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Haji Selim grapples with legal blitz

Settles 17 cases through 'mutual understanding'; 120 cases still pending

CHAITANYA CHANDRA HALDER and SHAKHAWAT LITON

Former Awami League lawmaker Haji Mohammad Selim, who is facing a staggering 120 cases on various charges, has filed petitions for withdrawal of 65 of them, the highest number of appeals filed by an individual.

Selim's counsel Pran Nath told The Daily Star that on Selim's directive he is preparing to file petitions for withdrawal of the remaining cases. "In a couple of days, I will file petitions for withdrawal of another 20 cases," he said.

He said the AL leader faces 120 cases while another 17 cases were disposed of through "mutual understanding" between the plaintiffs and the defendant.

Officials at the Dhaka district magistrate's office said over 1,500 petitions have been filed since the government declared that it would withdraw cases filed with "political motives".

The charges Selim is facing include murder, attempt to murder, extortion, theft, holding unlawful assembly, and obstructing police from discharge duties. Most of the 65 cases Selim has appealed for withdrawal were filed during the tenure of the last BNP-led alliance government.

Selim, who was elected MP on AL ticket in the June 12, 1996 election in Lalbagh constituency, allegedly patronised building up of a cadre group and if he is acquitted of the large number of charges, it will exceed the previous record.

Former BNP lawmaker of Lalbagh constituency Nasir Uddin Ahmed Pintu, political rival of Selim, was given acquittal in 76 lawsuits during the BNP-led alliance government's rule, sources at the metropolitan public prosecutor's office said.

Selim, also joint secretary general of Dhaka city unit of AL, was sent to jail on Wednesday after he surrendered before a Dhaka court in connection with a corruption case in which he was convicted for 13 years' imprisonment in absentia.

Selim was once the ward commissioner of Lalbagh area from BNP but he left the party after being deprived of nomination and joined the AL prior to the June 12, 1996 parliamentary elections.

He lost the October 2001 parliamentary election to Pintu.

Of the 65 cases, Selim faces three cases for killing, seven for theft, one for extortion, 10 for attempting to murder, 28 for holding unlawful assembly and damaging vehicles, nine for obstructing the work of the police and seven for keeping illegal arms.

The cases were filed under the law and order disruption act, Special Powers Act, arms and explosive substances act, company act, Anti-Corruption Commission Act and the penal code with different police stations.

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South Korean ex-president takes his life

AFP, Seoul

Former South Korean president Roh Moo-Hyun, who was at the centre of a multi-million dollar corruption probe, plunged to his death off a mountainside yesterday in an apparent suicide.

Police said they were investigating whether Roh, who held office from 2003-2008, killed himself. A former aide said the ex-leader jumped off a cliff after leaving a suicide note.

Roh, 62, had left home around dawn with a bodyguard and climbed a mountain near his retirement village of Bongha close to the southeast coast.

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Pak troops storm into Swat town

Key commander among 17 killed in street battle

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistani troops stormed into the main town in the Swat valley and fought street battles yesterday in a bid to capture the capital of the northwest district from Taliban control, the military said.

Chief military spokesman Major General Athar Abbas said parts of Mingora had already been cleared and that 17 militants, including an important commander, were killed during the most recent fighting of Pakistan's northwest offensive.

The ground assault on Mingora, a city with an estimated population of around 300,000 -- of whom many have fled -- marks the most crucial part of the military's blistering offensive against the Taliban in the scenic valley.

Mingora has effectively been under Taliban control for weeks and -- as the administrative and business hub of the entire district -- its capture is essential for the military to be able to declare ultimate victory in Swat.

Pakistan says up to 15,000 troops are taking on 4,000 well-armed fighters in Swat, where Islamabad has ordered a battle to eradicate fighters who advanced to within 100 kilometres (60 miles) of the national capital.

"Today the most important phase of opera-

tion Rah-e-Rast, the clearance of Mingora, has commenced," the military said in a statement on its website.

"In the last 24 hours, security forces have entered Mingora; 17 miscreants-terrorists, including important miscreant commander were killed," added the statement, written in English.

The military reported intense exchanges of fire and said one would-be suicide bomber was shot dead and that another "suicide vehicle" rigged with explosives had been destroyed.

