

Falu remanded for first time

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The defence lawyers submitted a petition for cancellation of the remand prayer saying that their client was implicated in the case as part of a conspiracy to harass him falsely.

On hearing both the sides, the court rejected the defence plea and placed Falu on a three-day remand.

On March 2, security personnel had recovered 605 corrugated iron (CI) sheets and 63 blankets meant for relief from a ward commissioner's office at Tejgaon in Dhaka.

The law enforcers also recovered 37 CI sheets from the house of one Shafiuddin near BG Press staff quarters mosque in Tejgaon.

During interrogation, Falu claimed that he purchased the sheets from Ruhul Amin Bhuiyan alias Jahangir, commissioner of ward 37 and the vice-president of Tejgaon thana BNP.

Acting on his information, security personnel raided the ward commissioner's office at Begunbari of Tejgaon the same day and found 63 blankets in gunnysacks and 605 CI sheets stacked up inside. Fifteen kg of rotten rice was also found there.

The law enforcers picked up Nazir Ahmed, office assistant of the commissioner, for interrogation.

Later, Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) official Abdus Samad from Rab 2 filed a case with Tejgaon Police Station against Falu, Jahangir and four others the same day.

QUADER, LOBI SENT TO JAIL
Obaidul Quader, joint general secretary of the AL, was sent to Dhaka Central Jail yesterday after he was produced before a Dhaka court on completion of his three-day remand.

Quader, who was taken on the remand for interrogation on his alleged involvement in subversive activities, looked pale and was limping as he was being escorted by law enforcers to the court on the third floor.

Quader was detained under the Special Powers Act on March 8.

Defence lawyer Advocate Shahara Khatun told the court that after the court had placed him on the three-day police remand, he was interrogated by unknown personnel at an undisclosed location and even his family members did not know of his whereabouts.

Furthermore, he was tortured both physically and mentally in such a manner that he cannot even walk steadily. He needed police assistance to climb up the stairs of the court building to reach the courtroom on the third floor, she added.

Since there was no further remand prayer, the court ordered to send Quader to jail.

LOBI CASE

Another Dhaka court yesterday sent former BNP lawmaker Ali Asgar Lobi to jail after he was produced before it on completion of his three-day remand in a case filed with Gulshan Police Station on March 11 for trespassing on a private property at Gulshan belonging to a UK expatriate, threatening to kill him and plundering valuables from his house.

Lobi was arrested on February 5. **GANI REMAND FOR THIRD TIME**
A Dhaka court yesterday placed detained forest boss Osman Gani on a three-day remand for the third consecutive time after he was produced before it on completion of a five-day remand. He was remanded for four days before.

In the forwarding report, the IO of the general diary filed against Gani with Uttara Police Station mentioned that Gani has divulged important information about his wealth that he acquired through corruption.

The IO added that more information could be gleaned from him about the unbridled corruption if he is taken on another seven days' remand. The court granted a three-day remand.

Gani was arrested from his Uttara residence on May 29.

MOUDUD CASE

A Dhaka court yesterday adjourned the proceedings of the case filed against Moudud for possession of 32 cans of beer and 16 bottles of other alcoholic beverages.

Judge Mohammad Azizul Haq of the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court adjourned the proceedings till June 17 following a time petition by the defence lawyers.

Moudud was present in the dock during the hearing of the case.

On May 28, Officer in Charge Mohamamd Obaidul Haque of Gulshan Police Station, also the IO, submitted the charge sheet to the Court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Dhaka, showing 10 people as prosecution witnesses.

On April 13, the joint forces apprehended influential BNP leader and former lawmaker Moudud Ahmed raiding his Gulshan residence in the capital.

The forces also seized various documents including receipts for different items and 220 saris meant for government relief to the poor.

Later, a case was filed against Moudud, a member of BNP standing committee, under Section 25 (B) of the Special Powers Act, 1974 for obtaining the foreign liquors evading government tax.

In the charge sheet, the IO mentioned that the charges brought against Moudud were primarily proved and he should be brought to justice.

Following his arrest, Moudud was taken on a four-day remand for interrogation.

On March 25, the National Board of Revenue directed banks to freeze the accounts of Moudud Ahmed and his wife.

Moudud served as a minister in three cabinets since the country's independence in 1971. He served autocrat ruler HM Ershad's government as a prime minister and as a vice-president.

MAMUN CASE

Nine prosecution witnesses of an arms case against controversial businessman Giasuddin Al Mamun yesterday gave statements.

Judge Mohammad Abul Bashir of the First Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court recorded statements of the witnesses and fixed June 14 for the next hearing of the case.

