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## Petty corruption ails people despite year-long drive

### Crackdown targeted large-scale individual graft only

JULFIKAR ALI MANIK and EMRAN HOSSAIN

Petty corruption and irregularities are still ailing the general people, although the military-backed caretaker government launched an unprecedented massive drive against large-scale individual graft last year.

The crackdown on graft has been riddled with questions for being conducted largely against politicians rather than targeting corruption-suspects irrespective of professions and working arena.

Questions regarding discrimination in targeting graft suspects, impartial and successful prosecution of cases and quality investigation through maintaining procedures properly also riddled the

massive hunt since its launch in February last year.

"From the anti-corruption drive people had learned that the corrupt couldn't get away anymore. But their sufferings from petty corruption have not reduced," says eminent economist Prof Muzaffer Ahmad assessing the drive in the first year of the government.

Prof Muzaffer, leader of a civil society initiative to promote good governance, adds: "It doesn't seem that public sufferings have reduced where police stations, land offices, education sector and Union Parishad offices are concerned."

Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) Chairman Lt Gen (ret'd) Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury says: "It's hard to address the issue of widespread petty corruption in our

limited capacity.

"Only social awareness against corruption can be used as an effective measure to address it. We're holding countrywide anti-graft programmes to raise awareness and learn about people's perception in this regard," he adds.

The cases filed so far did not even deal with large-scale corruption. Most of the cases were filed focusing on wealth statements submitted by individuals, tax dodging, and extortion.

The cases linked to large-scale corruption include the Niko and Gato graft cases filed against detained former premiers Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina.

Moreover, many influential persons widely known as corrupt suspects still remain out of the

anti-graft dragnet. Questions continue tainting the investigations as the anti-crime watchdog marked some shortcomings and was mellowed significantly due to lack of manpower and skill in carrying out the job.

Discrimination in selecting suspects resulted in a lack of public faith in the ongoing drive.

For instance, the lists of suspects published include Khaleda's sons Tarique Rahman and Arafat Rahman Koko, her brother Shamim Eskander, and nephew Shahrin Islam Tuhin.

But Khaleda's another brother Sayed Eskander and nephew Saiful Islam Duke, widely believed to have been involved in corruption, did not appear on any of the lists.

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This land at Karallachhari of Khagrachhari once had two hills and thousands of trees on it. Local leaders of a political party razed the hills and fell the trees for housing plots for themselves.

## Hill cutting on in Khagrachhari defying ban

JASIM MAJUMDER, Khagrachhari

Regional leaders of a political party illegally razed two hills and axed down over three thousand trees to make way for housing plots for their ward unit leaders and activists in the remote area of Keyanghat under Mohalchhari upazila in Khagrachhari.

The practice is continuing under supervision of the cadres of that political party flouting a ban on hill cutting imposed by the authorities concerned, sources said.

An influential local political leader is the kingpin of the hill cutters, who damaged at least 50 acres of hills in Maidda Karallachhari area for making space for at least 70 new housing plots, the sources said.

An ex-chairman of Keyanghat union parishad is directly helping the political leader in cutting down the hills, said a local resident requesting anonymity. The Daily

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## RUPALI BANK SALES DEAL

### Violation of privatisation rules costs Tk 17cr

JASIM UDDIN KHAN

The Privatisation Commission (PC) wasted over Tk 17 crore of public money violating privatisation regulations in the process of making the now uncertain Rupali Bank sales deal with the Saudi prince.

The commission violated subsection 16 of section (11-1) of Privatisation Regulations 2001 (Revised) by taking an amount as security deposit from the highest bidder Saudi prince, which was less than what it was supposed to take in accordance with the rules.

The commission received only US\$100,000 as security deposit

instead of the \$8.25 million mandated by the PC regulations, as it stipulates that the amount of the security deposit should be a minimum of 2.5 percent of the total sale price.

If the PC followed the regulations it would receive over Tk 56 crore as security deposit from the Saudi prince as the buyer had agreed to buy the bank's 67 percent stake at a cost of US\$330 million at the time of primary agreement, said a source in the ACC quoting from a primary investigation report regarding the matter.

