

GS, 5 other top BCL leaders held

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front organisations were also arrested, apart from run of the mill criminals.

Meanwhile, the home ministry said members of the armed forces arrested 43 people on charge of different crimes and recovered eight firearms, 638 bullets and three magazines of bullets in the 24 hours preceding 6:00am yesterday.

During the same time, police and Rab arrested 1,816 people including 24 who had already been convicted of crimes and sentenced in trials, and 1,020 who had arrest warrants issued against them. The law enforcers recovered 27 firearms, 13 other weapons and 724 bullets.

THE CAPITAL

The army picked up BCL GS Roton and its vice-presidents Lavlu Mollah Shishu and Mizanur Rahman, Joint Secretary Abul Kalam, Organising Secretary (OS) Khairul Hasan Jewel, and Assistant Secretary Tahmidur Rahman Kajol while they were going towards Shahidullah Hall of Dhaka University (DU) around 2:00am yesterday.

When the troops signalled the microbes they were in to halt at Dowel Chhatar, they sped up defining the signal prompting the army personnel to chase and detain them.

They were first taken to an army camp at DU Gymnasium and later to Shahbagh police station (PS). However, the six were later shifted to Ramna PS for security reasons.

Meantime, a Dhaka court yesterday placed Anwar Afzal, elder brother of Monwar Hossain Dipjol, who had been arrested on Tuesday on charge of possessing illegal firearms and ammunition, on a one-day remand for interrogation, turning down his bail prayer. The order was issued after Mirpur police sought a five-day remand.

Two separate cases were also filed under the Arms Act against his brothers Dipjol and Shahadat Hossain with Mirpur PS.

NARSINGHIDI

The army raided the residence of late Shamsuddin Ahmed, Eshaq, and Rokeya Ahmed Lucky, Eshaq's wife, both of whom had been BNP lawmakers, in Bouakur area in the town around 2:00am yesterday. The troops recovered an unlicensed revolver, 25 shotgun bullets and two machetes from the house.

They arrested four sons of Eshaq - Harunur Rashid, Kabir Hossain, Mohammad Ali and Kennedy. Kabir and Ali are leaders of local Juba Dal while Kennedy of the local JCD.

Police said all the four sons of the former BNP lawmaker couple have cases against them in connection with criminal offences including possessing illegal firearms, and extortion.

After the troops handed them over to police, a case was filed against them under the Arms Act and police

sent them to court.

Meantime, the army personnel arrested Narsingdi Municipality Chairman Lokman Hossain, who is also the general secretary of the town unit of AL, from his house in Bashali around 2:00am.

The troops later handed him over to police. Police said he was sent to jail to be in detention for one month.

An accused in the murder case of former municipality commissioner Manik Mia, Lokman had secured bail earlier in the five cases he is facing, said his relatives.

CHITTAGONG

The army picked up eight persons including a Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh-backed union parishad (UP) chairman Mezbah Uddin, an AL-backed dockworkers' leader, and a BCL leader.

The troops arrested Mezbah of Mirer Sarai upazila from his house while Chittagong Port Dock Workers Union GS Abdul Ahad was arrested from the portarea in the afternoon.

They also picked up Ahmadul Ullah, GS of Chandaanish upazila BCL, from his house at Barupara under the upazila in the early hours of yesterday.

The other arrestees are Mezamul Haq Manik, Abul Basher, Md Tanjid, Nurul Islam alias Ledu Dakat, and Nurul Amin. Ledu is accused in eight different criminal cases while Tanjid is accused in five.

GAZIPUR

The army arrested AL-backed chairman of Baria UP Akhtaruzzaman Sukkur from near Muktijoddha Sankar office in the town yesterday afternoon.

Akhtaruzzaman had been removed from the post of the UP chairman on allegation of corruption and he appealed with higher court against the removal.

The troops also arrested one Abu Mia, a labourer in Gazipur food depot.

Rab arrested an alleged criminal named Masud from Harinal area.

KHULNA

A joint force arrested Rampal upazila unit BNP Vice-president Khwaja Moinuddin Akhtar, who is also the chairman of Ujalpur UP, yesterday noon.

They also arrested Abdul Gaffar, an associate of Mohammad Ali.

RANGPUR

Rab arrested district BCL Office Secretary Nayan around 11:00am from a house at Khalipatani under Gangachara upazila and recovered a US-made revolver and two bullets.

