Faisal Mahmud Faizee has been 'de-listed' from judicial duty amidst mounting call for his resignation after Chittagong University (CU) cancelled his LLB certificate.

Sources said the single-member bench of Faizee was found missing on yesterday's cause list as Chief Justice Mohammad Ruhlul Amin withdrew him from judicial work. However, it could not be confirmed officially.

Despite being at the epicentre of controversy, the judge himself appeared calm yesterday, saying he would take a few more days to consider resignation. "I did not get yet any papers stating cancellation of my certificate," sources said quoting Faizee, who applied for two-week's leave yesterday.

But Law adviser Mainul Hossain, who met with the chief justice at the Supreme Court last afternoon, told The Daily Star, "I think there is no question of Faizee remaining a judge. I also think Chittagong University has not done the right

thing by cancelling his certificate after 10 years."

"Nevertheless, since he (Faizee) has become controversial he cannot remain a judge. I believe, the option for him is to resign, or legal measures will be taken against him according to the constitution," the adviser said. "I believe, Faizee will resign."

Sources said the government has already started discussing Faizee's issue at different levels to find out a solution to the crisis following the CU syndicate's unprecedented action against an HC judge.

The options so far discussed to resolve the crisis are resignation of Faizee or his removal through Supreme Judicial Council.

Faizee was appointed an HC judge from the lawyers' quota in 2004. Sources mentioned that LLB certificate is the minimum requirement to be a lawyer.

It requires formation of Supreme Judicial Council to remove a judge of the Supreme Court or the HC. Since Faizee lacks the minimum requirement to be an

HC judge from lawyer's quota because he is not a lawyer, the president can remove him simply through an order, the sources pointed out.

After a day's leave on Sunday, Faizee again submitted a leave application for two weeks to the office of chief justice in the morning, SC sources said.

Coming of his meeting with the chief justice, the law adviser earlier told The Daily Star that Faizee issue was among the ones they discussed at the meeting. "What will be a solution to this matter is in the process of discussion," he said.

Meanwhile, the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) yesterday decided to send a letter to the president requesting him to remove Faizee through Supreme Judicial Council.

SCBA Secretary M Aminuddin said the letter be sent by today.

In reply to a question on the SCBA request, Mainul said, "I hope it will not require a Supreme Judicial Council to remove Faizee."

Asked whether Faizee is ready to

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JHALAKATHI JUDGES KILLING

Final bell tolls for 6 JMB men

President rejects mercy petitions

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The president has rejected the mercy petitions of six of the seven Islamist militants condemned to death for killing two Jhalakathi judges in November 2005.

With the rejection of the mercy petitions, there will be no obstacle to the executions of the militants.

Sources said the president rejected the mercy petitions on Sunday while the relevant documents were sent to the ministry concerned yesterday.

Deputy Inspector General (Prisons) Maj Shamsul Haider Siddique told The Daily Star last night that he did not receive any official order regarding rejection of mercy petitions.

He, however, said the order would reach the jail through the law and home ministries and it may take two to three days.

According to the jail code, if the president rejects clemency prayers by the condemned, the jail authorities are to reschedule the date of execution within 21-28 days from the date of receipt of the copy of his

decision.

The condemned are Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) chief Abdur Rahman, its second-in-command Siddiqui Islam alias Bangla Bhai, its Majlis-e-Shura members Ataur Rahman Sunny, Khaled Saifullah and Abdul Awal, suicide bomber Iftakhar Al Mamun and absconding Asadul Islam alias Arif. The captured six are in different jails.

In the first week of February the jail authorities sent the mercy petitions of the six to the president through the home ministry.

The seven JMB militants were convicted and sentenced to death for killing two judges in Jhalakathi in a suicide bomb attack in November 2005. One of them, Asadul Islam alias Arif, is absconding.

Senior assistant judges Jagannath Pandey and Sohail Ahmed were killed in the suicide bomb attack at Purba Chadkati in Jhalakathi town in the wake of a series of bombings carried out by Islamist militants across the country.

