

Political leaders in Sylhet on the run as houses raided

Ministry asks city corporation to provide info on their whereabouts while many leave country

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

At least 50 leaders of different political parties, their youth fronts and student wings in Sylhet are on the run to evade arrest or harassment by law enforcers. The list includes, immediate past lawmakers, party leaders, ward commissioners of Sylhet City Corporation (SCC) and CBA leaders.

Houses of many of them were raided in past two weeks, sources close to the administration and law enforcing agencies told this correspondent yesterday.

Meanwhile, the local government ministry has sent a letter to the SCC requesting for providing information on whereabouts of ward commissioners, SCC sources said yesterday.

They got the letter on Thursday and will reply 'soon', they said.

On the other hand, some ward commissioners who left the country for short periods before proclamation of emergency have not yet returned, it was gathered.

Things took a different turn for a section of political leaders after the arrest of Sylhet district Awami League (AL) general secretary

Iftekhar Hossain Shamim last Monday. Leaders of major political parties became scared as rumours spread in the city in last few days that many of them were wanted by law enforcers.

However, front ranking leaders like former BNP lawmakers Dilder Hossain Selim and M Ilyas Ali through statements and mobile phones claimed that they are in the capital on personal engagements.

The sources claimed that talked about people like Sylhet city BNP chief and ward commissioner Ariful Haque Chowdhury, joint secretary Azmal Bakht Sadeque, city JCD chief Ziaul Gani Arefin Zillur, Juba Dal leader Main Uddin Sohel are hiding.

There are allegations of land grabbing, tender scam, misuse of power and other corruption against them, the sources claimed.

City BNP general secretary Nasim Hossain, former vice-president of central JCD Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury and district JCD chief Emran Ahmed Chowdhury left the country weeks ago and are staying in the UK, the sources claimed.

Ward Commissioner and former

JCD leader Abdul Kadir Shomsu also managed to leave the country for UK weeks ago. Another commissioner, Dinar Khan Hashu, who went to the USA weeks ago is yet to return.

Besides, JCD leaders and cadres like Kamrul Hasan Shahin, Nurul Alam Siddiqi Khaled, Nahidul Islam Nahid, Ashraf Uddin Jewel, Kala Manik, Iftekhar Ahmed Dinar, Shakil Murshed, Nozibur Rahamn Nozib and Milad Ahmed are hiding since the arrest of AL leader Iftekhar Hossain Shamim. There are allegations of toll collection, mugging and other crimes against them, the sources claimed.

Some leaders of AL's youth front Juba League are also hiding after arrest of Juba league general secretary and ward commissioner Azadur Rahman Azad under the Special Powers Act in a graft case. They include Bidhan Kumar Shaha, Ranjit Sarker and Aftab Uddin. Azad is in jail now.

The sources said, at least seven ward commissioners and nine Union Parishad (UP) chairmen went into hiding after proclamation of emergency on January 11. They face allegations of land grabbing,

extortion and protecting criminals. Some of them were arrested changeover but released while some were on the list of wanted persons, the sources claimed.

Ward Commissioner Ashique Ahmed and Union Parishad (UP) chairman Osman Ali are facing charges of looting of Tk 22 lakh from Pubali Bank three years ago. The incident came to light when some amount of the looted money and motorbikes used for this were recovered from Osman's house.

There been a number of alleged offences against SCC ward commissioners Farhad Chowdhury Shamim, Jagadish Das, Syed Misbah Uddin, Selim Ahmed Rony and Abdul Quadir Shomsu.

JCD cadre and ward commissioner Shomsu was charged with mugging and toll collection. There were allegations of land grabbing and other crimes against Kuchai UP chairman Abul Kalam. UP chairmen Mokhlisur Rahman Doula, Sirajul Islam, Ali Ahmed, Kabir Ahmed, Ataur Rahman, Tofazzal Hossain and Osman Ali also face allegations of harbouring gangs of criminals.

The sources said most of these

people are hiding, some of them in the capital.

City BNP chief Ariful Haque Chowdhury will surrender before court within a day or two, according to reports in local newspapers.

Last week, some national dailies published a list of 50 'wanted' people including Arif. They have been asked to surrender to court or to any police station, the sources said.

Sources in law enforcing agencies said they also raided houses of BNP leader Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury, Azmal Bakht Sadeque, district JCD chief Emran Ahmed Chowdhury, Juba Dal leader Syed Main Uddin Sohel in last two weeks. The list of houses raided also include ward commissioner and BNP leader Farhad Chowdhury Shamim, commissioner Ashique Ahmed, UP chairman Osman Ali, JCD leaders Kamrul Hasan Shahin, Nozibur Rahamn Nozib, Ziaul Gani Arefin Zillur, Nurul Alam Siddiqi Khaled, Nahidul Islam Nahid, Ashraf Uddin Jewel, Kala Manik, Iftekhar Ahmed Dinar, Shakil Murshed and Juba League leaders Bidhan Kumar Shaha and Ranjit Sarker.



Artistes rendering songs at a spring festival held on the premises of Sangskrit College at Mirer Maidan in Sylhet city yesterday.

9 'political appointees' sacked from Kalaroa pourasaabha

Irregularities alleged in recruitment

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sathkira

Kalaroa pourasava authorities yesterday terminated services of nine fourth class employees allegedly appointed in an irregular way.

