

## EMBEZZLEMENT Lawmaker Rony sued

OUR CORRESPONDENT,  
Patuakhali

A case was filed against Awami League lawmaker Golam Maula Rony and 14 others with a Patuakhali court yesterday in connection with their alleged involvement in embezzling Tk 79 crore from development projects.

Jamal Hossain of Dashmina upazila in the district filed the case with the District and Sessions Judge's Court.

The court fixed August 20 to start hearing on the case, said Abdul Khaleque, plaintiff of the case.

According to the case statement, Rony, his close associate Iqbal Mahmud Liton and 13 of his party men misappropriated at least Tk 79 crore of different government projects in the upazila.

In the last four and a half years, Rony and his associates had drawn money without doing any work in the projects, it said.

The accused misappropriated Tk 6 crore from test relief project, Tk 10 crore from food for work project, Tk 12 crore from 120-day project, Tk 20 crore from 20-day project, Tk 5 crore from programmes for ultra poor, Tk 3 crore from fishermen project, Tk 10 crore from road construction and repair projects, Tk 3 crore by selling rents on government land and Tk 10 crore from education fund.

Earlier, nobody dared to file any case against them in connection with their alleged involvement in the embezzlement as they were influential ruling party men, the statement read.

The plaintiff alleged that he went to Dashmina Police Station on August 4 and Anti-Corruption Commission's office in Patuakhali on August 8 to lodge formal complaints against the accused.

But they did not record his complaints, he added.

## Export

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"Still, Bangladesh is a lucrative destination for many retailers and brands due to its price competitiveness," Shubhashish said.

In July, knitwear export was up 25.24 percent to \$1.25 billion on the same month of the last fiscal year. Similarly, woven garment export grew by 27.02 percent to \$1.27 billion.

"We need not to be worried because we are still a strong player in garment business globally," said Shahidullah Azim, vice-president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, a platform of garment makers.



A team of Detective Branch of police conducts a raid at Odhikar's head office at Gulshan in the capital yesterday evening.

PHOTO:  
COURTESY

## Odhikar secy remanded

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that tarnished the image of the state, the government and law enforcement agencies.

On June 10, Odhikar published online a report titled, "Assembly of Hefazat Islam Bangladesh and Human Rights Violation".

The rights body claimed that 61 people, not 13 as estimated by the government, died in the early hours of May 6, when law enforcers flushed several thousand Hefajat activists out of Shapla Chattar in Motijheel.

Charges were brought against Khan under Section-57 (1) and (2) of the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Act, which states that publication of fake material on website or other electronic forms will be regarded as an offence if it "causes to deteriorate or creates possibility to deteriorate law and order, prejudice the image of the State or person or causes to hurt or may hurt religious belief or instigate against any person or organization."

Meanwhile, DB police raided Odhikar's Gulshan office around 8:45pm in search of documents in connection with the case, and seized three laptops and two computers, said Obaidul Haque, senior

assistant commissioner of DB (north) Gulshan Zone.

Speaking at a press briefing at the DMP media office yesterday, Monirul Islam, joint commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP), claimed that no lethal weapons, "only tear gas shells, sound grenades and boiled water were used to drive the Hefajat men out of the capital's important business centre."

Referring to the violent incidents in Paltan and Motijheel between May 5 morning and early hours of May 6, he said, "A total of 13 people, including police officials, transport workers and two pedestrians, died in those incidents."

On the pictures used in the report, Monirul said though Odhikar's report was based on the happenings of that night (early hours of May 6), some pictures were of those who died earlier in the day (May 5), and some were of people who are still alive.

Asked whether police had the authority to detain Khan without an arrest warrant, Monirul said though charges were brought against Khan under the ICT Act, he was arrested under section-54 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC).

Section-54 of the CrPC gives law enforcers the authority to arrest anyone on suspicion.

Khan was produced before the Court of Metropolitan Magistrate Amit Kumar Dey around 2:30 pm. DB Inspector Ashraful Islam, also the investigating officer of the case, prayed for placing Khan on a 10-day remand.

Two officials of the Netherlands and the Swedish embassies were present at the court hearing. The Netherlands was a donor in one of Odhikar's projects, an Odhikar official told The Daily Star.

Khan's counsel AJ Mohammad Ali appealed to the court for granting Khan bail and rejecting the remand prayer. He told the court that the allegations brought against his client were vague, as the report had been posted online months back.

Taskin Fahmina, senior researcher and programme coordinator of Odhikar, said when Khan returned home with his wife and two children by a private car around 10:30pm, eight men, identifying themselves as DB officials, forced their way through the gate of Khan's Gulshan house.