Md Nurul Islam, deputy director of the ACC, conducted the primary investigation and submitted his

report to the anti-graft commission recently, sources said.

The investigation also found that the PC arranged a series of high profile international road shows to sell the bank's shares spending Tk 17 crore, some of the venues for which were selected whimsically while some persons were also included in the team unnecessarily.

The commission showcased Rupali Bank's assets at the road show which travelled to Mumbai, Kuala Lumpur, Karachi, London and Dubai between March 12 and March 29 in 2006.

The World Bank and the

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

## Question leak: NU postpones exams again

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The authorities of National University (NU) last night postponed again the English comprehensive examinations of the honours part-2 course for the bachelor's degree scheduled for today and tomorrow, following a leak of question papers.

The examinations had been held once before on November 11 just to be cancelled later following a previous question paper leak.

A news release issued by NU last night said, "The 2nd Year Honours English Examinations under the NU scheduled to be held on Saturday and Sunday have been postponed due to unavoidable circumstances. The next date of the said examinations will be

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## DR KAMAL ANNOUNCES 10-PT CHARTER AT CITIZENS' RALLY

### Withdraw emergency, hand over power thru' polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Gono Forum President Dr Kamal Hossain at a citizen's rally yesterday announced a 10-point charter for national unity to end the existing political and constitutional crises in the country and establish an effective parliament and constitutional rule.

Speakers at the meeting also called for withdrawing the state of emergency without delay and the holding of a transparent and fair general election to hand over power to the elected representatives of the people to reinstate democracy.

The speakers put emphasis on the withdrawal of the state of emer-

gency so that the ongoing movement for the trial of war criminals of 1971 could spread countrywide.

The charter focuses on ensuring equal rights and human rights to people regardless of their gender and religion. It also focuses on a uniform system of education for everyone, establishing an effective parliament, building the country and the administration system accountable to the people and free from politicisation and extremism.

Gono Forum arranged the meeting titled "National Unity to Meet National Challenges" at the Engineers' Institution where activists of the organisations from different parts of the city gathered and eminent personalities and intellec-

tuals spoke.

"We must be united to make the independence meaningful and establish people's ownership of the country as the constitution itself ensures," said Dr Kamal.

The charter for national unity includes the ensuring of people's effective representation by honest and competent representatives; a free and fair election that is free from black-money, armed cadres, extremism, and politicisation; the upholding of citizens' right to information; freedom of press and expression; the ensuring of transparency and accountability in the functioning of all public institutions; and respect for human rights

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## Everest conqueror Edmund Hillary passes away

AFP, Wellington

Edmund Hillary, the modest New Zealand beekeeper who shot to global fame as the first person to climb Mount Everest, died yesterday at age 88.

A hero to millions for his daring-do, dry wit and dedication to others -- he spent much of his life working to help the people of Nepal -- Hillary had a heart attack after a spell of bad health, Auckland Hospital said.

The lanky, plain-speaking Kiwi made history on May 29, 1953, when he and Nepalese guide Sherpa Tenzing Norgay made it to the top of the world's tallest mountain, a feat that had defied mountaineers for decades.

On the way back down, Hillary lifted his mask and uttered what would become one of the most famous phrases in the annals of climbing: "Well, we knocked the bastard off."

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## Caretaker govt steps into second year today

UNB, Dhaka

Armed with a new set of advisers and special assistants, Chief Adviser (CA) Fakhruddin Ahmed steps into crucial second year of his rule today with general elections on top of his agenda.

Fakhruddin, a former governor of Bangladesh Bank, assumed the office of chief adviser on January 12 last year under the state of emergency declared to quell the violent clashes between major parties over some issues relating to the general election slated for January 22 last year.

The present caretaker government and the reconstituted Election Commission vowed to hold the stalled parliamentary elections before the end of this year.

