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Property of
9 high-profile
graft suspects
attached
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday attached houses and property of nine high profile political leaders, businessmen and government officials including former commerce minister Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury in a graft case.

The eight others are former secretary of Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakka (Rajuk) Mir Mosharraf Hossain, its former chief engineer Emdadul Islam, Bashundhara Group Chairman Ahmed Akbar Sobhan Shah Alam, former BNP lawmaker and Matco Co-chairman Shafiqur Rahman Kiron, Chairman of Advanced Development Technologies Ltd SM Anwar Hossain, Chairman of MN Co Ltd Niu Ze Mendes, former superintendent engineer of Public Works Department (PWD) Ziauddin Ahmed and Chittagong Awami League leader Afzal Uddin's wife Hasna Ahmed.

Gulshan police said they conducted the drive following a court order on October 1 to attach all

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LOCAL BODY POLLS
AL for lifting
emergency
more than 2
months before
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League (AL) and the Samyabadi Dal (SD) yesterday called on the government to lift the state of emergency earlier than two months ahead of each election, saying this will give the political parties leeway to prepare for the polls.

The two parties of the AL-led 14-party combine at a meeting also called for the resumption of indoor politics across the country so that

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GATCO CASE

Khaleda might
be quizzed
next week

UNB, Dhaka

Detained former prime minister Khaleda Zia is likely to be quizzed next week in connection with the container handling case filed against her by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC).

The investigation officer is likely to file a petition in a day or two to allow him to question and take a statement from the detained former prime minister. If permitted, it'll happen sometime next week at the sub-jail, a competent

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GRAFT ACCUSATION Truth Commission for businessmen on cards

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is going to set up a "Truth Commission" to have confessions from businessmen accused of corruption with an aim to settle the charges against them without putting them to trial.

Formulation of the commission, which is quite identical to the reconciliation commissions in several countries, comes as the government is pondering over giving corrupt businessmen a chance to surrender their ill-gotten wealth or pay financial penalty and thus avoid arrest or trial.

The commission will be a major tool for "Plea Bargain", an agreement where a defendant agrees to plead guilty or no contest in

exchange for a settlement from the prosecution regarding the punishment.

"In many countries, the question of reconciliation and settlement comes after a major change. So, we are thinking about introducing plea bargain for businessmen," Law Adviser Mainul Hosein said yesterday.

The government is working on enacting a law to give legal cover to the commission, he told reporters at the information ministry. He, however, did not elaborate on the structure of the commission.

"Businessmen have been repeatedly saying they are in panic, they cannot get involved in their businesses as per their expectation," Mainul said, adding, "Going

before the Truth Commission, they will admit to acquiring wealth through dishonest means and will say: 'Fine us or take away our illegally-earned wealth'."

Acknowledging that the identity of an accused—whether they are politicians or businessmen—cannot be considered during the ongoing campaign against corruption, he said, "Since this government's prime objective is to ensure democracy and good governance through elections, we cannot deal all types of corruption the same way."

While all are putting utmost emphasis on the transparency and honesty of the government, people must also think about reviving the

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IFTEKHAR REVEALS FOREIGN POLICY PLAN Better relations with neighbours, 5 key world powers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Adviser Iftekhar A Chowdhury yesterday revealed a 10-point foreign policy plan of the caretaker government, which includes improving relations with neighbouring countries and the five key world powers, securing duty-free export access, attracting foreign investment and promoting manpower export.

At a press conference in New York Iftekhar also said Russia has assured Bangladesh of assisting in building a nuclear power plant, which the government plans to set up by 2015.

The foreign adviser pointed out the government's achievement in securing jobs for 4.6 lakh Bangladeshis overseas and road-link deals with Myanmar.

Enumerating the 10 points of the caretaker government's foreign policy, Iftekhar said it should be geared to the benefit of "common man and woman".

The foreign policies include strengthening a "balanced relationship" with the neighbouring nations and member states of the Saarc and Bimstec, and developing linkages with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, European Union, Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and the

Commonwealth.

Dhaka will also look to "actively engage ourselves in the demarcation of land and maritime boundaries," he said.

