MP returns bribe taken by Jubo League leader

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Natore

Six months after a Jubo League leader took money from villagers promising electricity connections to their homes in Gurudaspur of Natore, the local lawmaker returned the money on Saturday.

Younus Ali, leader of ruling Awami League's youth wing Jubo League, and his followers collected Tk 2,500 each from 47 villagers of Nawpara, saying the money would be paid to Palli Bidyut officials as bribes.

Khorshed Ali, Shefali Begum, and a number of other villagers claimed that Younus mounted pressure on them to pay the money.

The matter also drew local lawmaker Abdul Quddus' attention.

"I came to know about the matter six months ago and asked Younus to return the money to the villagers but he did not pay any heed to it," said Quddus.

He said Younus finally caved and returned the money.

Younus told The Daily Star over the phone that he had taken the money to bribe the officials at the Palli Bidyut office. Since Palli Bidyut gave the electricity connection without taking bribes, he returned the money to the villagers through the lawmaker.

During the inauguration ceremony of the new electricity connections on Saturday, Quddus returned the money to the villagers in envelopes.

"Now I'm feeling relieved," he said. Nitai Ranjan, the general manager of Natore-2 Palli Bidyut, thanked the awmaker. On whether any action would be

taken against Younus, the lawmaker said a decision was yet to be made regarding that.

US man arrested for seeking to join IS in Syria

AFP, Washington

A US man was arrested for attempting to fly to Syria to join the Islamic State jihadist group, while an accomplice was arrested for supporting his plan, the Department of Justice said Saturday. Joseph Hassan Farrokh, 28, and

Mahmoud Amin Mohamed Elhassan, 25, both of Woodbridge, in the state of Virginia, were charged "for criminal activity relating to Farrokh's attempt to travel to Syria" to join IS, the DoJ said.

FBI agents arrested Farrokh Friday at a local airport as he sought to board a flight to Chicago, "where he intended to board a flight to Amman, Jordan, with an ultimate destination of Syria," the statement read.

Elhassan was arrested Friday in Woodbridge after he returned from driving Farrokh to catch the flight.

Farrokh, a US citizen originally from Pennsylvania, was charged "with attempting to provide material support and resources" to the IS, "a designated foreign terrorist organiza-

Elhassan, a legal permanent US resident originally from Sudan, was charged "with aiding and abetting" Farrokh's plans.

Farrokh, who had been trying to leave the United States and join IS in Syria since at least November 20, met several times "with confidential human sources in attempts to work out the details" of flying to Syria, the statement read.

Elhassan introduced Farrokh "to a person who Elhassan believed maintained connections to individuals engaged in jihad overseas."

On Friday Elhassan picked up Farrokh and drove him to approximately a mile (1.6 kilometers) from the airport. Farrokh then took a taxi, checked in for his flight, "cleared security and was arrested," the statement read.

Elhassan drove home to Woodbridge, where he was intercepted and interviewed by FBI agents, but lied repeatedly "in response to

ROM pAGE 16 the party's Rangpur unit council, said a press release of the party.

Party insiders said Ershad's announcement indicates that his brother is going to be the next chief of the JP which has three ministers in the cabinet.

Ershad, also special envoy to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, left the capital yesterday on a three-day visit to his hometown Rangpur.

In the council at Rangpur, Ershad also announced that the party's cen-

tral council would be held in April. He also named JP presidium mem-

bers GM Quader and ABM Ruhul Amin Hawlader as convener and member-secretary of the council preparation committee.

Ershad said the party's charter will have to be amended to create the post

of co-chairman. He also said three JP ministers would quit the cabinet in consultation with Sheikh Hasina soon to restore the image of the party as the

main opposition in parliament.

Sayedee files

fROM pAGE 16 On January 12, the government filed a review petition with the SC seeking death penalty for Sayedee.

instructed his lawyers, who went to

meet him at Kashimpur Jail-1 in Gazipur, to submit a petition on his behalf to the SC seeking acquittal of him the charges. After his review petition was filed yesterday, Sayedee's principal counsel Khandker Mahbub Hossain told reporters at the Supreme Court Bar

Association auditorium that the government has no legal right to move a review petition seeking capital punishment for Sayedee. Sentencing an accused is the discretionary power of the judges if an offence is found to be proved, but the government cannot pray to the judges to increase the punishment, he said,

submitted the review petition to create a pressure on Sayedee. Meanwhile, Attorney General Mahbubey Alam told The Daily Star that there is no legal bar for the government to move a review petition before the SC seeking an increase in punish-

adding that the government had

He said his office was planning to submit an application to the SC for

fixing a date for hearing the review petitions.