The EC is expected to hold second round of dialogue with political parties in February to finalise its draft electoral reforms in

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A pedestrian yesterday looks at two posters published on completion of the caretaker government's one year in office. The photo was taken from Segunbagicha in the city.

PHOTO STAR

## BRIBERY Arrested RHD engineers sent to jail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The seven engineers of Roads and Highways Department (RHD) and managing director of a Rupsha Bridge toll collecting firm, arrested Tuesday night while sharing bribe, were sent to Dhaka Central Jail yesterday.

Sub-Inspector Giasuddin Ahmed of Dhanmondi Police Station yesterday produced the eight before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court around 1:00pm.

Metropolitan Magistrate Imran Hossain ordered to keep them under jail custody. The magistrate also ordered an investigation into the case by officials of the Anti-Corruption Commission as it is a corruption case.

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## HUGE FIRE AT RAYERBAZAR 2,000 shunties of 4 slums gutted

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A devastating fire broke out last night burning down over 2,000 shunties and several restaurants and rickshaw garages in four slums of Rayerbazar in the capital. The fire left well over 10,000 people homeless.

More than 250 firefighters along with several hundred locals fought for over two hours to quell the blaze. But neither the full extent of the damage to properties nor the number of casualties could be immediately assessed as the entire area remained under a power outage since the fire broke out.

Witnesses said the fire started around 7:00pm burning down the shanties of Nimtola Slum, Tali Office Goli Slum, Sultanganj Slum,

and a portion of the Rayerbazar Slum. Firefighters and locals brought the fire under control around 9:10pm.

Army personnel, Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) personnel and police also took part in the operation.

The Department of Fire Services and Civil Defence (FSCD) said 12 of their units from various stations took part in the fight against the devastating blaze.

Firefighters and locals said they had to face difficulties in putting out the fire due to water shortage. The FSCD personnel said the blaze swept through the slums like a wildfire as all the shanties were made of bamboos, tins, and woods and there was a strong breeze. Most

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## HIV medicines to be produced in Bangladesh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Beximco Pharmaceuticals Ltd will manufacture generic HIV medicine with the technological help of Roche.

Beximco will receive free-of-charge technological expertise from Roche along with three others companies in Zimbabwe, Kenya and Tanzania under their policy of not filing patents on antiretroviral medicines in least developed countries, a Roche press release from London yesterday said.

The press release said Roche's dedicated team from its headquarters in Switzerland will work onsite to build facilities at all four locations for the transfer of technology to take

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

## Creating atmosphere for polls should be CG's main task: AL

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) yesterday said creating a congenial atmosphere for holding the next parliamentary election by the middle of this year and handing over power to an elected government in a peaceful manner should be the main tasks of the caretaker government from this point on.

