

Mayor's graft

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the cases after an investigation had confirmed the allegations. All the cases are under trial at a senior special judge's court in Chittagong, according to sources.

The joint forces seized all documents in connection with the allegations of corruption and malpractices spearheaded by Mohiuddin during his 13-year stint in the office of the mayor.

The Daily Star obtained copies of some of the documents compiled by the joint forces based on which further corruption charges will be framed against him.

Some of the major financial irregularities detected by the audit are Tk 5.14 crore loss to the CCC due to allotment of shops at a shopping complex to a group of companies instead of shop keepers, issuing of work orders worth Tk 8.61 crore without any tender, spending of Tk 16.80 lakh to buy 35 walkie talkies without a tender, lending of Tk 53.45 lakh to ward commissioners which were not recovered even after the dates for repayments had passed, showing false spending of Tk 18.2lakh through a false master roll in connection with a canal digging project, buying three cars at a cost of Tk 34.65 lakh despite having three other cars which were operational, lending of Tk 13 lakh to female ward commissioners without charging any interest, and irregularities in spending Tk 31.07 lakh for buying equipment for a canal excavation project.

The corruption cases filed against Mohiuddin by the Bureau of Anti-corruption are in connections with returning a fine of Tk 11.31 lakh to constructors in exchange for financial favours, who were fined for not following the city plan for an earth removal project at a graveyard; bringing financial loss to the corporation through constructing a 11-storey building for Singapore Market on a government land at Gosail Danga, causing financial loss to the government by building a bus terminal on a government land at Nasirabad; building a public toilet on a private property at Nasirabad; and in connection with waiving of a fine of Tk 2.14 lakh of a firm for not properly following the work order in an earth filling and expansion project of the central grave yard by violating government rules in exchange for financial favours.

Besides, eight other cases were filed against Mohiuddin for embezzling Tk 24.24 lakh collected as holding tax during 1994-95 to 2001-02 financial years. The allegations were confirmed through investigations and charge sheets were also submitted. Another corruption case was filed against him in connection with irregularities in allotting shops at a passenger shed at Muradpur bus terminal.

There are also allegations that Mohiuddin established a number of institutions at important city centres on government lands violating government rules and regulations. He was also responsible for cutting a number of city hills creating spaces for residential plots, CNG refuelling stations, and markets. He set up a private university in the city on government lands without any approval. The university has a number of campuses located at different places in the city. A campus of Premier University is built on pillars on a road side city canal and another one is built on top of a refuelling station exposing the students to pollution and the danger of an accidental gas explosion.

Mohiuddin also allegedly purchased a second hand dredging machine spending Tk 2 crore. The machine was collected through Alam Trade International for digging Chaktai Canal. The machine had an emblem of China Tenjing Fisheries Company on it.

According to the sources city corporation engineers could build such a dredger spending only Tk 6 lakh. The new dredger was not necessary as the canal could have been excavated using dredgers belonging to the Water Development Board or Chittagong Port Authority.

Even after buying the new dredger the mayor spent 800 metric tons of rice and wheat allocated by the government for manual labourers employed for canal digging. The mayor spent Tk 5 crore again in collecting spare parts for the dredger, generators that are usually used in ship breaking yards, and pipes for the project. He allegedly embezzled several crores of taka by allotting shops to his flunkies and relatives without any open tender or following official procedures.

According to the sources the mayor first allotted the shops to his flunkies and relatives for cheap then sold those to others at higher prices pocketing handsome profit. He allotted 32 shops at Nasirabad Women College Crossing to Irim Mashrafy Pasha, an under aged daughter of a ward commissioner, Mamun. The shops were built on pillars on a roadside canal. Twenty three other shops on the ground floor of Shah Amanat Super Market were allotted to Kalu Sarder, known as a flunkiey of the mayor. Thirty two shops on the foot-path of Muradpur, 12 shops on KC Dey Road, five shops on Jail Road, four shops at Memon Hospital were also first allotted to the mayor's own people for cheap and then sold for higher prices to other people.

The corporation could have earned several crores of taka if those shops were allotted through open tenders or news paper advertisements following

official procedures.

Mohiuddin and his close relatives allegedly grabbed Tk 1.5 crore through setting up a pharmaceutical factory on Shagorika Road.