Earlier on April 26, Cantonment police submitted the charge sheet against Mamun to the Court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Dhaka showing 12 people as prosecution witnesses.

Shahrum Khan, officer in charge of Cantonment Police Station and the IO of the case, pressed charges against Mamun, who was arrested from his Banani DOHS residence on March 26.

Police seized a .22 Spanish pistol and eight bullets from his house.

Later, an arms case was filed against Mamun and he was placed on a four-day remand.

HUDA-SALAHUDDIN CASE

Another Dhaka court yesterday accepted the charge sheets of two separate criminal cases against detained former communications minister Nazmul Huda and BNP lawmaker Salahuddin Ahmed from Demra in the capital.

After scrutinising the case dockets and other relevant documents, Metropolitan Magistrate Quamrunnahar passed the order.

On May 8, Dhanmondi police pressed charges against Huda in a criminal case filed against him for using a fake registration number for his sport utility vehicle (SUV). Sub-Inspector Kazi Amirul Islam, also the IO of the case, submitted the charge sheet to the CMM's Court, Dhaka.

On February 25, police seized Huda's luxurious Cadillac Escalade bearing registration number Dhaka Metro Gha 11-9999 and filed a case against him with Dhanmondi Police Station on March 1.

Meanwhile, SI Mainul Islam of the same police station pressed charges against Salahuddin Ahmed and his son Imran Ahmed in a fraud case.

Mainul Islam, also the IO of the case, submitted the charge sheet to the CMM's Court on May 8.

Saiful Islam, deputy director of Amin Mohammad Group, filed a fraud case with Dhanmondi Police

Station against former BNP lawmaker from Demra Salahuddin Ahmed and his son Imran.

In the case, the complainant said Salahuddin and his son forced him to sign the ownership document of a flat on November 10, 2003 paying only Tk 5 lakh against the actual price of over Tk 35.66 lakh.

Our Bogra correspondent adds: Police pressed charges against former BNP lawmaker Helaluzzaman Talukder Lalu in two different cases filed for extortion and embezzlement.

SI Rafique and SI Mustafizur Rahman of Gabtoli police station pressed the charges against the lawmaker before a first class magistrate court.

Gabtoli upazila AL president Azam Khan filed the extortion case accusing 16 individuals including the lawmaker on April 30. IO of the case SI Rafique submitted the charge sheet accusing 14.

On April 18, Aminul Islam, former chairman of Mohisaban union, filed another case against 38 people including the lawmaker accusing them of being involved in deception, theft and embezzlement.

SI Mustafizur Rahman submitted the charge sheet in the case on June 7 accusing 37 on June 7.

Taliban 'radio boss' joins Afghan peace scheme

AFP, Kabul

The former head of the Taliban regime's radio station and spokesman for its leader, Mullah Mohammad Omar, met the media yesterday after surrendering to the Afghan government under an amnesty scheme.

Mullah Mohammad Is'haq Nizami, who returned to Afghanistan this week from Pakistan, told reporters, "It's a matter of pride for me to be back in my country."

Nizami however refused to answer any questions, saying: "I'm not ready."

He headed and ran the Taliban government's Shariat Shagh (Voice of Sharia) radio station before the US-led invasion that toppled the hardline regime in November 2001.

The radio station broadcast religious texts and news, with music banned by the ultraconservative government.

Nizami had been in Pakistan

Belgians go to polls, PM facing defeat

AFP, Brussels

Belgians went to the polls yesterday in legislative and senate elections widely expected to hand defeat to Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt, dashing his hopes for a third term after eight years in office.

As always in linguistically divided Belgium's politics, the country's French-Dutch language fault line will play a central role in determining the new coalition government to emerge after the elections.

Since no party fields candidates in both of Belgium's two main regions, winning in Dutch-speaking Flanders, where 60 percent of the population live, is key to national success.

Belgium's 7.7 million registered voters, who are required by law to vote, were casting ballots for candidates vying for 150 seats in parliament and 71 in the senate.

After polling stations close at 1:00pm (1100 GMT) for traditional paper ballots and 3:00 for electronic voting, the first results were expected around 5:00 pm and the final count was due in around midnight.

With most polls putting Verhofstadt's Flemish Liberal Democrats in fourth place in Flanders, chances are slim that he will return for a third four-year term although he has delivered firm economic growth over the last eight years.

"Whether tax cuts, or reducing unemployment, we need reforms. I hope voters will understand," Verhofstadt told private television channel RTL after casting his ballot.

Leading the pre-vote polls was the Flemish Christian Democrats, making regional Flemish leader and party heavyweight Yves Leterme, 46, the favourite to emerge as prime minister from the round of political horse-trading that will follow the election.

