

Ex-BNP MP Salahuddin

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police later. Of the rest arrested by police and Rab, 16 are accused in the Arms Act, two in Explosive Substances Act, 27 were convicted in different cases while 791 faced warrants of arrest.

SALAHUDDIN'S SURRENDER

Salahuddin appeared before the court of Metropolitan Magistrate Mamun Al Rashid with his lawyers at around 12:45pm in the scheduled hearings of two cases filed against him under the Arms Act and Special Powers Act.

The former BNP MP earlier met his lawyer at his chamber near the Court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Dhaka at around 11:00am to talk about his surrender.

The defence lawyers prayed for bail in the cases saying that the three swords, one knife and currencies of US, Saudi Arabia, Thailand that had been seized from a showcase at Salahuddin's house were part of his collection.

"Keeping the foreign currencies and the weapons at my house was in no way illegal," Salahuddin told the court.

The prosecution opposed the bail prayer.

Hearing both the sides, the court ordered to send him to Dhaka Central Jail. He was later taken to jail in a police prison van.

On February 4, the security forces seized the weapons and foreign currencies along with nine diplomatic passports and eight other Bangladeshi passports, 23 mobile phone sets, videocassettes, compact disks, shotgun licence when they raided Salahuddin's house at Kadamtola in Shyamnagar to arrest him.

TANGAIL ARRESTS

The security forces arrested Shamim-al-Mansoor Siddiqui alias Azad, Siddiqui, younger brother of Krish Sramik Janata League (KSJL) president Abdul Kader Siddiqui, at Ichhapur village under Kalihati upazila in the early hours yesterday.

Tipped off, the security forces cordoned off a house in the village and captured him from there.

Azad, who has been on the run since the launching of the joint forces crackdown, faces 26 criminal cases including three for murder in Tangail Sadar Police Station.

He was involved in bid-manipulation of tenders at different government departments including Roads and Highways Department (RHD) in Tangail and piled up wealth of crores of taka within a very short time, police said.

Two executive engineers of RHD were forced to leave Tangail in 2005 after Azad threatened them with death for not following his instructions, RHD sources said. He also beat up a sub-assistant engineer of the department on August 22, 2005 when he resisted Azad's men from digging up earth damaging the Tangail-Madhpur Road, they added.

Azad announced to contest January 22 polls from Tangail-4 (Kalihati) constituency as a KSJL candidate.

The joint forces also held Azad's brother AL leader Abdul Latif Siddiqui at Kalihati upazila yesterday.

On January 30, the joint forces detained Azad's elder brother Murad Siddiqui, who also faces 23 criminal cases including three for murder, from Kalibari area in Tangail town.

BOGRA ARRESTS

Dupchanchia BNP leader Jahangir Alam was picked up by the joint forces at Poura Bhaban yesterday noon. He is accused in several criminal cases filed with Dupchanchia and Kahalou police stations.

Meantime, BNP district unit GS Saiful Islam and businessman Shokrana, who were held on Sunday for misappropriating government relief materials, were sent to Bogra Jail yesterday morning with a month's detention. Another case will be filed against Shokrana shortly for his alleged involvement in hoarding over 52,000 bags of lentil, police said.

Shokrana was allegedly involved in several murders including that of freedom fighter Anwar Haque Anu, but the cases have been stayed due to political pressure, police sources said.

SYLHET ARRESTS

The joint forces picked up district AL GS Iftekhar Hossain Shamim from an inaugural function of a market in Fenchuganj upazila yesterday morning.

Earlier on Sunday night, the joint forces detained chairman of Chhatak municipality Abul Kalam Chowdhury, who faces the allegations of harbouring criminal groups and grabbing public land.

The law enforcers also held Khadimara Union Parishad (UP) Chairman Iqbal Hossain the same night, who was later released on bail.

Former chairman of Kuchai UP Dara Miah was arrested yesterday afternoon on charges of grabbing private and public land.

The joint forces also arrested Jalalabad Gas CBA leader Golam Hamid Babul and JCD activists Ali Akbar, Zakaria and Zakir Hossain.

The Rab men in another raid caught JCD men Manik, Chanchal

BSF kills 2

UNB, Naogaon

and Mostafa from South Surma area yesterday afternoon.

The law enforcers also detained UP member Abdul Qadir and Makku Miah on charges of grabbing government land in Jaintapur upazila yesterday.

BAGERHAT

On Sunday night, the joint forces arrested a commissioner of Mongla municipality M Sarwar Hossain and Jamaat leaders Mostafa Kamal and Maulana Golam Mostafa from Mongla.

CASES AGAINST EX-XP

In Kushtia, seven cases were filed against former BNP lawmaker Shahidul Islam and his brother Bheramara UP Chairman Towhidul Islam in Bheramara and Mirpur police stations in Kushtia yesterday.

The complainants in the separate cases said that they could not lodge the cases soon after the incidents fearing reprisal by Shahidul and his gang.