During primary interrogation, Nayan disclosed the names of his two associates - Yusuf and Mintu of the town. Rab recovered a revolver from Yusuf's possession.

MANIKGANJ

The army arrested Alamgir Hossain, Singair upazila unit president of Juba League, and Sheikh Kabir Ahmed, upazila unit organising secretary of Juba Dal, Tuesday night.

They also arrested four drug peddlers.

TANGAIL

Raiding the Thana Para residence of Sohel Khan, commissioner of ward no 13 of Tangail municipality, around 3:00am the army arrested him.

Earlier, the troops arrested Hatem Ali Shikdar, commissioner of ward no 8 in Sakhipur municipality on Tuesday.

COX'S BAZAR

Navy personnel raided Teknaf Sadar union parishad office in Cox's Bazar and arrested the UP Chairman and local pourashava BNP President Jafar Alam on Tuesday, reports UBN.

suspects in separate drives in Rajshahi yesterday.

Police yesterday evening arrested Charghat Municipality BNP President Kaimuddin, who is accused in several criminal cases filed by local people and the authority of Sarda Police Academy.

In a block raid in Bagmara upazila, police picked up 36 persons for their suspected involvement in underground politics. However, 21 of them were released after interrogation.

The arrestees include Convenor of Tahirpur Municipality BCL Delbar Hossain, and Shahidul Islam, a teacher of Barupara High School.

In Durgapur upazila, police and the army picked up 25 persons including Jubo Dal supporters Mahbub and Enamul.

They raided the houses of Durgapur upazila BNP President Ashraf Kabir Bulu, GS of the same unit of BNP and municipal chairman Sajidur Rahman Montu, and Jubo dal leader Enamul Haque, but failed to arrest any one.

CHANDPUR
Ten people including district Shechhebaseb Dal Organising Secretary Alam Khan, Algi UP Chairman Harunur Rashid, who is also the joint secretary of Hainchar upazila BNP, were arrested during a joint drive by the army and police in the early hours of yesterday.

COMILLA

At least 10 leaders and activists of both AL and BNP were arrested during an army-led drive in Comilla in the early hours of yesterday. The arrestees include AL activists Lutfur Rahman and Masud, BCL leader Kayum, Moniruzzaman Monir and Md Jashimuddin, local Jatiya Party leader Masum, and Jubo Dal cadres Shahin and Akther Hossain.

SATKHIRA

Army personnel arrested Mohammad Ali and Masum Billah Shahin, president and organising secretary of the district Jatiyatabadi Krishai Dal respectively, from Matiadanga area Tuesday night.

They also arrested Abdul Gaffar, an associate of Mohammad Ali.

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India wants

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Asked about the topic of discussion with Hasina, he said they discussed bilateral issues including business and trade. "We want the bilateral relations develop more."

Briefing the reporters on the meeting, Kazi Zafarullah, AL presidium member, said the AL chief and the Indian envoy discussed a range of issues including the economy, land ports, the Ganges water treaty and Chittagong Hill Tracts peace treaty. He hoped the bilateral relations between the two countries would be strengthened further through discussion.

"An election with the participation of all parties would be acceptable to them (India)," Zafarullah said, adding that AL informed the envoy that it wants the election to be held as early as possible after overhauling the Election Commission and preparing an accurate voter list.

The Shujan members requested the caretaker government to ensure neutrality of the law enforcers and administration and security for the minority and women.

"Many elected representatives of the people, government officers and those close to the centre of power have been looting public wealth for a long time. Such illegal activities cannot be checked in future also if these people are not punished now," Shujan said, urging action against identified criminals.

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Obaidul Quader, acting general secretary and Syed Abul Hossain, international affairs secretary of AL were also present at the meeting.

North faces

FROM PAGE 16
Informed The Daily Star that in February vessels might not be able to move if the water level continues to drop at the current rate. Currently the water level is dropping an inch a day on an average. BIWTA sources said adding that a minimum required level is being maintained through dredging of the river bed on Bagabari-Kazirhat road.

But still oil tankers are not being able to navigate through the area with full capacity load, instead they are carrying only 60 percent of capacities.

Dredging is not sufficient for maintaining the required water level in February due to a shortage of modern dredgers, said an official of BIWTA.

BIWTA officials said the corporation decided to supply 2,84,00,000 litres of diesel less than the actual estimated requirement of 7,70,90,000 litres for the month of January.