According to the sources, the mayor converted a warehouse into the factory. Nurul Alam, a business partner of the mayor's wife was given the contract for constructing the factory building. Although the government has yet to give any approval for the factory, the mayor already spent about Tk 3 crore for buying second hand machinery for it.

The CCC showed Tk 80 lakh expenditure for producing a movie on the liberation war in Chittagong. The corporation issued five cheques of Tk 10 lakh each to the director of the movie, Abdullah Al Mamun. The remaining Tk 30 lakh was shown as expenditure for hiring artistes, renting cars and other logistical support in making the movie. But there was no approval from the Ministry of Local Government for such expenditure for making a movie. Although the movie had been made during Mohiuddin's own party Awami League's regime, it was never released.

Construction and repair works of city roads were controlled by one Jafar Ahmed for the last 10 years. With the blessings of the city mayor he captured most of the construction and repair works using names of three construction firms.

The firms are Chittagong Engineering Construction, SN Traders, and Shahid and Brothers. Hardly any other construction firm got road construction or repair work contracts in the last 10 years.

The mayor took a project at Halishahar to make fuel from garbage, spending Tk 5 crore. The contractor for the project was Nurul Alam, the same business partner of the mayor's wife, Hasina Mohiuddin. Construction of a building for the project had been completed even before a tender was floated.

The city mayor charged 5 to 10 percent from each construction bill of the CCC for a 'mother and child fund'. The corporation earlier used to charge Tk 5 and put stamps on the bills. But in the last two years the mayor charged 5 to 10 percent of each bill in cash for the fund without any stamp.

In the name of introducing a turn-key system by allocating development works without any tender, the mayor actually took unilateral control of the entire contract disbursement process. The new system was designed to give the mayor a free hand in corruption, according to the sources.

Mayor Mohiuddin Chowdhury also bought a Mitsubishi Pajero four wheel drive at a cost of Tk 45 lakh from a private firm violating government rule. According to the rule the automobile should have been collected from a government agency. If such a vehicle is collected from Progati Industries, the government's automobile assembly plant, it would cost around Tk 17 lakh.

Bin Laden

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adding that senior leaders were in touch with bin Laden, reinforcing a widely held view that he is hiding near the rugged Pakistan-Afghanistan border.

Khan said special prayers were offered by Taliban fighters in camps in Afghanistan to mark bin Laden's birth on March 10, 1957, in the Saudi Arabian city of Jeddah.

"We prayed that Allah may give him 200 years to live," Khan said, by satellite telephone from an undisclosed location.

"When we woke up today, we offered collective and long prayers for him because he is a great mujahid (holy warrior)."

The most recent videotape of bin Laden was released in late 2004 -- subsequent tapes released were identified as old footage -- and around half a dozen audio tapes surfaced in the first half of 2006.

But a long silence since then has fueled rumors that bin Laden is unwell, or dead, though the United States fears that the al Qaeda network he founded is rebuilding its base in Pakistani tribal lands, and has forged ties with affiliates in Europe, North Africa and the Middle East.

Dead or alive, bin Laden is revered by some as the symbolic leader of a global jihad, or holy war, against the United States, following the September 11, 2001 attacks on New York and Washington that killed more than 3,000 people.

"He is the man who raised voices against excesses being committed on Muslims all over the world," the Taliban spokesman said.

The Taliban were ousted from power by U.S.-backed forces in late 2001 after their leaders refused to surrender bin Laden following the al Qaeda attacks on the United States.

The attacks triggered the largest manhunt in history, with over 12,000 U.S.-led troops scouring the deserts and mountains of Afghanistan for over five years.

The United States also announced a \$25 million reward for any information leading to the arrest or death of bin Laden, but leads on his whereabouts have been few and far between.

Intelligence on the movements of his Egyptian deputy, Ayman al Zawahiri, is gathered more frequently.

Lankan fighting

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Three bodies of the STF commandos were already with the military, officials said adding that 16 commandos suffered injuries following Friday's heavy shell attacks.

Fighting raged in the area Saturday, but there were no immediate reports of the latest casualties.

In the adjoining district of Batticaloa, troops kept up shelling of suspected Tiger positions in a new offensive to advance into a jungle area held by the guerrillas.

