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## Govt to pull out troops soon

### Relaxes emergency further to free polls campaign, media

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The caretaker government yesterday decided to start troops pullout from across the country immediately and relaxed emergency power rules (EPR) allowing political parties to hold meetings and rallies ahead of the parliamentary and upazila elections next month.

All political parties, excepting BNP-led four-party alliance, already started electioneering shortly after the Election Commission (EC) had announced detailed schedules of the two elections on Sunday night.

BNP leaders said they will make their official reaction to the EC announcement public tomorrow.

The military backed caretaker

government also removed all restrictions on the electronic and print media for covering poll campaigns, by revoking clauses 5 and 6 of the EPR 2007.

The decision of taking the military back to barracks and of relaxing the restrictions on political activities came a day after the EC had announced the poll schedules.

President Iajuddin Ahmed, also the supreme commander of the armed forces, approved a government proposal for withdrawal of the members of armed forces deployed across the country in aid of the civil administration, a top official of Bangabhaban said yesterday.

Asked when the troops pullout will begin, Home Adviser MA Matin

told reporters, "With immediate effect."

On December 9, 2006, the president who also held the post of chief adviser simultaneously back then, ordered army deployment to maintain law and order ahead of the stalled 9th general election, originally scheduled for January 22 last year.

Home ministry sources yesterday said withdrawing the armed forces will start after the ministry issues a gazette notification in this regard.

EPR RELAXED A gazette notification issued yesterday relaxing restrictions on political activities says the government, with some conditions, is

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## Office of graft

### ACC catches whole land office staff with bribes

EMRAN HOSSAIN

They ride on the gravy train. Money comes in from all directions.

They are paid by the government, and they are paid by those whose service they are at.

All these are revelations about the staff of Chikandondi land office under Hathazari upazila of Chittagong.

An Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) team yesterday went to the tin-roofed office to carry out a general inquiry against an official. But they found, to their surprise, how all staff down to the rank of peon are busy making quick bucks. How people suffer to get them to do the work they are salaried for.

The anti-graft men found bribes in pockets of all four land

officials and the peon stationed there. Sweetener was on the floors, on the tables and in a broken safe of the store room.

The officials admitted they give a part of the money to the AC land of Hathazari upazila through his assistant every month. Last month, they gave him Tk 24,000.

The ACC team seized over Tk 1.55 lakh that was taken as bribe yesterday alone.

"I think we could have found more of the ill money had we rummaged through the piles of papers there," Zulfikar Ali Majumder, supervisor of the ACC drive, told The Daily Star last night.

"We found bundles of wads in everyone's pocket. Interestingly, they did not yet draw the month's salary."

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## Hasina returns November 6

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina, now in USA for treatment, might return home on November 6, four days ahead of her scheduled arrival to the country.

Hasina brought forward the timetable of her arrival following continuous requests by her party's central leaders after the announcement of the schedule for the

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## MONEY-LAUNDERING Trust Bank bins charges

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Trust Bank yesterday said there is no scope for the bank chairman to launder its money, in response to allegations made by former energy adviser Mahmudur Rahman against Anti-Corruption Commission Chairman Lt Gen (ret'd) Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury.

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## Chinese milk tested melamine positive

### Govt clears 5 other brands; confusion persists as BAEC results not disclosed; DU sticks to its test results

STAR REPORT

The government yesterday disclosed that new lab tests done at home and abroad found toxic melamine in three brands of Chinese powdered milk -- Yashili-1, Yashili-2 and Sweet Baby-2.

But confusions still persist as it did not disclose the findings of tests done by the Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission (BAEC).

Meanwhile, the chemistry department of Dhaka University still sticks to its findings, saying melamine was found in all eight brands including Dano, Diploma, Red Cow, Anlene and Nido fortified infant.

A 12-member expert committee had a seven-hour closed-door meeting on Sunday after receiving test reports from the Bureau of

Quality and Safety of Food in Bangkok, the Bangladesh Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (BCSIR) and the BAEC in Dhaka.

But the committee did not disclose the test results and said yesterday melamine was not found in Dano, Diploma, Red Cow, Anlene and Nido fortified infant.

A source presented in the meeting said there was no signature of any BCSIR analysts on their report presented at the meeting.

After the worldwide melamine scare the Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution (BSTI) sent eight samples of five popular brands and three Chinese brands of powdered milk to Dhaka University. The chemistry department of the university said all eight

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## Jamaat gets poll pass

### EC shifts into full election gear, completes party registration by November 10

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jamaat-e-Islami and about two dozen other parties will be registered as parliamentary political parties to contest in the December 18 general election, confirmed the Election Commission (EC) officials.