Referring to a recent television programme where the ACC chairman predicted that 50-60 percent votes would be cast in the January 22 elections and the BNP-led alliance would come to power again, Prof Muzaffer said, "If he [Justice Sultan] believes so, it becomes clear that he dares not investigate the corruption of the

Cash-strapped mine

FROM PAGE 1
is the main customer of the mine. Both projects were built under Chinese supplier's credit.

One of the two units of this power plant has remained shut for several months due to coal crisis. The other unit is currently operating using coal in its stock and may be shut down in a month or so due to coal shortage.

The authorities claim that the mine may resume operation from mid-February.

But already the PDB last month floated a tender for importing coal in the face of such uncertainty.

"The PDB is now set to import 25,000 tonnes of coal worth Tk 12 crore from India. This coal is good enough to run one of the two units of the plant for only 25 days," said a PDB source.

The Indian coal is costing the PDB about \$68 per tonne as against Barapukuria's \$60 a tonne. Ironically, the PDB remains unable to pay the mining authorities about Tk 50 crore for purchasing coal.

Quality of the Indian coal however is much lower than Barapukuria's, and may not serve its purpose efficiently, the source pointed out.

The coal mine stopped production following a series of tussles between the developer of the mine and the government over various payments, Petrobangla sources said.

Both the mine and the plant, built by Chinese companies led by CMC, contain hundreds of flaws due to corrupt handling by the past three governments, especially the two led by BNP.

The highly unfavourable supplier's credit was pushed by the Hosaf group, led by Moazzem Hossain, in the early nineties, and then the energy minister Mosharraf Hossain (immediate past health minister) made the deal happen. Hosaf has been representing the builder of the mine and power plant, and consultants of both the projects, making it impossible for the government to ensure their proper implementation.

As a result of this deal, the mine and the power projects turned out to be perennial loss making ventures and white elephants for the nation. Bangladesh is facing difficulties in paying instalments and other costs of this project.

The Petrobangla through the Barapukuria Coal Mine Company Ltd (BCML) makes payments for the mine, and the PDB is responsible for payment for the power plant.

Petrobangla paid the CMC Tk 600 crore in four instalments between 1995 and 2004. It paid the fifth instalment of Tk 62 crore in October last year, a year behind the schedule. Petrobangla is supposed to pay the sixth instalment of Tk 100 crore in March.

In addition to timely payment of instalments, Petrobangla also owes the CMC annual charge for the service contract, plus a huge amount for procuring mining equipment.

Despite strong diplomatic and political influence of CMC and Hosaf, profit-making entity Petrobangla did not have cash in its hand, and the situation turned into a hotch-potch.

Petrobangla annually earns nearly Tk 3,000 crore, which is almost entirely

taken by the finance ministry.

Secondly, the PDB owes Petrobangla nearly Tk 50 crore as arrears for purchase of coal from the mine. Despite repeated reminders, the PDB could not pay that money, sources mentioned.

Again, the PDB is suffering from an acute fund shortage due to wrong government policies, and while it is absorbing an annual loss of over Tk 8,50 crore a year, it is not getting hundreds of crores of taka in arrears from Desa and other bulk consumers.

The immediate past government did not even try to address this financial insidipence.

After the CMC stopped coal production in October last, Petrobangla arranged funds for the fifth instalment and paid it. But the CMC still did not resume production as it asked for money for procurement of mining equipment on behalf of the BCML, and other extra costs related to the mine's development.

"There is no contract with the CMC

for procurement of mining equipment.

The CMC brought these tools on request from the BCML. In addition, the CMC that was awarded the service contract in 2005 has not actually completed the initial development of the mine. Yet, service contract should follow the development phase.

Besides, there are many other contractual defects," said a competent source describing the hotch-potch in the project.

"But at this stage, we have no option but to resume coal and power production," he added.

Recently, Petrobangla arranged and paid the CMC arrears for purchase of production materials worth about Tk 20-25 crore.

Sources said Petrobangla is now arranging the fee of CMC's service contract worth about \$1.5 million.

On January 14, BCML Managing Director Aziz Khan, who has been appointed from Petrobangla recently to resolve this crisis, held a meeting with the caretaker government's energy adviser Tapan Chowdhury.

"We hope to resume coal production from the mine by mid-February," said Aziz Khan, when contacted over phone. "The deadlock