The High Court (HC) on August

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30 get training on WTO, only 3 remain in post

Trade talks capacity suffers from wrong planning

JASIM UDDIN KHAN

Bangladesh's international trade relations have been suffering badly for quite a long time due to poor negotiation skills and lack of expertise in related government agencies.

Government posts earmarked for officials from the trade cadre are usually filled by officials from the administrative cadre resulting in a vacuum of experts in the commerce ministry, sources said.

The ministry failed to create a pool of experts on international trade as the highly technical department, World Trade Organization (WTO) Cell, under the ministry is treated like any other administrative departments by the government, the sources added.

Only three from the 30 officers, who got training on dealing with WTO issues from the organisation's head office in Geneva, Switzerland, are now working in the WTO Cell, said Nasir Uddin, the immediate past director general of

the cell.

"The country needs a permanent pool of experts at both government and private levels to maximise gains from negotiations at regional and global levels," Nasir Uddin added.

If an officer is transferred to an administrative post after getting involved with trade negotiations, it is a kind of talent waste, Nasir feels.

Currently, only one official from the trade cadre is posted in a Bangladesh mission abroad as a commercial councillor, while the remaining 18 such posts are filled by officials from the administrative cadre with little or no knowledge about global trade, another official of the ministry said.

The parliamentary standing committee on commerce ministry in March 2006 suggested that all the 19 posts of commercial councillors be filled by officials from the trade cadre, Shamsul Alam, secretary general of Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) Trade Cadre Officers'

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ACC prepares to file graft cases against 3 ex-state ministers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) prepares to lodge graft cases against three former state ministers now in detention.

They are BNP leaders Mir Mohammad Nasiruddin, Amanullah Aman and Awami League (AL) leader Dr Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir.

Mir Nasir's son barrister Mir Helal Uddin and Aman's wife Sabera Aman will also face charges of corruption.

"We will file cases against the five tonight (Monday night) or tomorrow (today) with Gulshan Police Station," ACC Commissioner Habibur Rahman said yesterday afternoon.

The anti-graft body officials said immediate past state minister for civil aviation and tourism Mir Nasir and ex-state minister for labour and employment Aman had amassed huge properties--moveables and immovables--and those do not match their legal incomes.

They did not even make any mention of those assets in their wealth statements submitted to the ACC recently.

The officials said Mir Nasir and

his son Helal have accumulated assets worth over Tk 3.22 crore while the properties of Aman and his wife Sabera Aman are valued at over Tk 8.28 crore.

They said former state minister for planning Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir has Tk 1.17 crore in six fixed deposits but he concealed the information in his statement to the ACC.

So far, the ACC has found that the aforementioned assets were not disclosed to it.

In a briefing yesterday, the ACC officials said the charge against Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir is that he did not mention anything about the fixed deposits in his wealth statement.

In addition to the charge of concealing information, Mir Nasir and Aman are going to be sued for acquiring assets through corruption and misuse of power.

In absence of the ACC chairman, the two commissioners--Habibur Rahman and Abul Hasan Manzur Mannan--met yesterday and gave approval for bringing graft proceedings against the five.

They told the newsmen that ACC Deputy Director (DD)

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Anti-graft drive to help create atmosphere for credible polls: CA

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed has said the ongoing drive against corruption will help create an environment congenial to holding a credible election.

The head of the caretaker government reaffirmed his views about the purge when the outgoing Chinese Ambassador, Chai Xi, paid a farewell call on him at his office yesterday.

Citing a great friendship between Bangladesh and China, the chief adviser appreciated Chinese assistance for Bangladesh in developing various sectors,

including social, economic, military, cultural and educational fields.

He hoped the Chinese cooperation will be increased in the days ahead.

Referring to Bangladesh-China air link, he said it will help expand people-to-people contact between the two countries.

Describing the existing bilateral relationship as warm and cordial, the chief adviser thanked the outgoing Chinese diplomat for the initiatives he has taken to develop the ties further.

He said the government has

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