In the east of the island, government troops, backed by artillery and multi-barrel rocket fire, were on the offensive in the districts of Batticaloa and Ampara, where the Tigers control a vast jungle area known as Thoppigala.

The latest offensive is the biggest since troops captured the town of Vakkaral from the Tigers in January after weeks of heavy fighting in Batticaloa district.

The government has said it wants to clear the entire eastern province of Tamil Tiger rebels, and Thoppigala is the last rebel bastion in Batticaloa and Ampara districts.

More than 4,000 people have been killed in escalating fighting since December 2005 even though the two sides agreed to a truce five years ago.

UNHCR

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Officer Kitty McKinsey conducted the workshop.

In reply to a query, Phiri said according to a survey carried out by her agency in August 2006, there are 250,000 to 300,000 Biharis in Bangladesh of whom about 152,000 are living in 116 camps across the country.

Replying to a question, she admitted that the UNHCR has no mandate for the Biharis known as stranded Pakistanis. Phiri, however, said, "We'll maintain our interests until the issues are addressed by the Bangladesh government."

On some 26,000 Rohingya refugees living in two camps in Cox's Bazar, the UNHCR representative said the door must be kept open for voluntary repatriation of the refugees to Myanmar. "I firmly believe they will go back home because home is home."

She emphasised the importance of improving the living condition and ensuring formal education for the children of the camps.

Phiri expressed desire to begin a discussion with the government to allow the refugees' freedom of movement and right to work.

Currently, the refugees, who have been here for the last 15 years, cannot get out of the camps and are not allowed to work.

She said Bangladesh should ratify the 1951 Refugee Convention.

New car found

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the highway at West Shikarpur under Uzirpur Police Station since Thursday night.

Uzirpur police informed land and sea ports customs officials and road transport authorities about the car's chassis and engine numbers to find out its owner.

Police believed the owner left the car fearing anti-corruption drive launched recently against selling of duty free cars purchased by the lawmakers.

Khaleda

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health condition of Mahub Uddin. A member of the BNP parliament committee, Advocate Mahub Uddin was admitted to a city hospital with problems in nervous system seven days ago and released yesterday morning.

BNP leaders Gayeswar Chandra Roy, Nazrul Islam Khan and ZA Khan were, among others, present during Khaleda's visit.

Finance adviser

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develop transparency and accountability in public expenditure while minimising adverse consequences," he added.

The adviser also said the government is considering building a partnership with the NGOs in delivering public services to make the most of limited national resources.

"I've already approved three contracts for three municipalities to contract out medical services to NGOs and they were selected through transparent tender process," Azizul said.

Citing recent statistics, he said Bangladesh is keeping pace with India and Pakistan in pursuing the MDGs despite having lower per capita income than both the South Asian countries.

In some areas like water and sanitation services, the country has outdone the two countries.

He, however, noted that the government cannot afford to be complacent when some very difficult challenges lie ahead.

WB Country Director Xian Zhu said he is encouraged by the way the caretaker government is working to bring about an atmosphere conducive to attaining the MDGs and carrying out the poverty reduction programmes.

He said policymakers and development practitioners should use this "unique and historical" moment to debate policies to strengthen development policies and their implementation.

Kaiser M Khan, lead human development specialist for South Asia Region, presented a study report at the seminar. Founder Vice-chancellor of EVU Mohammad Farashuddin made welcome remarks while acting vice-chancellor Mohammad Musa chaired the discussion. Manzur Ahmed, director of Institute of Education Development at Brac University, Prof Ahmed Neaz of American International University of Bangladesh (AIUB) and AK Enamul Haque of EWU were the other discussants.

Ctg port functions

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others are at various stages of implementation.

A three-shift workday has been introduced for dockworkers for ensuring round the clock operation at the port in place of earlier two-shift work-days.

"We are happy about the steps taken by the joint forces so far for saving the port from devastation and accelerating the cargo handling activities," said Mohammad Amirul Haque, chairman of standing committees of FBCCI and CCCI (Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry) on port and shipping.

He hoped that the people would get the benefit of various reforms undertaken at the premier port.

The container handling responsibility at the Chittagong Container Terminal (CCT) has been given to Saif Powertec Limited, a private firm, for an integrated and smooth operation of the port. The company has started its operation since Wednesday.

