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## UN ready to help try war criminals

Resident coordinator in Dhaka says

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

United Nations (UN) Resident Coordinator Renata Lok Dessalieu yesterday said the UN is ready to assist Bangladesh in trying war criminals.

"But we are yet to get any official proposal from the government," she said while talking to reporters at the Secretariat after a meeting with the Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Shafique Ahmed.

Replying to questions from reporters, Renata said different countries formed war crimes tribunal to try war criminals and Bangladesh can also talk to the experts and seek assistance from the UN.

Renata, however, said she thinks the present government would take initiatives to try the war criminals as it was mentioned in their election manifesto.

She said the UN would assist the government to

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# Lies in the Truth Commission

## All but one told lies, got away with corruption

EMRAN HOSSAIN

The Truth and Accountability Commission (Tac) has allegedly allowed many graft suspects to be spared prosecution by surrendering wealth way less than what they were found to have 'amassed illegally'.

Despite wide discrepancies between findings of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) probe into assets of those accused of graft and the confessional statements made for clemency, the truth commission did not ask for ACC's views, said sources involved in the anti-graft drive.

Of those listed by ACC as corruption suspects, 270 sought exemption from prosecution in return for voluntary disclosure and surrender of their ill-gotten wealth.

Of their statements to Tac, only one's tallies with findings of the ACC investigation. The rest vary widely from the probe outcomes.

Still, the truth commission, which does not have the investigation authority,

issued them with clemency certificates, said the sources.

Contacted, Tac Chairman Justice Habibur Rahman Khan last night said, "There's no provision requiring us to seek any information or explanation from any source, be it Anti-Corruption Commission or National Coordination Committee."

"We heard what the applicants confessed, and made our decisions. That's all we can do according to the law concerned."

The 270 graft suspects have admitted to having ill-gotten wealth worth only Tk 28 crore before Tac, whereas ACC investigation revealed they have assets worth no less than Tk 400 crore.

Around 130 of them own more than Tk 1 crore each while some own as much as 17 crore each.

Sources in ACC said the amount of ill-gained assets held by the 270 could have gone much higher had the investigation been done properly.

Tac, which began functioning on August 3 last year and packed up early January, has imposed fines of Tk 36 crore

on the applicants. Of the amount, about Tk 34 crore has been deposited in the state coffers, said the commission chairman.

The truth commission was set up for five months under Voluntary Disclosure Ordinance 2008 with an aim to lessen the burden of the judiciary that is overwhelmed by the number of graft cases.

According to the ordinance, a person can seek to be excused graft proceedings by disclosing to Tac the wealth earned beyond known sources of income and depositing those in the public exchequer.

It says if anyone conceals anything while making disclosure, an investigation or action measures can be taken in that regard.

ACC Director General Col Hanif Iqbal said, "The objective of establishing the truth commission has been negated considerably."

"The graft suspects did not avail themselves of the opportunity with right spirit. Instead, they got off the hook by taking advantage of the provision."

Meanwhile, ACC officials said they will

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## Govt moves to stamp out terrorism

### PM orders fresh probe into major grenade, bomb attacks

M ABUL KALAM AZAD and HASAN JAHID TUSHER

The government will launch a fresh investigation of terrorist activities including major grenade and bomb attacks perpetrated during the BNP-Jamaat-led four-party alliance government's regime, in an effort to identify the masterminds and their national and international links.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday instructed the home ministry to take immediate steps in that direction, so the government

may try the masterminds and stamp out terrorism from the country, sources in the government said.

Presiding over a cabinet meeting in Bangladesh Secretariat yesterday, Hasina, also the Awami League (AL) president, directed the minister and state minister for home affairs to submit a complete report mentioning names of the masterminds and their links.

At the meeting, the home ministry submitted a report on terrorism which failed to impress the prime minister as she felt it was

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## WELTH STASHED ABROAD ACC to get more UK help

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) will work with foreign countries to detect and recover the money siphoned off and assets made abroad illegally.

"We are determined to detect the illegal money stored abroad and assets made outside the country... We will work with foreign countries and make necessary arrangements both bilaterally and multilaterally to detect and

recover the money siphoned off and assets made abroad illegally.

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## BTTB staff gobble up Tk 52cr, reveals ACC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Employees of Bangladesh Telecommunications Company Ltd (BTCL), formerly Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB), misappropriated about Tk 52.55 crore between 2000-01 and 2007-08.

A taskforce of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) launched a probe at two BTTB revenue offices and found that the employees indulged in rampant graft by allocating money in supply and service sectors unnecessarily, making fake bills and illegal transport fares.

ACC Director General (Admin) Col Hanif Iqbal revealed the ACC findings at a press briefing at the ACC headquarters yesterday. He said

the ACC investigation team worked in BTCL Revenue-1 and Revenue-2 offices from where revenue collection is organised across the country and unearthed the facts.

The Revenue-2 office collects revenue in the capital through four offices, while the Revenue-1 collects tax from across the country by 11 offices.

Of the total embezzled amount, Tk 5.23 crore was spent in addition to the budget during the corresponding time at Revenue-1 office.

The investigators found that fake bills and vouchers were prepared by showing employment of thousands of labourers to arrange files, cleaning pieces of furniture, composing and storing goods in the office.

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## 25 missing as trawler sinks in Meghna

A CORRESPONDENT, Chandpur

Twenty-five day labourers went missing as a trawler capsized in Meghna River in Dhashani area of Matlab upazila early yesterday.

