

# Party in power was a magic lamp for VDP member Salam

Arrested Khagrachhari Jubo Dal leader faces several cases for land grabbing, murder and other crimes

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

The party in power came as a magic lamp for once VDP (Village Defense Party) member Mohammad Abdus Salam. By virtue of being a close aide to BNP leader Wadud Bhuiyan, he became president of Khagrachhari district Jubo Dal, which opened up the scope for him to amass wealth and establish supremacy in the district during the rule of BNP-Jamaat government.

Besides being known as an alleged land grabber, he also faces allegations of torturing political opponents and involvement in murder. His arrest is now a talk of the town.

Salam was arrested on September 6 from a house of his relative at Tabalchhari in Rangamati. Police brought him to Khagrachhari and produced him before court, which sent him to jail. He was on the run after arrest of former BNP lawmaker Wadud Bhuiyan on February 4.

Officer In-Charge (OC) of Khagrachhari police station Kazi Helal Uddin said Salam faces eight cases filed with the Sadar police station alone.

Many other victims are preparing to file cases against him and his cadres, he said.

Abdus Salam owns three luxurious houses worth about Tk 4 crore at Molla Para (beside hospital gate in Khagrachhari town), Shantinagar



Mohammad Abdus Salam

and Bangalkathi in Sadar upazila, over 180-acre orchards at Vuyachhari, Alutilla, Panchhari and Dighinala in the district and some 12 plots for shops.

Four of the plots are at Arambug, two at Bazar in Sadar upazila, two at Boalkhali in Dighinala, two at Barnal and two at Guimara in Matiranga upazila in Khagrachhari district, according to police and intelligence sources.

Some of the 12 plots are in the name of his wife Nilufar Yasmin and brother-in-law.

The sources claimed that Salam's Molla Para house encroaches government land, Shabdamia Para house was built

by grabbing his cousin's land and the Santinagar house partly occupies land of a local journalist.

Talking to this correspondent, an official of Khagrachhari Adhunik Sadar Hospital seeking anonymity demanded judicial inquiry into the alleged corruption and land grabbing by the Jubo Dal leader.

Journalist Nurul Azam, whose land was grabbed in Santinagar, told this correspondent that he was preparing to file a case against Salam and demanded probe into his assets.

During five years of BNP-Jamaat rule, Salam was untouched though there were allegations of corruption, tender manipulation, murder, terrorising others and other crimes.

Zarina Akter, daughter of local Awami League leader Nurul Islam, alleged that Salam was involved in the murder of her father on November 9 last year at the fag end of BNP-Jamaat rule. She filed a murder case with Khagrachhari Sadar police station on November 21 last year.

She also alleged that Salam's name was dropped from the charge sheet due to political influence. Talking to this correspondent, she demanded fresh investigation of the murder.

Kamrun Nahar Panna, daughter of Abul Kashem, filed a case on February 17 alleging that Salam and his cadres ransacked

and looted their house at Shalbagan on October 4 2001, days after BNP-Jamaat came to power.

Khagrachhari Chhatra League leader Iqbal Bahar was attacked and injured allegedly by Salam and his men on August 6 last year. Iqbal's mother Nur Bahar filed a case on August 8 naming Salam as the prime accused.

Contractor Nurunnabi filed a case against Salam and his cadres with Khagrachhari Sadar police station on February 16 for attacking and seriously injuring him and snatching Tk 282,000 in the town on January 23, 2002.

Khagrachhari district Awami League secretary Zahedul Alam filed a case on March 29 last year accusing Salam and his men for damaging his house and looting ornaments and furniture earlier. Talking to this correspondent Alam claimed that Salam was present during the attack but his name was dropped from the charge sheet.

Salam along with some Chhatra Dal activists also faces another case filed on August 6 last year for an attack on some Chhatra League activists at Khagrachhari College a day before.

Naderuzzaman of Kalabagan area in the town filed a land grabbing case against Salam on May 19. In the case he alleged that Salam grabbed 10 decimal of his land in the town.

## Sundarban textile mill workers get arrears

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Payment of arrear dues of workers and staff of state owned Sundarban Textile Mills who left jobs under golden handshake programme that began on Tuesday continued yesterday.

The payment is being made after one month of their retirement.