They were BNP activists allegedly appointed on political consideration during the tenure of the immediate past four-party alliance government, sources in the pourasabha claimed.

The terminated employees are Momrej Ali, Al-Amin, Abdus Salam, Rezaul Islam, Aleya Begum, Safiqul Islam, Rekha Parvin, Sahanur Rahman and Abdul Mazed.

Pourasava administrator Samimul Islam Siddique, who is also the Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO), in an order terminated them after a probe body found gross irregularities including bribery, political influence and

nepotism in the selection process. They were appointed solely on political consideration, which burdened the pourasava even though there were no vacancies, the sources said.

According to the sources, the Pourasava authorities appointed 14 local BNP leaders and activists in posts of fourth class employees only to provide them with jobs.

They were appointed because they were men of former BNP lawmaker Habibul Islam Habib, the sources alleged.

Of the terminated employees, Aleya Begum, Al Amin, Abdus Salam and Momrej told this correspondent that local BNP leaders appointed them as fourth class employees, taking Tk 70,000 to one lakh from each of them.

A leader of Kalaroa upazila Juba Dal took the money, they said.

They (terminated employees)

said they are now looking for the Juba Dal leader to get back their money. They also demanded punishment of the BNP leaders who took many from them.

On contact, Kalaroa pourasava secretary Maniruzzaman said, under the pressure and political influence of former lawmaker Habib, they were compelled to appoint them who were BNP supporters.

While talking to this correspondent, Kalaroa pourasava administrator and UNO Samimul Islam Siddique said, the pourasava authorities terminated their services as they were appointed only on political consideration even though there were no vacancies.

He said he will also look into other irregularities in last five years in recruitment and take action as per law.

Mysterious disease kills 3 in a Thakurgaon village

60 scared families leave homes

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

At least three people died of a mysterious disease at Belua village near the border in Haripur upazila in Thakurgaon district in 20 days. Two more are now suffering from the unidentified disease, sources at Thakurgaon Civil Surgeon's official said.

The disease has scared villagers and , many of them are leaving the village, sources said.

According to Thakurgaon Civil Surgeon Dr. Shahadat Hossain, the dead are Md. Ziaur Rahman, 35, Parul Begum, 30 and Lal Mohammad, 34. Those attacked are Md. Mizanur Rahman, 34 and Shefali Begum.

According to doctors in Thakurgaon and at Dinajpur Sadar Hospital, the patients become unconscious due to high fever and show symptoms of blood dysentery.

Two medical teams from Thakurgaon and Dinajpur led by Civil Surgeon Dr. Shahdat Hossain and Dr. Yunus Ali respectively visited the village, about 70 kilometres from Thakurgaon town. But they failed to find out any clue.

A five-member medical team from Dhaka led by Dr. Imtiaz Asraf Chowdhury went to the village on Monday.

The teams collected stool, urine and blood of infected people from Haripur and Rangpur Medical

College Hospital. They also consulted with other doctors at Dinajpur Medical College Hospital and Rangpur Medical College Hospital, sources said.

The five-member team left Thakurgaon for Dhaka yesterday.

Doctors at Haripur upazila health complex, quoting family members of the victims at Belua village said, the first victim-- Md. Ziaur Rahman--was admitted to the health complex on January 23. He was referred to Dinajpur Medical College Hospital next day with high fever. He died there on January 26.

Parul Begum also succumbed to the disease at Rangpur Medical College Hospital on February 10.

Parul was first admitted to Dinapur Medical College Hospital. Doctors referred her to RMCH. Doctors there said they could not diagnose the disease..

The two others are being treated at Haripur Health Complex, according to sources at Thakurgaon CS office.

Sources said that, Mizanur Rahman was the driver of the microbus who drove the vehicle and took Parul Begum to RMCH.

Dr. Shahadat Hossain said, "We are waiting for reports by experts who visited the area".

Puja, fair begins at Adinath Mandir

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

The Adinath Mandir at Moheshkhali island, a place holy to the Hindu community, is once again vibrant as thousands of devotees thronged the site for the Shibchaturdashi Puja.

The Puja and a fair that began yesterday will continue ten days. Shibchaturdashi (religious festival) is observed at the temples amid great festivity and grandeur.

Colourful Shibchaturdashi Mela (fair) is held centering the temples where, apart devotees, thousands of people irrespective of religion also throng.

Thousands of devotees from home and abroad have poured into the huge fair premises on the Adinath Hill.

Pilgrims of different ages climb the long stairs having 69 steps that lead to Adinath Mandir (temple), some 288

feet above the sea level.

Devotees from India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, the Maldives and Malaysia also gather at the Adinath Mandir, which they believe to be one of the most sacred places for them.

They also believe that until a visit to Adinath Mandir, at least once in life, all their homage to Shib or Mohadev and pilgrimage remains incomplete.

A temple committee takes care of the Mandir.

Devotees believe that the temples located within an area of 217 acres also have many evidences of Ravana abducting Shib to Lanka. On way, Ravana halted only on the Adinath hills.

Apart from Hindu devotees, hundreds of Rakhaine community people came to the fair.

Advocate Shukhamoy, a devotee, said other than three temples in Sitakunda, only the Adhinath Mandir possesses the original statue of Shib that appeared there with the help of



People of different communities and religions at the fair that began at the Adinath Mandir in Moheshkhali yesterday.

13x3

10x3