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## Scrutiny of nomination starts today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The returning officers (ROs) today start scrutinising nomination papers filed by candidates to decide who are qualified to contest the upcoming parliamentary polls as per the stringent criteria laid down in the electoral laws.

After the scrutiny, which will be completed tomorrow, any MP aspirant can appeal against the ROs' decision, acceptance or rejection of anyone's nomination, to the Election Commission (EC) in the next three days.

Nominations of a number of political bigwigs might be rejected as they have been

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

## 76 identified as loan defaulters on EC list

20 go to court for not to be declared defaulters

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Bangladesh Bank has identified 76 loan defaulters on the Election Commission's (EC) list of candidates of different political parties for the upcoming parliamentary elections.

The central bank is cross checking records of another 31 candidates.

Some 20 candidates have, meanwhile, filed writ petitions with the High Court (HC) for stay orders on the process of declaring them loan defaulters.

Relevant departments of Bangladesh Bank and other banks have been directed to work for vacating the HC stay orders as

early as possible.

Of the 76 loan defaulters, eight are candidates of the Awami League, 12 of BNP, four of Jatiya Party, two of Gono Forum, five of Bikalpadhara Bangladesh and three of Liberal Democratic Party. The rest are contesting the polls as candidates of Progressive Democratic Party and a few Islamist parties and as independent candidates.

The EC had sent the list of 2,139 parliamentary poll candidates to Bangladesh Bank on Monday. The central bank completed scrutiny of 80 percent of the list as of late last night.

Bangladesh Bank Executive Director

Khondker Mazharul Haque told reporters yesterday that nine teams of the credit information bureau of Bangladesh Bank are working on the matter from morning to night. They worked until 9:00pm on Monday.

The list of the identified loan defaulters obtained from EC sources has Awami League candidates Maj Gen (ret) Abdus Salam (Mymensingh-9), Motahar Hossain (Lalmonirhat-1), Nuruzzaman Ahmed (Lalmonirhat-2), Md Mizanur Rahman (Khulna-2), Shamsul Haque Chowdhury (Chittagong-11), Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury (Feni-2),

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

## Khaleda, Hasina may face off

EC mulls rivals' electoral debate

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The Election Commission (EC) plans to organise electoral debates on crucial issues before the December 29 parliamentary elections with participation of top political leaders. This might bring archrivals Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia face to face.

Election Commissioner Brig Gen (ret) M Sakhawat Hussain yesterday held a meeting with senior officials of Bangladesh Television (BTV), BBC World Service Trust and UK's Department for International Development (DFID) to proceed with the plan.

The meeting discussed different technical aspects of organising the debates and Sakhawat asked the agency officials to prepare proposals on it for further discussion, sources said.

Later, Election Commissioner Sakhawat told The Daily Star that they only held a primary discussion at his office. "It is really a tough task. We will have to work a lot to organise the debate," he said.

If the EC plan succeeds, the face-off between four-party alliance chief BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and AL-led grand

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

## Most parties show poor poll bid

Only AL, BNP have over 300 candidates

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ten political parties have each nominated less than 10 candidates in the upcoming parliamentary elections and their total number of nominees is 48, according to a report prepared by the Election Commission (EC) Secretariat.

Another 11 parties have each nominated less than 50 candidates against the 300 seats in parliament.

The report shows the strength of a number of parties that had rushed to the commission to get registered and qualify to contest the national polls.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1



PHOTO: STAR

Local influential people encroach on the Turag River by filling with sand near Kamarpara Bridge on Tongji-Ashulia road on the outskirts of the capital.

## AL for S Asian initiative to fight terror

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina yesterday said if voted to power she would take an initiative to form an antiterrorism taskforce in South Asia to fight terrorism.

"If voted to power, I'll propose to other South Asian countries to jointly form a South Asian Taskforce to root

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

## BNP reviews nominations

RASHIDUL HASAN and RAKIB HASNET SUMAN

In the wake of severe criticism of the nomination decisions, BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia is now making some changes to the party ticket for the December 29 general election.

A revised list of candidates was already handed to the election officials yesterday while another might be sent today, said BNP sources.

Late at night, Khaleda Zia met some standing committee members including just released Moudud Ahmed to review the nominations.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

## Media totally free during emergency

Says chief adviser

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Adviser (CA) Fakhruddin Ahmed yesterday said the press in Bangladesh is totally free as no restrictive regulation was imposed on the media under the present state of emergency.

He said after his assumption

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4



## McCain visits Dhaka

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

US Senator John McCain, who was the Republican nominee in the recent presidential election, arrived in Dhaka last night as part of a regional visit.

A chartered plane carrying him from New Delhi landed at Zia International Airport at 10:25pm. He is accompanied

SEE PAGE 15 COL 5

## Thai govt dissolved

Court strips PM of his post for vote fraud, outlaws ruling party; airport to reopen

AFP, Bangkok

A Thai court stripped Prime Minister Somchai Wongsawat of his post and outlawed the ruling party yesterday, prompting jubilant anti-government protesters to lift a blockade of Bangkok's main airport.

Party leaders quickly vowed to form another government under a new banner but without Somchai, who was barred from politics five years by the Constitutional Court in a vote fraud case.

The move was welcomed by the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD), which occupied Suvarnabhumi airport a week ago to cap a months-long campaign to oust Somchai, the brother-in-law of exiled former premier

Thaksin Shinawatra.

"My duty is over. I am now an ordinary citizen," Somchai, 61, told reporters in the northern city of Chiang Mai from where he has been governing since the blockade began.

Under a military constitution adopted after a 2006 coup against then-premier Thaksin, any political party in which a single executive is convicted of vote fraud must be dissolved and all executives banned.

Somchai, a former lawyer, spent less than three months in power, beset by the royalist protesters who accused his government of acting as a proxy for their nemesis Thaksin and of being hostile to the monarchy.

"As the court decided to dissolve the People

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

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