Meanwhile, the commission yesterday started election preparation activities in full swing as it sent nomination forms throughout the

country and appointed returning officers (RO) and assistant returning officers (ARO).

The commission decided to register Jamaat despite a slew of official objections to the Islamist party's registration accusing it of war crimes including genocide and rape.

The EC held a hearing on Saturday on the objections lodged by different citizens' and freedom fighters' groups, where no repre-

sentative of the party was present on an official plea of 'not wanting an unpleasant situation to occur'.

Instead of rescheduling a full hearing the EC yesterday accepted a written statement of Jamaat.

"The commission has got the statement of Jamaat regarding the objections and there is no need of a formal hearing on the matter," Commissioner M Sakhawat Hussain told The Daily Star yesterday.

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## SSF takes over 2 ex-PMs' security

UNB, Dhaka

The government has provided SSF security for two former prime ministers--Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina--as VVIPs.

Awami League (AL) sources said members of the Special Security Force (SSF) took the charge of security of Sheikh Hasina's residence, Sudha Sadan, at Dhanmondi in the capital on Sunday night.

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## EXPLORATION IN BANGLADESH WATERS Myanmar defies warnings

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday decided to send the foreign secretary to Myanmar tomorrow as Myanmar continues to ignore Bangladesh's warnings against trespassing.

Hydrocarbon exploration vessels and two warships of Myanmar, which intruded into Bangladesh's

territorial waters Saturday, are yet to be withdrawn.

Foreign Adviser Iftakhar Ahmed Chowdhury summoned Myanmar Ambassador to Dhaka U Phae Thann Oo at the foreign ministry yesterday afternoon and conveyed the government's decision.

The foreign ministry also called

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## Change in the air as US goes to vote today

AP, AFP, Miami/Tampa

Barack Obama stood on the threshold of history yesterday as polls gave the Democrat a solid lead over his Republican rival John McCain on the last day of campaigning for today's most dramatic US presidential vote in a generation.

But McCain, who has no room for error in the tense battle for a handful of toss-up states, vowed to confound the pollsters and wrench victory from the African-American's grasp on Tuesday.

The 47-year-old Democrat stressed the historic nature of his quest to be America's first black president, striking an optimistic tone as fresh polls gave him a wide lead and heaped further pressure on McCain.

The presidential candidates are capping a history-making campaign with a dash from Florida through a half-dozen other crucial states as John McCain tries for an upset over Barack Obama.



US POLLS

With little sleep, McCain was darting through seven swing states Monday, arguing that victory was virtually at hand despite national polls showing otherwise.

"My friends, it's official: There's just one day left until we take America in a new direction," the Republican Party's choice to succeed President Bush told a raucous, heavily Hispanic rally in Miami just after midnight.

Obama, comfortably ahead in national polls, was getting a later start with a rally in Jacksonville at midday and a swing through long-time GOP bastions that might go to his Democratic Party this time.

"I feel pretty peaceful," Obama

said on the "Russ Parr Morning Show."

"The question is going to be who wants it more," he added. "And I hope that our supporters want it bad, because I think the country needs it."

It has been the longest and most expensive presidential contest ever featuring for the first time an African-American as a major party standardbearer.

Asked in an interview broadcast Monday morning what most displeased him about the nearly 2-year-long contest, Obama cited attacks launched by Republicans against his wife, Michelle.

"There's a Republican or right wing media outlet... that went after my wife for awhile in a way that I thought was just completely out of bounds," Obama said on CBS's "The Early Show."

"I would have never considered or expected my allies to do something comparable to the spouse of

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Talking polls and beyond

## No more caretaker government system

### Observes LDP President Oli Ahmed

SURANJITH DEABNATH and WASIM BIN HABIB



Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) President Col (ret'd) Oli Ahmed apprehends scope of vote rigging also in the December 18 parliamentary elections.

"Nobody can say all previous elections were free and fair.... This time also there is scope of stuffing (manipulated) ballot papers in the (ballot) boxes if candidates and presiding officials have understanding between them," said Oli in an exclusive interview with The Daily Star.

The veteran freedom fighter suggests that the caretaker gov-

ernment take measures to ensure mandatory presentation of voters' ID cards at all polling centres, and recording their numbers so that no candidate and political party can reject the election results.

Oli also proposed the government should launch a special drive to recover arms and arrest criminals at least 15 days before the election.

Protesting the government decision on holding the next parliamentary election under the state of emergency, the LDP chief noted that national elections are held across the country, and not

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Find details of the interview on page 11

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