

Bail rejection
Lawyers in
Satkhira
confine
magistrate

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Khulna*

A group of lawyers on Monday confined first class magistrate Shajahan Ali of Satkhira Court for rejecting the bail petition of an accused, court sources said.

Eyewitnesses said that after a long hearing, accused Hafizur Rahman was denied bail by the magistrate.

Angered by the decision, the lawyers who moved the petition got into an argument with the magistrate and forced him to leave the court. Back in his chamber, magistrate Shajahan Ali was verbally abused by the lawyers who also broke window panes of the office and threatened the magistrate with dire consequences for rejecting the bail petition.

Later, a fresh hearing was arranged at 4:00pm following intervention by the ADC (Gen) and ADC (Rev) and the accused was granted bail at 4:45pm.

Advocate Mohammad Shah Alam, who led the angry lawyers against the magistrate, said he was compelled to resort to violence failing to cope with the magistrate's high-handedness. Alam is general secretary of Satkhira District Bar Association and a front-ranking leader of Workers' Party.

ADC (Gen) Mohammad Gaus told this correspondent over phone that the bail petition of the accused had to be granted to bring the situation under control. He however said the lawyers who ransacked the magistrate's chamber would face legal action.

Governance, EC
funded projects
discussed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A specialised sub-group of the European Commission-Bangladesh Joint Commission yesterday discussed governance and implementation of government programmes and projects funded by the European Commission.

The sub-group on social development cooperation also debated government's development priorities in the years ahead, says a press release.

Another sub-group of the joint commission discussed on Monday the separation of the judiciary from the executive, access to justice, prison reforms, custodial deaths, death penalty and the situation of the Rohingya refugees.

The sub-group on governance and human rights highlighted Bangladesh's adherence to international human-rights instruments and the prospect of making it a focus country within the context of the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights.

The sub-groups were established by the European Commission-Bangladesh Joint Commission in November 2001. The joint commission sub-groups on trade and trade-related issues and on economic development cooperation also met in Dhaka last September.

AES set to get string-free sell-off nod

SHARIER KHAN

The government is set to allow the US company AES to sell its two power projects to British company CDC Globeleq but misses out on managing possible benefit for the nation through re-negotiation.

As per contract, AES cannot sell more than 49 per cent of its shares of these projects -- Meghnaghat 450 MW and Haripur 360 MW -- in the first eight years of its commercial operation. Having lobbied for over six months, the company is finally on the verge of getting the necessary modification to the contracts done by the government without giving away any concession for the favour.

Experts at the Power Development Board (PDB) felt this was an ideal occasion for the government to rectify a few flaws in the agreement and implementation

contracts of Meghnaghat and Haripur projects. The experts had discussed these mistakes at different meetings, but the government actions showed it cared little about rising to the occasion, sources said.

The power ministry last month formed a two-member committee headed by the director general of power cell to decide about the plea of cash-strapped AES. The committee then recommended in its April 23 report that the selling and transfer of the projects to Globeleq should be go ahead.

Ironically, the committee at the same time advised the government to make sure that Globeleq, which was formed about a year ago and lacked experience in running large-scale power plants, abides by the eight-year no-selling condition.

The AES Meghnaghat 450 MW project began commercial opera-

tion in November last year while the Haripur 360 MW has been operating for more than a year.

Negotiators of the financially strong Globeleq visited Dhaka in last November and started talks with government officials and high-ups.

With the sell-off appearing inevitable, PDB experts had discussed the possibility of rectifying some weak terms and conditions in the process of this unprecedented changeover.

PDB experts want the AES to cancel the 'priority agreements' with the government that gives it first priority right among current and future independent power plants (IPPs) in all respects including getting paid, getting dis-

p a t c h e d ,

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BNP to curtail
programmes on
Zia to check
abuse of BTV

UNB, *Dhaka*

Ruling BNP has decided to refrain from making "over publicity" of its founder late President Ziaur Rahman through Bangladesh Television, party sources said.

In a recent meeting ahead of President Zia's 22nd anniversary of death on May 30, the party high command took the decision with a view to come out of the trend of 'abuse' of state-run media, the sources said.

Chaired by BNP secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, the meeting observed that any 'show-off' about Ziaur Rahman using the BTV might create annoyance among the public.

Attended by party joint secretaries, the meeting decided to reduce the number of programmes to be telecast in BTV on Zia's death anniversary on May 30.

Party's joint secretary general-1 Tarique Rahman, eldest son of late President Ziaur Rahman, played a

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AL to revive
thana units

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Main opposition Awami League (AL) is to revive its eight thana level units of the city.

The reorganisation began yesterday with a Tejgaon thana unit workers' meeting at a city community centre. Another such meeting of the Sabubagh thana unit was also held yesterday.

Earlier, eight committee against each parliamentary constituency of the metropolitan area were formed with party presidium members and senior central leaders to reorganise the units by next month.

By placing new leadership, party high-ups are hoping to launch fresh movement against the government's 'misrule', a leader said at the Tejgaon thana unit meeting.

The AL leaders urged workers to strengthen the party at the grass roots.

The BNP-Jamaat-e-Islami regime is inviting its own downfall

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Border talks
with Myanmar
begin

BSS, *Dhaka*

A three-day director general level meeting between Bangladesh and Myanmar began in Dhaka yesterday.

On the first day, both sides emphasised the need for holding regular flag meeting between the commanders of the two forces to discuss the border problems, BDR sources said.

Director General of Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) Maj Gen M Jahangir Alam Chowdhury led a 12-member team while Director General of Immigration Headquarters of Myanmar U Maung Htay headed a seven-member delegation.