Saif Powertec now charges Tk 1200 for loading, unloading and transporting a container to and from the delivery yard.

Earlier, the port users were compelled to spend Tk 4,000 to Tk 5,000 for the same task as they had to bribe the equipment operators employed by the CPA (Chittagong Port Authority) at various points.

A decision was also taken to hand-over cargo handling activities of different jetties in general yards to private companies.

Other important steps taken by the task force include shifting handling activities of nine bulk items outside the port area, allowing delivery of Full Container Load (FCL), doing away with monopoly in stevedoring system from hook point, reducing the size of the labour groups, setting up sector wise off-dock inland container depot (ICD), cancellation of unreasonable fees and charges by shipping agents and reducing the number of signatures required from customs and port authorities for clearing papers.

According to sources, ever since the new measures came in effect, the turnaround time of a ship has reduced to 7-8 days from earlier 14-16 days.

Moreover, the congestion inside the port area was minimised greatly since the handling of nine bulk items was shifted outside the port where around 1,000 trucks and 2,000 labourers used to gather for handling the cargo.

In the general yard, importers are now allowed to take on chassis delivery of FCL from hook point. They are also allowed to take the FCL to their

own premises without providing bank guarantee or cheque to mainline operators or shipping lines. Now they are required only to sign a joint guarantee making sure that the container is in good shape.

The dominance of labour leaders has diminished as well and a 'no work no pay' system has been introduced. The stevedoring system has also been abandoned and the size of labourer groups reduced.

The task force has asked different trade bodies to set up sector wise off-dock inland container depot (ICD) for handling goods and reduce pressure on the port yard. Eleven ICDs already exist in the country and a total of eight more such ICDs would be allowed.

The trade bodies that were asked to set up separate ICDs include BGMEA, BTMA, BARVIDA and C&F agents' association.

The charge of Tk 1,000 for Licence Measuring Department (LMD) by CCCI for import of raw cotton has been withdrawn along with the rate restoration charge of \$200 for 20 feet container and \$400 for 40 feet containers by the shipping agents.

The cut-off time of the ships would be fixed after negotiation with BGMEA, according to sources.

The shipping line offices are kept open on Saturdays and allocated office spaces with internet facilities near the 'one stop service centre' to issue delivery orders.

The collection of money by freight forwarders against issuing no objection certificates has also been stopped.

The joint forces also stopped toll collection of Tk 67 from each truck by Panama Truck Stand near the port for issuing gate passes. Fees for container survey, documentation and cleaning have also been fixed reasonably.

The handling charge of bulk cargo from mother vessels to land by lighterage vessels has also been reduced to Tk 127-160 per ton instead of previous rate of Tk 400-500.

The port authority has taken an initiative to purchase a 10 MW generator for operating port equipment during power outage. A 2.5 MW generator had been purchased earlier without considering the actual requirement. The process of purchasing a container scanner for expediting customs checking has also been started, said sources.

Dhaka acceding

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again, said that the international community must address the root causes of terrorism -- poverty, hunger, injustice, disasters, displacement etc - to effectively combat this menace."

Mentioning the connection between war and poverty, the veteran diplomat said "The war on terror must also be a war against poverty, the fight against terror must be an inclusive process."

"Explosives, both local and smuggled, have lately proven more deadly, particularly in the hands of the JMB outfit," Professor Imtiaz Ahmed of Dhaka University (DU) said in his paper titled 'Terrorism beyond reason: possibilities and limits,' adding, "Such weaponisation of the society cannot be contained only through national efforts."

Regional approach is required in the form of a regional police-civil force for checking the illicit arms trade, money laundering and militant outfit nexus, he further observed.

About Islamisation of Bangladesh politics, Assistant Professor of DU Laifur Yasmin in her paper titled 'Indo-Bangladesh Relations: Terrorism in Perspective,' said 'Islamisation in Bangladesh's politics started with the deterioration of popularity of the post-independence

regime."

She noted that former president Ziaur Rahman replaced the word 'secularism' from the constitution by 'absolute trust and faith in the Almighty Allah.'

"Ershad (former dictator and president) made Islam as a state religion, therefore, Islam emerged as a strong tool in politics," Yasmin further said.