The International Crimes Tribunal-1 on February 28, 2013, sentenced The following day, Sayedee Sayedee to death for killing Ibrahim Kutti and one Bisa Bali in Pirojpur in 1971, even though it had found him guilty on eight charges filed against

> Following two appeals by Sayedee and the government, a five-member bench of the apex court on September 17, 2014, delivered a short order based on majority views commuting Sayedee's death sentence to imprisonment until death. Of the judges, Justice Md

> Muzammel Hossain (now retired), Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha (now the chief justice), and Justice Hasan Foez Siddique gave Sayedee imprisonment until death. They sentenced him to 12 years'

> rigorous imprisonment for killing Ibrahim Kutti and imprisonment until death for murdering Bisa Bali in Pirojpur. The SC bench also found Sayedee guilty on three more charges and acquitted him of three others.

> Justice Md Abdul Wahhab Miah acquitted him of all charges, and Justice AHM Shamsuddin Choudhury Manik (now retired) upheld the capital punishment.

Feud over money?

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ment of the convict.

accusing some unknown persons. In the case statement, Shafiqul said

Taslima had been hiding in Narayanganj in fear of Shahjahan and his wife Nazma from whom Taslima had borrowed Tk 12 lakh. Shafiqul, a private car driver, men-

tioned that the couple had threatened Taslima over the matter. He also mentioned that a man named Mahfuz used to stalk Lamia, and this could be a reason for the murders. A senior police official of

Narayanganj said primary investigation found that Taslima indeed fled from Dhanmondi area after failing to pay the loan. "We suspect the killers went to Narayanganj from Dhaka." Md Asaduzzaman, resident medical officer at General (Victoria) Hospital in

sies were conducted, said there were marks of strangle on their throats as well. "But they were hit abruptly in their heads by heavy objects. This caused internal bleeding in their brains, leading to their deaths," he told report-

Narayanganj where the victims' autop-

ers yesterday. The nature of the hitting indicates the perpetrators were not professional killers, he added.

Police recovered the bodies from the ground floor of a six-storey building at Baburail in Narayanganj on Saturday night.

Taslima's sister-in-law Hazera Begum went to the house around 9:00pm and she found the door locked from outside and could not reach them by phone, police said.

She along with some neighbours then broke into the flat and found the

bodies. She later called the police.

Cops picked up six to seven people, including Lamia's (one of the victims) husband Sharif, for questioning. Sharif works at a mobile phone shop in the capital. He went to Narayanganj on Friday.

Nothing inside the flat has any sign of damage and nothing seems to be stolen either, police said.

Morshedul, another victim, had a sewing factory near the building where the killing happened. Those working there were his relatives. The two kids -- Shanto and Sumaiya -- started going to schools in the area

only recently. Shanto was still wearing his school uniform and had the schoolbag on his back when police recovered the bodies. Taslima rented the house one and a half months ago. The family members would hardly make any noise or

a neighbour. Several other neighbours said they did not know the victims in person.

receive any guests, said Monir Hossain,

Contacted, Khandker Mahid Uddin, superintendent of police in Narayanganj, said police were gathering information about the personal and social lives of the victims.

Asked about their findings, he said it was too early to tell, but added the killers might have been known to the victims.

Mahfuzul Haque Nuruzzaman, deputy inspector general (Dhaka range) of police, said police would perform a viscera test of the food collected from the crime scene to determine if the victims were drugged to unconsciousness before the murder.

Rab Director General Benazir Ahmed said the elite force would conduct a "shadow investigation" into the incident.

The miracle village

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per month, up from a paltry \$12 in 1995.

Sixty of the 235 families in the village are millionaires. Every year, their fields yield bountiful crops of millets, onions, and potatoes that make it hard to imagine that only a few years ago they were barren stretches of land that no one cared about.

Up until the mid 90's, Hiware Bazar was indeed a poverty-stricken village reeling in the aftermath of a severe drought in 1972.

"The peace was shattered," recalls Raosaheb Rauji Panwar, an 82-year-old villager. "People became irritable and restless as the struggle to stay alive became severe."

Frustrated with the situation, about 90 percent of the villagers moved to nearby towns and cities in search of odd jobs. The village sarpanch (leader) at the time was just an elderly figurehead with no vision and the youth of the village soon realised they need a strong leader.

So they got together in 1989 and decided to approach a young man named Popatrao Pawar, the only villager with a graduate degree. Pawar wasn't interested at first, but the villagers' persistence finally wore him down. When he was unanimously elected sarpanch, he decided that the time had come for Hiware Bazar to shine.

sarpanch was to convince the villagers to close down about 22 liquor shops. Giving up one of the only things that brought them comfort, or at least an illusion of it, was not easy, but they eventually agreed. The new leader then arranged for

loans to poor farmers from banks and used some of the funds to start projects to improve water supply in the region. Pawar started rainwater harvesting and water conservations schemes, and got the villagers to build 52 earthen bunds,

32 stone bunds, two percolation tanks and nine check dams. "Villagers realised how the scarcity

of water was the source of all our

problems," Pawar explained.