Issues relating to cross-border smuggling, problems faced by the Bangladeshi fishermen in the Bay of Bengal and matters of mutual interest came up for discussion yesterday, the sources said.

A joint "Record of Discussion" will be signed by both the sides on May 22.



PHOTO: STAR

Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury leads a procession in Chittagong yesterday to celebrate a court verdict that ruled illegal the approval of construction of two private terminals at Patenga and Narayanganj by the Stevedoring Services of America.

Poor food, lodging led to marine cadets' walk-out Probe report also blames it on corruption

SHAHIDUL ISLAM, *Chittagong*

Corruption, poor living condition and substandard food were what led 56 cadets to leave the Chittagong Marine Academy on May 4, says a probe report.

The report, submitted to the director-general (shipping) yesterday, also accused four academy officials of corruption and financial irregularities.

Chief Education Officer Abul Hashem Bhuiyan, Library-in-Charge and Store Officer ABM

Abdul Quadir, Accounts Officer Kabir Ahmad Rashed and Development Officer Nazir Ahmad stand accused in the report prepared by Captain Habibur Rahman after a ten-day investigation.

The report based on interviews of academy officials, present and former cadets and staffers included written statements in which most cadets labelled the four officials 'four-Ali Babu'.

A probe committee recommended minor punishment to the 56 cadets of the 38th batch for breaking discipline and stressed

that they should be brought back to the academy soon.

On May 4, the cadets walked out of the academy in a procession, with all high officials including the commandant and the deputy commandant around. The cadets vandalised the hostels and dining halls and damaged the notice board of the administrative building.

Earlier, the marine academy expelled four cadets of the 38th batch for alleged physical and men

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Domestic helps held in killing of Panni's wife

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Four people including three domestic helps of former deputy speaker Humayun Khan Panni's residence were arrested for their suspected involvement in the killing of his wife Sultana Khan Panni.

Police produced the four--Alauddin Munshi, the cook, Mohammad Rony, domestic help and his wife Ruby, also a cook, and Mohammad Mizan, tailor -- before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka with a seven-day remand prayer. The court placed them on five days' remand for interrogation.

The victim's elder daughter, Sonia Khan Panni, filed a case with the Dhanmondi Police Station, accusing unidentified killers. Police suspect that the crime was committed by someone very close to the family, but the members of the family refused to comment on the matter.

Sonia could not be contacted for her comments. She also did not talk to a group of journalists who went to their Dhanmondi residence at about 4:00am yesterday.

Morshed Khan Panni, a former MP and nephew of the victim, told the journalists that Sonia was sleeping.

The former MP could not confirm whether any valuables had been stolen from his aunt's residence.

Khan criticised the newspaper reports that quoted police as claiming that the family members were involved in the crime. He said it was the job of police to find out the killers. He also said the family wants to see the killers brought to justice very soon.

Someone made a call from Sultana's mobile at about 3:30am on the night of occurrence. "We asked the cellular company for a copy of the report, but the company replied that the copy had been taken away by the investigators," Khan said.

Tina Khan Panni, Sultana's younger daughter, arrived here from Karachi yesterday, while son Sadat Khan Panni will reach Dhaka Thursday morning. The family members have not yet decided whether she will be buried in Dhaka or Tangail.

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Muggers stab
man to death

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Muggers stabbed to death a young man at Amin Bazaar truck stand in the early hours of yesterday.

Mohammad Aslam, 19, was stopped by a gang of muggers while he was returning home at about 2:00am.

They ordered him to hand over his valuables but Aslam refused to act. The gang stabbed him in the chest and snatched away his belongings.

Fatally injured Aslam was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where the on-duty doctors declared him dead. The body was sent to the hospital morgue for autopsy.

A case was filed with the Savar Police Station.



UNDER SIEGE... Residents of the Pyaridas Road in Old Dhaka find their only thoroughfare dug out for the last three months and the Dhaka City Corporation takes no interest to rebuild it.

PHOTO: STAR

Pakistan bans Hizbul Leaders restricted from entering PoK

PTI, *Islamabad*

In a significant move to facilitate talks with India, Pakistan has banned the militant group Hizbul Mujahideen and said the outfit's leaders, including its chief Syed Salahuddin, have been restricted from entering PoK.

Although the outfit has been banned, no restriction has been imposed on movement of its leaders outside Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir (PoK) but they could not conduct their organisational activities in the country, Interior Minister Faisal Saleh Hayat said.

At the same time, Hayat said the government of PoK has already imposed a ban on the entry of Hizb leaders into the territory, which effectively meant that its militants would not cross Jammu and Kashmir at will. He, however, did

not say when the outfit was banned.

Pakistani government has already banned the entry of leaders of Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Muhammad into PoK.

The news of ban on Hizbul Mujahideen followed a series of statements by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee that Pakistan should crackdown on the militant groups and destroy their camps to create conducive atmosphere for talks between the two countries.

Meanwhile, Hizb leaders claimed that they have not received any orders banning them, and Sardar Qayyum Khan, the leader of Muslim Conference which governed PoK, also said that no ban was imposed on Hizbul.

Denying Hayat's statement, he said that PoK government has not imposed any restrictions on the

entry of Hizb leaders.

The ban on Hizbul whom Pakistan describes as an "indigenous" Kashmiri militant group was significant as it was the last of Pakistan-based militant groups to be banned.

Hizb was also recently banned by the US ahead of the visit of Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage to India and Pakistan.

Hayat said so far the government has banned the activities of seven Kashmiri militant organisations.

Besides Hizbul, the militant organisations that have been banned so far are Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Muhammad, Harkatul Mujahideen and three other sectarian groups. Lashkar and Jaish, considered to be made up of P a k i s t a n i

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