Pakistani troops had been slowly tightening their encirclement of the city for days and Abbas said Saturday that militant supplies had been cut off.

"Mingora was surrounded from four directions and militant supplies were cut off," Abbas told a news conference.

On Friday, he told reporters in Swat, a stunning mountainous district once popular with tourists but ripped apart by a two-year Taliban insurgency, that only five to 10 percent of Mingora's population of 300,000 remained in town.

Pakistan has said Islamist extremists based in Swat threaten the sovereignty of the nuclear-armed nation, hailing operations launched

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SIEMENS SCAM

Govt to check if bribe money used for JMB

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government will soon form a probe committee to investigate whether the money given by Siemens as bribe was used to fund the banned Islamist outfit Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB).

"A probe committee would be formed in a week to investigate irregularities including the Siemens scam in the telecommunications sector during the tenure of BNP-led alliance government," Post and Telecommunications minister Raziuuddin Ahmed Razu told reporters yesterday after a discussion.

Bangladesh Mobile Phone Business Association organised the discussion at the city's Sonargaon Hotel to observe the World Telecommunications Day-2009.

The probe committee will also investigate alleged irregularities and corruption during the previous BNP-Jamaat-led alliance government.

The minister's announcement coincided with a feature run by a US-based news service site 'Frontline' indicating that former post and telecommunications minister Aminul Haque, allegedly involved in the Siemens scam, had a link to JMB responsible for a series of bomb blasts across the country on August 16, 2005.

The report, however, said that there was no evidence to prove that the bribe offered by Siemens went to the JMB fund.

Earlier Aminul was sentenced to 31 years in prison in 2007 for aiding and abetting JMB.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

Madhav new Nepali PM

AFP, Kathmandu

Nepal's parliament yesterday chose veteran communist leader Madhav Kumar Nepal as the nation's new prime minister following the collapse of the Maoist-led government earlier this month.

Madhav Kumar Nepal, 56, senior leader of the Communist Party of

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Prayer Timing

	May 24	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-05	4-40	
Zohr	12-45	1-15	
Asr	5-00	5-15	
Maghrib	6-40	6-45	
Esha	8-00	8-30	

Source: Islamic Foundation



Residents of Tikatuli Sweeper Colony suffering from acute shortage of water desperately try to collect water from a lorry of Dhaka City Corporation on Tikatuli-Narinda Road in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN

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PAK WAR CRIMINALS

Govt mulls trial in absentia

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is taking steps to try Pakistani war criminals of 1971 in absentia and the trial would be completed within the tenure of the present government, said Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Shafiqur Ahmed yesterday.

He was speaking at Bangladesh Sanglap organised by BBC Bangla Service at the Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in the capital.

"We are committed to trying the war criminals within the tenure of our government

ensuring that the trial procedures meet international standard," said Shafiqur.

"We might not be able to try the Pakistani war criminals bringing them to Bangladesh but we are taking steps to try them in absentia," he said.

The law minister said the government has asked the authorities concerned to investigate the deaths in crossfire.

PBN leader and former minister barrister Rafiqul Islam Mia said all political parties in the country are now demanding the trial of war criminals. But if the issue is left unsettled, any quarter might cash in on it to woo voters.

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2 Jubo League men killed

Another succumbs to May 9 bullet injury

STAR REPORT

Two Jubo League men were killed at Kanar Ali village under Jhikargachha upazila in Jessor Friday night as unknown criminals threw a bomb at them and cut their throats.

The deceased are Ruhul Amin, 42, son of Siddique Hossain of Sadipur village and a probable chairman candidate for the forthcoming election of Nirbaskhola Union Parishad, and Ansar Ali, 38, a Jubo League activist of Kanar Ali village.

Meanwhile, ward Jubo League leader Manzurul Hasan Rinku who sustained bullet wound on May 9 succumbed to his injury

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Online Poll

Do you think Bangladesh will qualify in the super eights of the next month's ICC World Twenty20 tournament?

Yes (63.0%)

No (34.9%)

No Comments (2.1%)

Total votes: 381

TODAY'S POLL

Should the government form a special task force to save the rivers from encroachment?

Please cast your vote at www.thedailystar.net