Nawsad Ali of Fakirabad in Bheramara upazila filed a case against 41 BNP leaders and cadres including Shahidul Islam and his brother Towhidul Islam, Bheramara police said.

In the case, the complainant alleged that a gang loyal to Shahidul and his brother Towhidul attacked a motorcade led by industrialist Abdul Khaleque, in Bheramara on July 13, 2005, leaving at least 40 people injured and four vehicles damaged.

Shahidul ordered the attack to an attempt to kill Khaleque, who was an aspirant for the Kushtia-2 constituency, the complainant said.

In another case with Mirpur Police Station, Idrish Ali accused 28 BNP leaders and cadres including Shahidul Islam, Mirpur municipality Chairman Faruk Choudhury and upazila BNP Organising Secretary Golam Rabbani for attacking a rally of Abdul Khaleque at Bamangari bazar in the upazila on March 30, 2005.

Abul Hasem filed a case with Mirpur police alleging that a gang led by Shahidul Islam, Mirpur municipality Chairman Faruk Choudhury and upazila BNP Organising Secretary Golam Rabbani attacked another motorcade led by Abdul Khaleque in the upazila on October 8 last year leaving a number of people injured.

Idrish Ali of Supukuria in Mirpur upazila accused 27 BNP leaders and cadres, including Shahidul, Mirpur municipality Chairman Faruk Choudhury and upazila BNP Organising Secretary Golam Rabbani for attacking another rally of Abdul Khaleque on February 13, 2005 at upazila Eagle Chatter in his case filed with the Mirpur police.

Zubazab Ali of Bhangia filed a case with Mirpur police accusing 60 people including Shahidul Islam and Golam Rabbani, for attacking a peaceful protest procession at upazila Eagle Chatter on November 26, 2006.

Tauhidul Islam, a resident of Bheramara village in Mirpur upazila, filed a case with Mirpur Police Station against Shahidul and 13 of his accomplices for attacking a rally at Khalfar Mor on July 13 last year.

Alif Hossain filed another case against Shahidul and his 20 associates for attacking a rally on March 13 last year at Porodhoda in Mirpur and injuring 20 people.

Shahidul Islam earned widespread notoriety for his various clandestine and criminal activities during the last ten years when he had been the elected lawmaker from the constituency for two terms. He had turned the area into a 'risky zone' for journalists who were assaulted and threatened for writing against him on many occasions.

The latest incident took place when BNP cadres loyal to Shahidul attacked a journalists' rally in the district town and injured 25 journalists including former president of Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists Iqbal Sobhan Choudhury on July 31.

But no action was taken against Shahidul and nobody dared lodge any case against him during the tenure of the past BNP-led government.

After the take over of the new caretaker government led by Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed and the start of drive by the joint forces, Shahidul went into hiding.

Detained BNP

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and power -- Amanullah Aman, Mir Nasir and Iqbal Hasan Mahmud, former BNP lawmakers M Naser Rahman, Manjurul Ahsan Munshi, Mosaddak Ali Falu and Ali Asgar Lobi, and BNP-backed BTTB trade union leader Firoz Mia.

The joint forces had arrested them from their residences at different dates for their alleged involvement in activities against the state, creating panic among the public, corruption and goods hoarding. Later, all of them were sent to Dhaka Central Jail and a 30-day detention was given for each.

Huge quantity

UNB, Naogaon

Two Bangladeshi cattle traders were shot dead by Indian Border Security Force (BSF) near Nitpur border in Porsha upazila of the district yesterday morning.

The dead were identified as Ishaq Ali, 25, and Setabul Alam 18.

Both hailed from Chakbishnupur village in the upazila.

Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) sources said the Indian border guards of Panna camp opened fire on the two when they went near the main border pillar at about 6:00am, killing them on the spot.

Later, the BSF men took away the bodies.

Hearing the sound of gunshots, BDR personnel of Nitpur camp fired several bullets targeting the Panna camp. BSF returned fire.

Locals said the border guards of the two neighbouring countries traded over 20 shots. A tense situation is prevailing in the area.

Company commander Nitpur BDR camp protested the killings and sent a letter to the BSF, demanding return of the bodies.

UNB reports, the joint forces in

Faridpur seized 4.35 lakh kg of fake fertilizer from a factory at Komarpur in sader upazila Sunday night.

Sources said the law enforcers raided Silver Cap poultry and fish farm at 9:00pm, seized the fake fertilizer along with machinery and arrested farm manager Golam Mostafa.

Acting Deputy Director of the Department of Agriculture Extension Abdul Quddus filed a case against farm owner Abdus Siddique and manager Golam Mostafa.

17 held before

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Police said yesterday evening that they would release the detainees upon receiving bonds from their family members.

Inspector general of police (IGP) on Sunday signed an order cancelling the selection of 757 police personnel recruited at the eleventh hour of the immediate-past BNP-led coalition government.