After a short but tense campaign, Leterme appeared calmly confident after he voted, telling RTL: "I slept better last night than the night before.... We'll see what responsibilities voters want to give us."

While Leterme's platform of more power for regional bodies



PHOTO: STAR

Ambassador of Japan Masayuki Inoue speaks at the launching ceremony of "Teaching Package (Science and Mathematics) for Development and Training under Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP-2)" at the conference room of National Academy for Primary Education (NAPE) in Mymensingh on Saturday.

US tech sector eyes immigration bill revival, cites worker shortage

AFP, Washington

US high-tech industry leaders say they will maintain a fight in Congress to address what they claim is a critical shortage of skilled workers, despite the collapse of an immigration overhaul bill this past week.

Key technology executives had been pushing for changes to the immigration bill in the Senate to make it easier to hire foreign-born computer scientists and other skilled professionals before the compromise measure collapsed.

"We're hopeful the Senate will be

able to find a way to get this process back on track," said Robert Hoffman, an executive at Oracle and co-chair of Compete America, a coalition of computer and electronics firms and other business groups focused on immigration.

"The issues we're facing on the skilled immigration front are so important, we hope the Senate will find a path forward."

Even as technology executives including Microsoft chief executive Steve Ballmer were furiously lobbying in the past week to modify the latest bill to provide more visas for skilled workers, the compromise immigration bill was withdrawn by Democratic Senate leader Harry Reid.

"At Microsoft alone we have 3,000 core technical positions we have not been able to fill in the United States because of the lack of available qualified applicants," said company spokeswoman Ginny Terzano.

Terzano said Ballmer met with lawmakers to discuss "the urgent need to fix the immigration system. If the high-tech industry in the US is going to be able to hire and retain qualified workers."

While Senate leaders and President George W Bush had warned against modifications to the fragile compromise on immigration reform, tech industry leaders claimed there were flaws in the latest measure that could make it

even harder to attract top-flight professionals.

The bill as written, tech executives said, would have failed to provide enough relief for companies struggling to fill jobs. Some argued that the companies should have the same type of exemptions as major sports leagues, which can lure foreign-born players with special skills.

The high-tech industry says many of those working in the global-leading sector are immigrants themselves, including Google co-founder Sergey Brin.

Lazlo Bock, vice president for people operations at Google, told a congressional hearing Wednesday: "The US scientific, engineering, and tech communities cannot hope to maintain their present position of international leadership if they are unable to hire and retain highly educated foreign talent."

Some critics of the H-1B visa programme say it is used to depress wages in the tech sector, with the hiring of engineers from India and other Asian nations, and argue that evidence of a shortage is not entirely clear.

But Hoffman said multinationals such as Oracle and Microsoft are faced with a dilemma because of the visa shortage, and often must relocate those jobs offshore.

Teaching package for dev, training launched

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

M Musharraf Hossain Bhuiyan, secretary (in charge) of the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education said the primary education is the stage when the tender children take their first lesson with keen interest for their future life.

The content of science and mathematics should be correct, relevant and precise and the instructions should be imparted in a simple and friendly manner to sharpen and accelerate the inquisitiveness of the young minds, said the secretary while addressing a launching ceremony of "Teaching Package (Science and Mathematics) for Development and Training under Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP-2)" as the chief guest at the conference room of National Academy for Primary Education (NAPE) in Mymensingh on Saturday. NAPE Director Md Abdul Wahid chaired the programme.

Ambassador of Japan Masayuki Inoue, Resident Representative of JICA Nobuko Suzuki Kayashima, Task Manager of PEDP-2, BRM, ADB Brajesh P Panth, Programme Director of PEDP-2 and Director General (In-Charge) of Directorate of Primary Education Ratan Kumar Roy were the special guests at the ceremony.

First Secretary of Norwegian Embassy Ingrid T Hang, Programme Officer of JICA Umme Shaila and NAPE Specialist MA Wahab were present.

The chief guest said we need to increase enrolment as well as the number of classrooms along with adequate number of teachers for rendering quality education at the primary level.

He also said the government has a policy to provide quality education to all children of the country, adding that the performances of the primary school children, particularly in science and mathematics are relatively low and the competence of the teachers is below expectation.

He thanked the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) for sponsoring friendly support to implement the PEDP-2 programme.

In his speech, the Japanese ambassador said primary education is the key driver for national growth of every country.

Education is the best long-term investment to reduce poverty in Bangladesh, said the ambassador.

The Japanese ambassador also said Japan is standing side by side with Bangladesh for the improvement of education by extending wide range of support in this sector.

A total of 51 superintendents of PTI attended the function.

Later, the chief guest and the ambassador opened the training package programme.