Bangladesh needs to "cultivate relations" with the five key global powers—the USA, Russia, Britain, Japan and China, he added.

Dhaka should also play a greater role in the UN by enhancing participation in peace-keeping and peace-building, and "actively espousing non-proliferation and disarmament", said a foreign ministry press release.

On trade, Iftekhar said the government should secure "unimpeded entry of Bangladeshi products into foreign markets, particularly of the readymade garments and negotiate reduced tariff and non-tariff barriers and favourable trading regimes through WTO mechanisms".

The foreign policy also includes attractive foreign direct investment in the country, including from the non-resident Bangladeshis.

The government should also locate newer markets for skilled and semi-skilled workforce and take active measures to promote and protect the welfare of all expatriate Bangladeshis, the foreign

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A child makes choice of Eid cards for her near and dear ones at a city shop on Sonargaon Road yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

VOTER LISTING EC for indoor politics in district HQs by Dec

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) wants the interim government to allow indoor politics in all district headquarters of the country by December this year for expediting the field level task of preparing the voter list with photographs and to implement the electoral reforms.

"We strongly recommended the government to relax the restrictions on indoor politics in district headquarters by December," Election Commissioner Brig Gen (rtd) M Sakhawat Hussain told reporters yesterday in his office.

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) ATM Shamsul Huda on Tuesday said the state of emergency

should be lifted in places at least two months prior to holding polls to local governments there, which are scheduled to begin in January.

In defence of the demand for allowing indoor politics, the election commissioner argued that only senior leaders of the political parties are now discussing the electoral reform proposals including the proposed provision for mandatory registration of the parties with the commission, which they should actually discuss with district level leaders too.

On political parties' cooperation in the field level task of preparing the voter list with photographs, Sakhawat said the grassroots level

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CG can hold parliamentary polls only

Says Delwar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The only election the caretaker government can hold is the parliamentary election -- to hand over power to an elected government, Khandaker Delwar Hossain, secretary general of BNP, said yesterday.

"The task of the interim government is to hold only the parliamentary polls, not any other polls," he said while talking to reporters at his NAM apartment.

He hoped that the Election Commission (EC) will hold a neutral election soon after creating a suitable political environment.

"It is their [caretaker government] only duty to help the EC at the planning ministry.

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Flood losses estimated at \$200-250m

Foreign donors to channel large part of the required funds, says finance adviser

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

During a recent meeting in Manila, they have completed an inter-ministerial assessment of the flood damage, the finance adviser said, adding that the estimate might be finalised by the government committee concerned by 8th or 9th of this month.

Asked who would pay for the rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts, Aziz said that the ADB would provide a substantial amount along with other donors.

The World Bank (WB) has already pledged \$75 million loan as flood assistance.

Coordinated by the ADB, other donors to contribute to the post-flood reconstruction efforts are

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HC stays graft case proceedings against Salman

UNB, Dhaka

The High Court yesterday stayed the proceedings of a graft case against detained Beximco Group Vice-Chairman Salman F Rahman.

Passing the interim order upon a petition, a division bench comprising Justice Shah Abu Nayem Mominur Rahman and Justice Zubayer Rahman Chowdhury issued a rule upon the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) to explain why initiation of the case should not be declared unlawful.

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Asia Energy
wants to
renegotiate deal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Finance Adviser Mirza Azizul Islam yesterday said coal mining company Asia Energy has expressed its willingness to re-negotiate terms of its contract with the government.

"Before this re-negotiation, the government must decide which contractual terms should be revised," the adviser told the press following a meeting at his planning ministry office with the visiting Asian Development Bank (ADB) mission led by Kunio Senga.

At the meeting, the ADB expressed its concern that the government's indecision about the investment proposals of Asia Energy and Tata was giving 'investors a wrong signal.'

"It will be difficult for me to express the government position regarding both these deals because the projects involve not only the finance ministry but also other ministries," the adviser said. Till date, the council of advisers has not discussed any of the projects, he added.

Mirza Aziz said the government had signed the Asia Energy deal in the past.

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