The selection of the cops was cancelled after a recent probe found that they were recruited through gross irregularities including bribery, political influence and favouritism.

Later police allowed some of the protesters to handover copies of the memorandum to the president, the chief adviser to the caretaker government and the home secretary. They also sent a copy to the IGP via courier service.

They said in the appeal that the allegations against them are absolutely baseless. "We request that you track down and punish the real perpetrators who polluted the fair selection process and ensure justice," the memorandum reads.

The discarded recruits said they would file a case challenging the government's order.

US team

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Election Commissioner M Sohul Hossain was also present during the meeting that lasted for an hour.

Mccullough, the acting deputy chief of mission of the US embassy here, said the meeting was simply a courtesy call on the new leadership at the EC and they congratulated them on their appointments.

He said the delegation came to listen to the new leadership's expectations and what they perceive as challenges they will face in the coming months.

Later, in a meeting with the newsmen, the just-appointed Acting Secretary to the EC M Humayun Kabir, said his thought about the EC will be clear through his work.

"I keep a positive attitude to everything... There is nothing to do alone... I will mainly implement the decision of the government," he told reporters when asked about his thinking regarding the reconstituted EC.

"We didn't go into detail on specific cases. But, we think human rights and rule of law have to be respected and we totally agree, me and him, on these subjects," he added.

Frowein said he called on the law adviser to take stock of "what's going on," and the status quo of the Election Commission and the Anti-Corruption Commission, terming their reconstitution "positive" from the perspective of the international community.

When reminded that the EC is an independent institution, and there is nothing like implementing government's decision, he clarified his statement: "My role is defined... I will perform as a government staff."

Asked what will be his position in rebuilding the EC's mired image, as there are already controversies over the institution, the acting secretary declined to make any comment.

Experts for quick

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logging is a technique used in the oil and gas industry for recording rock and fluid properties to find hydrocarbon zones in the geological formations within the Earth's crust. This technique is also used for stabilising a volatile well.

The experts visited the site, collected data and exchanged professional views in measuring the gravity of the situation.

"They all agree that this was a very serious matter as this threatens the Brahmanbaria area directly and the country's energy security," said a source close to the committee.

Chief Adviser Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed himself was paying attention to the matter, he added.

Sources said the government has already talked to Chevron, the global oil giant, for technical help. Petrobangla sources said Chevron's expertise in dealing with this kind of situation was world-class.

"Nobody can say how much gas is evaporating from the Titas field in this way," said a Petrobangla source.

The Titas gas field produces 400 million cubic feet per day (mmcf) against the country's total gas demand of 1,500 mmcf. Discovered in the early sixties by Shell oil company, Titas was estimated to have a gas reserve of 5.12 trillion cubic feet (after four decades it now has 2.78 tcf).

Petrobangla is expected to forward this study to the ministry later this week. The remedial actions will begin when the ministry takes final decision on the matter.

At present over 100 million people have benefited from micro-financing across the world. Half of the beneficiaries live in India (34 million) and Bangladesh (16 million), he added.

Emphasising the need to spread micro-finance and social business in every walk of life, he called for setting up micro-credit banks in India.

Meanwhile, Titas gas field's parent company Bangladesh Gas

BDR seizes 15kg gold in Chuadanga

UNB, Chuadanga

Out of the total amount of Tk 1,25,857 crore in outstanding loans in the banking system, the amount of classified loans was Tk 20,098 crore or 13.15 percent on December 31, 2006 compared to 13.55 percent or Tk 17,509 crore on December 31, 2005, sources said.

Classified loans in NCBs amounted to Tk 11,503 crore or 22.94 percent of their outstanding loans in December 2006 which had been Tk 10,024 crore or 21.35 percent in December 2005.

Defaulted loans in PCBs amounted to Tk 4,365 crore or 5.45 percent of their outstanding loans in December '06, which had been Tk 3,543 crore or 5.62 percent in December '05.

Defaulted loans in FCBs came down to Tk 83 crore or 8.1 percent of their outstanding loans in December last year which had been Tk 104 crore or 1.26 percent in December, 2005.

The central bank data also reveal that Oriental Bank broke all records of commercial banks when its classified loans rose to 48.09 percent in June last year compared to 24.4 percent in December 2005.

"The percentage of classified loans has increased dramatically after the central bank took over Oriental's charge as the problem bank's past management had shown many classified loans as good loans," said a source in the banking sector. "The central bank revealed the camouflaged default loans and so the figure has increased to a record point," the source added.

The High Court (HC) upheld the trial court's verdict on August 31.

After rejection of his appeal, Saifullah filed a review petition in the SC.

Additional Attorney General Abdur Rezak Khan said the attorney general (AG) was not informed by the review petitioners that the matter would come before the chamber judge's court yesterday.

He said they would move against the petition when the matter comes for hearing in the full bench.