The opening session of the seminar was chaired by CPSP Chairman Commodore (ret'd) Ataur Rahman and addressed by CPSP Executive Director Maj Gen (ret'd) Ghulam Qader, while former state minister for foreign affairs Abul Hasan Chowdhury presided over the first working session titled 'Dimension of the Problem of Terrorism in Bangladesh.'

Ambassador Feroq Sobhan, president of Bangladesh Enterprise Institute, chaired the second session titled 'Towards a Comprehensive Strategy of Combating Terrorism in Bangladesh.' Brig Gen ATM Amin presented a paper on 'Regional Security Environment and Terrorist Threat.'

Partying on the beach

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obtained each plot for a mere Tk 34 lakh for setting up tourism facilities such as hotels or motels. But instead, most of the plot owners sold out the plots and made Tk 2 to 3 crore from each plot.

A few plot owners built large permanent structures in the middle of the beach while others even put up large billboards advertising for housing companies on the plots.

The present interim government last month seized all documents of these hotels and motels in the controversial zone. A source in the joint forces said the forces seized these documents from the office of the Cox's Bazar deputy commissioner amid allegations that plots in the exclusive tourism zone went in wrong hands and those were not being used for tourism purposes.

Cox's Bazar district administration sources said the immediate-past BNP-led alliance government allotted 90 plots to its ministers, state ministers, deputy minister and lawmakers between the period of 2002 and 2006. None but one of them had constructed any hotel or motel.

The Awami League government (1996-2001) during its term also allotted 10 plots to ten businessmen. Out of the 10, six hotels were constructed in the zone at that time that includes the Seagull, added the sources in the district administration office.

Besides violating government restrictions on the ecologically critical area on the beach, proper allotment process for plot allocation in the exclusive tourism zone was also ignored during the four-party alliance government, the sources said.

More over, a few of the recipients even obtained more than one plot. Salahuddin Ahmed alone obtained 16 plots. He however transferred the ownership of 12 plots to others and kept four under the possession of his family. Shamsul Islam and Morshed Khan obtained four plots each. Former deputy commissioner of Cox's Bazar Matiar Rahman and former deputy commissioner (revenue) Fasiullah also received multiple plots.

The lone recipient who constructed a hotel and a community centre on his plot is Lutfur Rahman Kajal.

10 BNP men held in Bogra for violating emergency rules

UNB, Bogra

Ten BNP activists, arrested for staging a demonstration in protest against the arrest of Tarique Rahman, were sent to jail yesterday.

Police arrested Asad, Shahjahan, Nazir Ahmed, Azam Ali, Saidur Rahman, Fair Ali, Baten, Ekram, Khokon and Insan Ali in front of the district BNP office on Friday night on charges of violating the emergency rules.

Besides, Sub-Inspector (SI) Saiful Islam filed a case with Sadar Police Station

on Friday against several BNP leaders and workers for joining the demonstration.

Iraq militants threaten to kill German hostages

AFP, Baghdad

A militant Islamist group in Iraq has threatened in a videotape showing two purported German hostages to execute them if the Berlin government fails to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan.

The Kataeb Siham al-Haq (Righteous Arrows Battalions) said in the videotape posted yesterday on an Islamist website: "We give the German government 10 days from the date of this statement to announce and start the withdrawal of its troops from Afghanistan."

"We have warned them. Otherwise, you will not even see one corpse for these two agents," said one of three masked gunmen who appeared standing behind the purported hostages.

A German passport seen in the video footage showed what appeared to be the surname of the female hostage as Kadhim, Geb Krause, while her first names were Hanniflore Marianne, born in Teltow in 1945.

The blonde woman cried along with her dark-haired son who sat on the floor next to her while she made a lengthy appeal in German.

A written Arabic translation of her statement said that she was calling on German Chancellor Angela Merkel to save her life and that of her son by pulling out troops from Afghanistan.

"I am under threat. These people want to kill my son in front of me and then kill me if German troops do not withdraw from Afghanistan," the translation said.

In Berlin, the German foreign ministry said a crisis cell was studying the situation.

Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier confirmed on February 12 that two German citizens had been missing in Iraq for a week and might have been abducted.

The Berlin daily Tagesspiegel, citing security sources, reported at the time that the victims were a woman in her 60s, who is married to a Iraqi doctor, and their son who is in his 20s.

It is the third abduction of Germans in Iraq since the US-led war was launched in 2003.