The Bangladesh Textile Mill Corporation (BTMC) sanctioned Tk 25 crore to pay the dues including arrears salary and other benefits of 807 workers and staff.

The mill went on production in 1984.

General Manager of the mill Mahmubul Alam said at least 400 workers and staff got cheques yesterday and the day before.

He said disbursement of the dues will be completed within two or three days, he said.

## ATTACK ON BRITISH HC Deposition of PWs continue in Sylhet STT

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Deposition of statement of prosecution witnesses in one of the two cases filed in connection with the grenade attack on British High Commissioner Anwar Chowdhury continued for the 8th day yesterday. The judge started recording statements of PWs on August 26.

Dipyoman Sarker, Sylhet Divisional Speedy Trial Tribunal Judge yesterday recorded deposition Matur Rahman. With this, deposition of 19 PWs was recorded against a total of 57.

The court on Tuesday recorded deposition of police constable Jibon Miah and NGO official MH Khokan, who was injured in the incident.

Three persons were killed and Bangladesh-born British High Commissioner Anwar Chowdhury and 70 others were injured in the grenade attack on May 21, 2004 on the premises of the shrine of Hajrat Shahjalal (RA) in Sylhet.

Thosw killed were Special Branch Assistant Sub-Inspector of Police Kamal Uddin, civilians Habibur Rahman Habib and Zobayer Ahmed Rubel.

## Workshop on child rights held in Satkhira

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Speakers at a view-exchange meeting yesterday called for creating awareness to protect rights of the children in line with the Child Rights Convention of the United Nations.

They emphasised the need for joint efforts by the government and non-government organisations (NGOs) to eliminate child labour.

It was organised by World Vision and Sodesh, a local NGO. Officials, journalists, lawyers and NGO representatives took part in the meeting held at the deputy commissioner's conference with Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Mahmud Hasan in the chair.

"One of the main contradictions in our society is our attitude towards children. Laws protecting children are not implemented properly", the ADC said.

Civil society members should come forward to create awareness about child rights, he said.

The speakers called upon the government to take steps to eliminate child labour.



PHOTO: STAR

Women from villages queue for voter registration at Balizuri in remote Tahirpur upazila in Sylhet yesterday.

# Voter registration begins in Sylhet division

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Voter registration with photos began in Sylhet division yesterday through a programme in remote Tahirpur, a haor upazila in Sunamganj district.

Sylhet Divisional Commissioner Aziz Hasan formally inaugurated the programme. Brig Gen Morshedul Haque of joint forces, Sunamganj Deputy Commissioner Sabar Hossain and other officials were present at the inaugural programme at Balijuri union.

Voters were brought to the centre from villages by mechanised boats.

The work will be done in two phases, election officials said. Listing of voters in Balijuri, Sripur Dakshin and Tahirpur Sadar unions will continue till September 19.

In the second phase, registration will be done in Badaghat, Bardal Uttar and in Bardal Dakshin unions.

Work of the third phase will start from September 29 and will continue till October 6 in the rest Sripur

Uttar union.

Sixty-eight supervisors and 335 enumerators are working in 40 registration centres in Tahirpur upazila.

Every day, data of 4799 voters will be recorded. Officials said they are hopeful of completing the job in the upazila in 25 days.

One hundred laptop computers and other equipment have been supplied for the work in the upazila.

Voter registration in Sunamganj Sadar will begin on October 9.

# Recover 1,375 acre grabbed land in Ghoraghat

## Ex-army men urge caretaker govt

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

An association of retired army men has urged the caretaker government to recover their 1,375 acres of land grabbed by musclemen in Ghoraghat upazila.

Ghoraghat Retired Army Men's Association president Habibur Rahman read out a press statement that the musclemen are depriving them of their allotted land and many of them are now living in miseries in different places.

Its leaders said at a press conference at Dinajpur Press Club the land was leased to them for their rehabilitation under a project of

Military Family Rehabilitation Programme.

Later, the District Armed Force Association established five colonies on the land in Ghoraghat upazila. The colonies are Nurzahanpur, Osmanpur, Khodadatpur, Haydarnagar and Alisarabad.

The colonies were allotted among 264 ex-army men. But the record volume of Phulbari Sub-Registry Office was burnt to ashes during the Liberation War in 1971.