The projects worked. Although Hiware Bazar only received 15 inches of annual rainfall, the ponds and trenches they built saved every single drop of water, preventing it from flowing out of the village. After just one monsoon, the irrigation area increased from 50 acres to 170 hect-

As the groundwater level began to rise, so did the villagers' morale. Many people who had left the village began to return.

Pawar set up systems so that two to three families could help each other on their farms, fostering a sense of community and avoiding the cost of hiring laborers. Today, they are able to harvest multiple crops, even taming and ploughing stubborn, rocky land for farming.

Hiware Bazar is now a model village, with a growing sense of discipline and order. The roads are clean and wellplanned, cement houses have long replaced the derelict huts of old, liquor and tobacco have been banned, as have open defecation and urination. Every single house has a toilet, a fact that cannot be said about most villages in

Brian mid peoply ale growingly happy and proud of their achievements. attack survivors One of the first things Pawar did as of horror

AFP, Ouagadougou

"We didn't know if we would get out. We tried calling our families, to tell them we weren't sure we were going to see them again," said Suzanne Songa-Ouedraogo, her voice trembling as she recalled Friday night's jihadist attack that killed 29 people in the Burkina Faso capital of Ouagadougou.

The Burkinabe artist, one of the survivors of the hours-long assault, was treated Saturday afternoon at the Yalgado-Ouedraogo hospital for a gunshot wound to the arm.

'Asol BNP'

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Officer-in-Charge Morshed Alam of Paltan Police Station confirmed the incident.

BNP Joint Secretary General Rizvi Ahmed at a briefing around 5:00pm said, "It [Asol BNP] is nothing but part of an evil design of the government to split the BNP." On January 2, a clash broke out

with the BNP activists after some 100 "Asol BNP" men made an unsuccessful attempt to occupy the office. Nasim came in the spotlight when

he on January 9 last year alleged that the leadership of Khaleda Zia and her son Tarique Rahman in the BNP was "illegal". The "Asol BNP" convener, who

claims to be a member of pro-BNP Jatiyatabadi Krishak Dal in Jessore's Chowgachha, says he wants to occupy the BNP central office to implement his plan to "reform and reorganise" the BNP. Talking to The Daily Star yesterday,

Nasim said he would make fresh attempts "any moment" to take over the office. About Nasim, Rizvi at the press

conference said, "He is just a street boy. He has gone mad. Who is he to demand such reforms in the BNP? He actually is a government agent."

India's Bhel fROM pAGE 1

"The exact financing of the project can be disclosed after completing the financial closure. It usually takes 12 to 14 months to complete the financial closure. However, we have taken some advance preparations which would help us close the finances by July," informs the source. As the government wishes the

company to install the Rampal power plant within its tenure, the Friendship company aims at completing the task by the end of 2019. The company has been formed

with equal stakes of Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB) and India's National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC). The project was originally expected

to be awarded by early 2014 with the target to begin commercial power generation from 2017. But in the face of environmental concerns, the authorities took extra time to refine tender guidelines and requirements.

The Friendship company will fund 30 percent of the project cost and the rest comes in the form of loans. Located 14 kilometres northwest

off the Sundarbans and four kilometres from the declared ecologically critical area (ECA), the selection of the Rampal site for a coal power plant drew a lot of flak. While the government keeps on

defending the plant saying its emission would not harm the forest, most critics believe the damage would take place while transporting coal to the plant site through the rivers inside the Sundarbans.

The plant will need 3.2 million tonnes of coal a year. Imported coal on 80,000-tonne capacity ships will anchor at the Akram Point. From there, lighter ships will load coal containers with maximum 10,000tonne capacity and transport those to the power plant's jetty on the Passur river.

In other words, several smaller vessels carrying coal will ply the rivers

every day, all the year round. As per a government decision, for every kilowatt power sales from this plant, the Rampal locality will get Tk 0.03. This roughly totals Tk 27 crore or more a year. This fund will be used for building roads, hospitals and other infrastructures in Rampal.

10 cops

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Abbasuddin and Arifur Rahman; and constable Tapas Kumar Mandal were suspended for two years, they added. However, departmental investiga-

tion and trial against Zillur Rahman, the then deputy commissioner of BMP, were yet to be completed. The 11 BMP police personnel

including Zillur, were accused in a departmental case filed over their alleged connection in creating a "bribe fund" for promotion of 230 BMP cops. Each of the 230 Barisal police members contributed between Tk

30,000 and 50,000 and created a joint fund of around Tk 77 lakh. The money was to be given to "top officials" to speed up their promotions, due since October 2014. Of the money, Tk 17 lakh was deposited to a joint account of ASI

Anisuzzaman, Nayek Kabir Hossain and driver Bablu at a Dutch-Bangla Bank branch in Barisal. They handed the rest of the money over to Zillur to "manage" their pro-

motions, sources said. The 10 lower-level BMP cops were suspended between June 29 and July 4 last year.