Germany vehemently opposed the war, but it does have 3,000 troops in the relatively stable north of Afghanistan, where it commands the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF).

Cop held

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the final report and fixed yesterday at 3:00pm as payment schedule.

As Rahman informed the law enforcers at Paltan army camp, they suggested marking a few Tk 500 notes, which was are to be given to Shahabuddin.

Later the armed forces arrested Shahabuddin on the basis of the notes.

Shahabuddin said he fell victim to a conspiracy.

In Gazipur, the joint forces arrested Nowsheer Ali, SI of Sreepur Police Station, and Abdul Motalab, a businessman, while transacting bribe.

Gazipur Police Super Rezaul Karim closed K M Abdullah, officer-in-charge of Sreepur Police Station, in this connection yesterday.

Sources said Motalab gave Tk 5,000 as bribe to Ali twice for releasing his seized trucks.

When the SI demanded Tk 1,000 more, Motalab complained to the joint forces personnel, who kept photocopies of two Tk 500 notes as part of a plan to arrest Ali.

The joint forces also arrested Motalab for giving bribe.

Assistant Deputy Director of Rab-11 Hasim Uddin yesterday filed a case against the two and also against Motalab's brother Abu Taher for being present during the transaction.

Later the three accused were produced before the court and sent to Gazipur District Jail.

Tarique disclosing

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away by Tarique and will soon spread a dragnet for them.

Meanwhile, a Dhaka court yesterday sent to jail Awami League (AL) Joint General Secretary Obaidul Quader on a 30-day detention on charges of creating anarchy, patronising criminals and involvement in sabotage.

In Chittagong, a court sent to jail a former president and incumbent general secretary (GS) of the District Bar Association on charge of violating the state of emergency law by organising a demonstration against the arrest and imprisonment of Chittagong Mayor and AL leader ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury.

The joint forces also arrested the joint secretary of Tangail district BNP and Jhalakathi municipality chairman while Projpur district BNP joint secretary surrendered to the forces yesterday.

QUADER JAILED

Obaidul Quader, who figures in the list of 50 influential political leaders and businessmen for the second phase of the joint forces' anti-corruption drive, was arrested by the forces from the house of city AL leader Ali Newaz Khan in Khilgaon Friday morning and taken to an undisclosed place.

Police filed a general diary (GD) with Ramna Police Station alleging that Quader was involved in creating anarchy and in sabotage. The GD also identified him as a patron of criminals.

Quader, also a former state minister for youth, sports and cultural affairs, was produced before a metropolitan magistrate's court at 3:15pm yesterday.

In their forwarding report, police mentioned the charges against him and asked the court to place him on a 30-day detention under the Special Powers Act 1974 to restrain him from similar activities.

Quader's counsel moved a bail petition terming the allegations against him false.

Hearing both the sides, Metropolitan Magistrate Nani Gopal Biswas rejected the bail prayer and ordered sending him to Dhaka Central Jail on a 30-day detention.

Later, his lawyer told reporters, "No specific charge has been brought against him. And he has not been charged with corruption."

Meanwhile, Ali Newaz Khan, who also was arrested with Quader, was released yesterday after interrogation.

CHITTAGONG

The joint forces arrested former president of Chittagong Bar Association Ibrahim Hossain Chowdhury Babul and incumbent GS Iftekhar Saimul Chowdhury on charge of violating the state of emergency law by leading a lawyers' demonstration on Chittagong court premises on Thursday morning protesting the

arrest and rejection of bail prayer of the Chittagong City Corporation mayor.

The forces summoned the two and five others to their camp at Chittagong Stadium Gymnasium Thursday evening and interrogated them till 11.00pm, sources said.

On Friday, they summoned Babul, also an AL city unit leader, and Saimul thrice to their camp. Once again, they were summoned around 11.00am yesterday and arrested.

The two were produced before the Court of Metropolitan Magistrate Monwarul Islam at around 5.00pm.

Rejecting their bail prayer, the court ordered sending them to jail.

The magistrate also ordered a probe into video recording of the court proceedings by Detective Branch photographer Delwar Hossain.

TANGAIL

The joint forces arrested advocate Ali Imam Tapan, joint secretary of Tangail district BNP and convener of district Jubo Dal, from the district sports association