Dinajpur Land Commission office is yet to record it anew, alleged ex-army men.

Taking advantage of it, about 50 musclemen created forged

documents and started living in the colonies depriving the genuine allottees. They also threatened the retired army men to face the dire consequences if they resist them.

Later, Military Family Rehabilitation Programme Officer Major Md Alamgir Shiddiqui urged Dinajpur Land Commission office to investigate the allegations against the musclemen on September 05.

Ghoraghat Retired Army Men's Association members Mizanur Rahman, Golam Rabbani, Abul Kalam Azad, Mozibur Rahman and Zahurul Islam were present at the press conference.



PHOTO: STAR

The Balashi Ghat railway yard in Gaibandha went under water yesterday as the Brahmaputra swelled again, inundating vast areas in the second spate of flooding in the current season.

## Bangladeshi killed by Indians

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

At least one Bangladeshi farmer was killed and two others were critically injured as Indian mob beat them indiscriminately on suspicion of cattle litters at Sharyal Jhoth opposite Tetulia border in Panchagarh district Tuesday night, BDR sources said.

The dead was identified as Moznun Miah, 40, of Sharyal Jhoth village in Tetulia upazila in Panchagarh district. Indian mob handed over the body to BSF personnel of Haptia camp in India.

The injured are Md Rustam Ali and Shubed Ali, of Aziznagar village in the same upazila.

# Set up coal-fired power plants in Northern districts

## Rangpur chamber demands

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

Speakers in a seminar in Rangpur yesterday suggested extraction of coal from northern region mines and setting up coal-based power plants to meet the need.

The seminar was organised jointly by Rangpur Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) and Greater Rangpur Welfare Somiti, Dhaka. It was held at RCCI conference room.

They urged the government not to pay heed to those who are

obstructing extraction of coal from the region.

RCCI president Mostafa Azad Choudhury presided over the seminar while president of Greater Rangpur Welfare Somiti and also former National Board of Revenue (NBR) executive chairman Nazrul Islam moderated it.

Four keynote papers on 'Development of Greater Rangpur and Northern Region: Problems and Potentiality' were presented at the seminar.

Former chairman of Bangladesh

Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC) and former chief engineer of Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) Monwar Hosen suggested in the seminar that the government should set up two urea fertiliser plants in Rangpur or any other places in northern region.

Former chairman of Bangladesh Power Development Board Brig Gen (Rtd) MA Malek and vice-president of Greater Rangpur Welfare Somiti MA Mojib addressed among others in the seminar.

## Move to resolve land dispute with Khasia people

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

At last the district administration has taken initiative to resolve the land related problems of indigenous people living in different forest areas of Moulvibazar district.

The administration at a recent meeting decided to form committees at district and upazila levels to resolve the land dispute between indigenous people and forest department.

Moulvibazar deputy commissioner, members of joint force, forest department officials, leaders of indigenous communities and Union Parishad leaders were present at the meeting.

Hundreds of cases on land dispute between indigenous people and forest department are pending with courts, the sources said.

The Indigenous people say that they are living and using forest lands for generations. They have been contributing to the national economy through betel leaf and jum cultivation, which are their only sources of income.

They always preserve forest for their own interest, while the forest department says indigenous people have occupied government forest lands and are destroying

forest resources.

There are large number of betel leaf gardens (Paan Punjee) in hills of Srimongal, Kamalganj, Kulaura, Baralekha, Rajnagar and Juri upazilas in Moulvibazar district. About 10,000 Khasia people live there and cultivate betel leaf.

Talking to this correspondent, indigenous community leaders Monika Khangla, Anil Yang and Kailash Suching said they are using the lands since British period through payment of revenue.

After land survey in 1956, the land were recorded in the name of concerned Punjee chiefs.

They claimed that they are being harassed by forest department through false cases.

Abul Bashar Miah, divisional forest officer (DFO) in Sylhet, claimed that the indigenous Khasia community people created betel leaf gardens on forest lands.

Deputy Commissioner Md Alkama Siddiquee said, "I have taken initiative to resolve the land ownership problem. To find a way out, committees at district and upazila levels were formed. We convinced the indigenous leaders that we are their brothers and are sincere to solve their problems".

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