They didn't show any reason for the arrest. They only said they had instructions from higher authority to detain Khan, she added.

When Odhikar officials went to Gulshan Police Station to file a GD around 3:00am yesterday, police

refused to accept it, saying they were aware of Khan's detention by DB police, said Taskin.

She claimed that Adilur was deprived of his rights, as the law enforcers didn't file any case before arresting him.

Odhikar Director Nasiruddin Elan told The Daily Star on Saturday that DB police have been following the organisation's activities for several days.

The law enforcers had earlier called Khan to their office but he didn't go there, said Elan.

Speaking to journalists at his Secretariat office yesterday, Home Minister Muhiddin Khan Alamgir declined to comment on Khan's arrest.

He, however, said the law doesn't permit anyone to violate others' rights in the name of protecting human rights.

The minister said it was an offence to tarnish the country's image by indulging in propaganda in the name of human rights.

Expressing concern at the arrest of the Odhikar secretary, BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia last night said Khan was arrested on the government's instructions.

Demanding his immediate release, the BNP chief in a statement said the arrest of the Odhikar secretary reflected the government's autocratic character.

## Top Japanese

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agreement, plans have been drawn out to survey all factories to identify risks within the next two years and subsequently carry out reforms to improve working conditions, Fast Retailing said in a statement issued on August 8.

Fast Retailing on May 27 began its own investigation into fire and building safety at the factories of its manufacturing partners in Bangladesh, according to the statement.

"With the sudden illness of a key union official and a strike threat in Bangladesh, we feel that the meetings will be more fruitful at a later date," says IndustriALL General Secretary Jyrki Raina.

All major brands and signatories are invited and we are expecting a high level of attendance."

The estimated long-term compensations to the victims of the Rana Plaza collapse amount to more than 54 million euros (\$71 million). For the Tazreen fire, the figure is 4.3 million euros (\$5.7 million), according to the statement.

Jamaat's 48-hr hartal from tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP's key ally Jamaat-e-Islami will enforce a 48-hour countrywide hartal from tomorrow morning as the main opposition aims to step up street agitation for a non-partisan polls-time government.

Before the anti-government agitation programme generates political heat, Eid holidaymakers will have to face immense sufferings while returning to work places due to Jamaat's dawn-to-dusk hartal.

On August 1, Jamaat called the 48-hour shutdown from August 12 to protest a High Court verdict declaring illegal the party's registration with the Election Commission.

The sudden call for hartal at the end of Ramadan threw into uncertainty millions of home-goers' travel plans.

On August 6, the party deferred by a day the 48-hour hartal it called for August 12-13, leaving the Eid holidaymakers struggling again to reschedule their return trip.

BNP, however, has yet to decide whether it would extend support to Jamaat's 48-hour countrywide hartal.

"The party high commands will discuss it [the issue related to Jamaat's hartal] and announce its decision," Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, a BNP national standing committee member, told The Daily Star last night.

Party sources said the BNP chief would sit with her party's national standing committee members and top leaders of BNP-led alliance components on Wednesday and Thursday to finalise the alliance's next course of action.

While exchanging Eid greetings with journalists on Friday, BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia said her party led-opposition alliance would soon enforce agitation programmes.

The same day, BNP acting secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir said different agitation programmes including series of hartal and road blockade will be enforced in the coming days.

The ruling Awami League leaders had already said in different programmes that they would also take to the streets to foil the opposition's "anarchy" in the name of agitation programmes.

## NBR cuts VAT

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NBR claim of more than Tk 3,000 crore as VAT for SIM replacement from four mobile operators.

The tax authority has already formed a joint panel, with representatives from the telecom companies and Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission, to settle the issue.

Muhith had told private television station Channel i on Thursday that the resignation would be accepted and a new chairman would be appointed.

Huq could not be reached for comment, despite several attempts.

Normally, the government appoints the chairman of Grameen Bank for three years. But when Huq was appointed, the finance ministry did not mention his tenure, an official of the bank said.

Earlier between 1982 and 2003, he worked for the bank as a general manager and director for research, training, planning and special programmes.

In media focus since his appointment, Huq hit newspaper headlines several times for controversial moves that many experts deemed unwarranted and

expressed concern at the arrest of the Odhikar secretary, BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia last night said Khan was arrested on the government's instructions.

Banking Division Secretary M Aslam Alam said yesterday that they were awaiting a decision from Finance Minister AMA Muhith -- whether the resignation letter would be accepted, and a new chairman would be named.

Before joining Grameen Bank as its chairman on January 10, 2011, Huq served as the managing director of Enterprise Development Company Ltd, a private sector financial organisation.

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