Police Super of the district Krishna Pada Roy said the earth-laden trawler Sabir-1 carrying 50 day-labourers sank in the river at about 3:00am when a sand-laden trawler coming from opposite direction hit its front side.

Some 25 labourers managed to swim ashore while the rest 25 went missing. The victims, mostly hailed from Chatmohor upazila in Pabna

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## Reporter faces contempt charge for protecting news source

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday issued a rule upon Nasrin Akhter, a reporter of the weekly Shirsho Kagoj, to explain why punitive measure should not be taken against her for not disclosing the sources of a report titled 'A High Court judge whitens black money'.

An HC bench comprising Justice ABM Khairul Haque and Justice Md Abdul Hye issued the rule as the reporter has not revealed the source of the report as per an earlier HC directive.

The bench also fixed January 27 for hearing of the rule.

Advocate Manzil Murshid recently submitted an affidavit

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PHOTO: STAR

CID officials collect evidence from Railway Bhaban in the capital yesterday after 56 rooms of the building were ransacked by criminals.

## Break-in at Railway HQ

### 56 rooms ransacked in Dhaka, documents taken away from Ctg office

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A group of unknown criminals broke into Railway Bhaban in the capital Sunday night and ransacked 56 rooms while another group took documents from the Eastern Zone Office of Bangladesh Railway in Chittagong.

Government officials and different law enforcement and intelligence agency personnel suspect that the criminals went into the offices to steal important documents.

Echoing their views, Communications Minister Syed Abul Hossain said, "Certain staffs of these buildings might have committed the crime in association with outsiders."

He said, "The criminals might have done this to damage the image of the government as well as to prove that law and order situation in the country is not under the government's control."

He said, "Even though I am not sure, it may be that the criminals were assigned to take files to hide evidence of corruption."

Bangladesh Railway suspended seven of its employees for failure and negligence in discharging their duties in Dhaka

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## Decision on 298 frozen accounts in a week

Says Muhith

UNB, Dhaka

The government is going to take decision within a week about the fate of 298 frozen bank accounts of politicians, businessmen and bureaucrats who were sued on corruption or tax evasion charges during the rule of the immediate past caretaker government.

"I hope the decision regarding the frozen bank accounts will come within a week," Finance Minister AMA Muhith told the news agency yesterday.

He however indicated that it is a critical issue, which will require to be settled through inter-ministerial effort, and even with concurrence of the highest level of the government.

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## Dispute in leaderships makes BCL unstable

### Tenure of all 87 organisational committees expires long ago

NAJMUL ALAM NOBIN

Bangladesh Chhatra League's (BCL) failure in forming new committees of its district and university units have led to a series of intra-BCL clashes in several educational institutions across the country, BCL sources said.

The tenure of all the 87 BCL organisational district committees including the central one expired a long ago, said the sources.

Disputes over leadership in the BCL units have emerged in absence of new committees. This led to over 20 incidents of intra-BCL clashes in several universities and other educa-

tional institutions across the country in the last 15 days.

In an attempt to facilitate young leadership, Awami League President Sheikh Hasina in 2006 introduced an age limit of 29 years for remaining as a BCL leader. The present central committee was formed the same year maintaining the provision.

But the central executive committee formed on April 4, 2006 with Mahmud Hasan Roton as president and Mahfuzul Haider Chowdhury Roton as general secretary did not implement it during formation of BCL unit committees.

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## Axing not helping Contestants defy AL order, stick to upazila race

SHARIFUL ISLAM and SHAKHAWAT LITON

Fahmi Golondaz Babel, a chairman aspirant from Gafargaon upazila in Mymensingh, was expelled from Awami League (AL) for refusing to quit the race following 'directive of party President and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.'

Like Babel, many grassroots-level leaders were axed from AL as part of the party high command's actions against the dissenters contesting the upazila polls, ignoring party decisions.

Mymensingh district AL unit president Principal Matuir Rahman and Captain (ret'd) Giasuddin Ahmed on January 17 in a letter to Babel asked him to lend support to Alal Ahmed as the AL-backed candidate for the upazila polls.

The letter, a copy of which The Daily Star obtained, reads 'If he fails to comply with the decision he would be expelled from the party as per the directive of AL President and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.'

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## 78pc UZ contestants' tax records dubious

### They do not pay tax or give tax info to RO

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Around 78 percent contestants in the election to 64 upazila parishads either do not pay income tax or did not provide their tax information to the returning officers and half the contestants are or were accused in criminal cases.

Contestants' submission of income tax information to the returning officer is mandatory.

Analysing information submitted by 1,083 candidates in three upazila parishad posts of the upazilas, Shushashoner Jannoy Nagorik (Shujan--Citizens for Good Governance) in a report yesterday revealed that out of the 444 chairman candidates only 147 (33.10 percent)

provided information about their tax-paying status and of them only 71 actually pay income tax.

As per the information given in the affidavits, 29 candidates own properties worth over Tk 1 crore each and one of them have assets worth Tk 14.40 crore.

Among the 1,083 candidates, 372 are vice-chairman aspirants and 267 are women vice-chairman candidates in reserved seats.

Only 6.74 percent women vice-chairman and 19.35 percent vice-chairman candidates submitted information about their tax-paying status to the returning officers.

In the report, Shujan also said over 50 percent

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