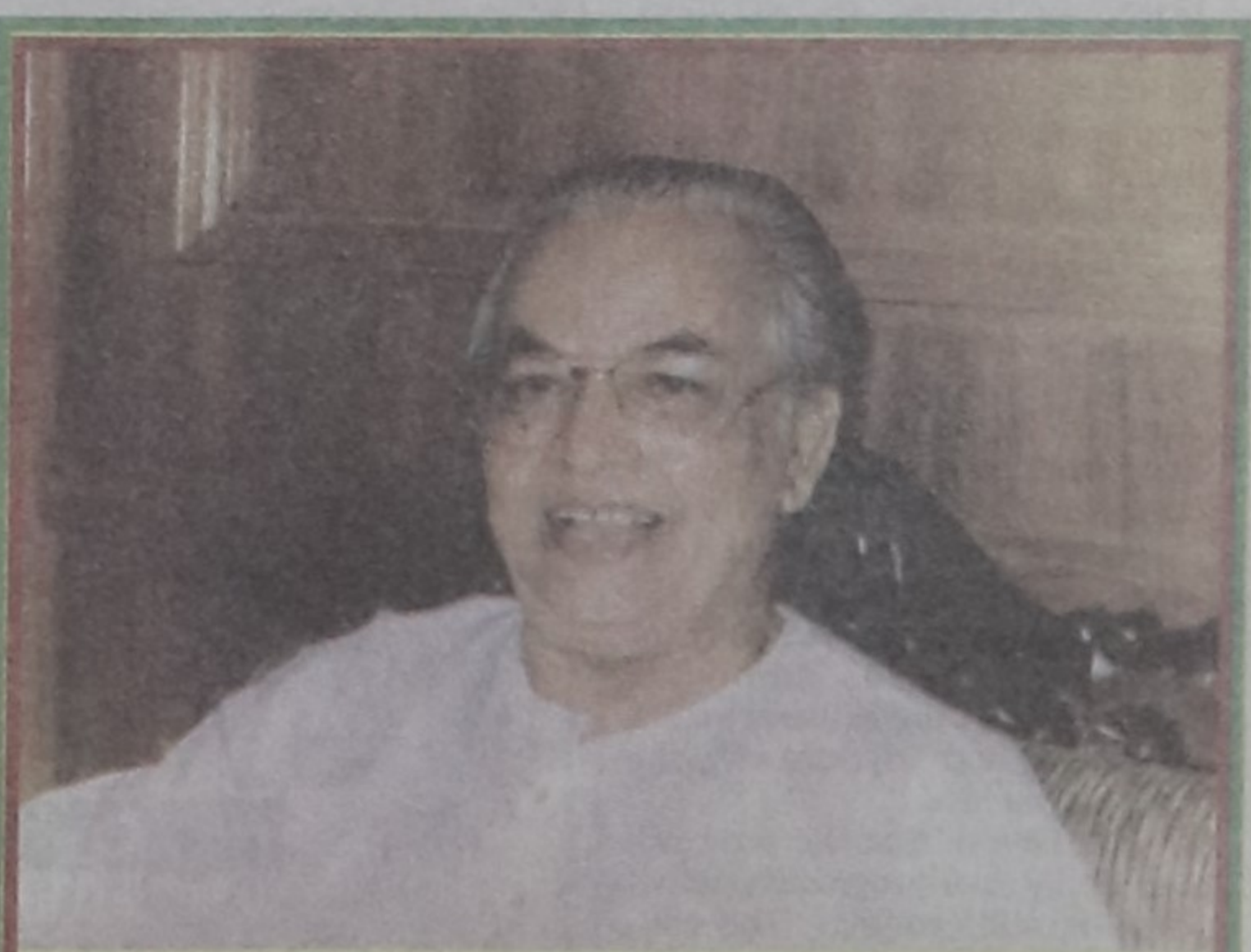
It also said the present government had even come to existence riding on the back of a movement of the grand alliance led by AL.

While evaluating the performance of the caretaker government led by Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed on the eve of its stepping into a year in existence, AL held the immediate past elected government of BNP-Jamaat-led four-party alli-

ance responsible for the current crises plaguing the country including skyrocketing prices of essentials, and the crises of power supply, energy, food, fertiliser and unemployment. AL identified the immediate past alliance government's 'widespread corruption and misuse during its tenure between 2001 and 2006' as the causes of the current crises.

At a crammed news briefing in currently detained AL President Sheikh Hasina's political office in Dhanmondi of the capital, party's Acting President Zillur Rahman termed holding of AL responsible on a par with BNP-Jamaat alliance for the pre 1/11/2007 incidents as 'baseless, false, fabricated and ill-motivated'.

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## In memory of 5th death Anniversary

Today is 12th January, on this day we deeply remember our dearest founder Chairman of Shamsul Alamin Group Late Al-haj A.K. Shamsul Alamin, a renowned personality, a famous Industrialist, a social worker, a charitable man and a former member of Parliament.

We pray to Almighty Allah to grant eternal peace for the departed soul of Late Al-haj A.K. Shamsul Alamin.

Humbly, we remain,

All family members and

Officers, Staffs and Workers,

**SAG Shamsul Alamin Group**

Alamin Centre, 25/A, Dilkusha C/A, Dhaka - 1000