The home ministry on July 1 last year suspended Zillur for his involvement in the creation of the bribe fund He was attached to Sylhet police on July 4, 2015.

The security cell of the Police Headquarters started investigation into the matter on June 17, 2015.

Teachers meet PM today

fROM pAGE 16 solve the crisis.

They said the strike would be on today too.

currently outside the country.

period of time, said Prof Nizamul

ministry to keep 25 percent of the

professors in grade 1 and providing

five percent with the status equivalent

to senior secretaries, he told The

finalised our proposal," said Prof Farid

Uddin Ahmed, president of FBUTA.

"We sat today [yesterday] and

Teachers under the banner of

FBUTA have been protesting the eighth

pay scale since May last year, saying it

downgraded their status. They have

been pressing for a four-point charter

of demands including formation of a

In the proposal, teachers urged the

Haque Bhuiyan, a leader of FBUTA.

Meanwhile, leaders of FBUTA presented the education ministry with a package proposal yesterday, the fifth day of the stoppage. Education taries; and upgradation of teachers' Secretary Sohrab Hossain received the proposal as the education minister is

One of the clauses in the proposal teachers' strike. was promotion of professors from

In his petition, Eunus Ali Akond ensure the teachers withdraw the

The SC lawyer also prayed that the HC will direct teachers to attend their classes within 24 hours.

of their rights, Eunus told The Daily Star, citing the petition. Eunus also said teachers could have

was any discrimination in their salary and dignity.

the education of the students, he said, adding that the HC was likely to hear the petition on Monday [today].

First national

Daily Star.

been put on display for three days at the fair inaugurated by Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury yesterday. The Ministry of Agriculture and the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) organised the programme at AKM Giasuddin Milky Auditorium in the capital's Khamarbari.

Bangladesh because arable land here is shrinking. "In that case, you can grow vegetables even in the cities," said Salim Reza, principal scientific officer at Horticulture Research Centre of BARI.

effects and is less prone to pest attacks

Its trial in Bangladesh began in 2006. Having been successful, BARI

is transferring the technology to different institutions like BRAC, Sher-e-Bangla Agriculture University and Bangladesh Agricultural University. Saiful Islam Rigan Khan, managing

the commercial venture was running a

Dozens of other methods being exhibited at the fair include integrated pest management that ensures crop production without the use of pesticides, floating cultivation on water and cooperative agri-marketing approach.

fair gave that message.

varieties, but people don't know about those nutritious vegetables.

meals, he added.

Through the new method, farmers can produce and benefit more, the DG said, adding that the authorities were

trial at Mohakhali in the city since

fROM pAGE 16

Masud Shikder of Mohammadpur Police Station, who allegedly tortured Rabbi on January 9.

SC lawyers AKM Ehsanur Rahman

interest litigation. order on the government to give the

Meanwhile, the one-member committee formed by Dhaka Metropolitan Police to probe the alleged torture on Rabbi submitted its report without any

Masud, who was withdrawn from duty on January 11, was suspended on

and demanded Tk 5 lakh from him. The SI allegedly threatened to kill him in "a shootout" and frame him in narcotics cases if he didn't pay them the money. The police brutality caused a wide-

spread public outrage, and many expressed their anger and frustration on the social media. Talking to reporters at the Supreme

Court Bar Association yesterday, petitioners' lawyer AM Mahbub Uddin Khokon said the writ petition mentioned that policemen led by SI Masud tortured Rabbi in violation of his fundamental rights and the constitu-

should be given compensation," he Mahbub said a police probe into the incident might not be fair and impartial. The petitioners prayed to the HC to ask the government to investigate the incident through a judicial probe

Given the gravity of SI Masud's offence, his suspension is not enough as punishment, he said.

the police authorities, describing the torture on him. The petitioners prayed to the HC to direct the police to accept the application as first information report, said Mahbub.

The HC may hear the petition today,

commission to initiate an independent pay scale for public university teachers.

The Baily Star 11

Other demands include parity of salaries and allowances between senior professors and senior secretaries, and between professors and secre-

Meanwhile, a Supreme Court lawyer challenged the legality of the

strike.

Education is a fundamental right

But they cannot enforce the strike by boycotting classes and hampering

The produce and the method have

Hydroponics is important for

Moreover, the method has no toxic

The technology is not new. It is rather being used to grow vegetables, flowers and fruits in many parts of the world, including Japan, USA, Malaysia, Singapore and India.

director of Bengal Hydroponics, said

Nutrition wise, vegetable is a crucial component in a balanced diet. Bangladesh has 156 types of vegetables. "We have developed many

As people, especially those living in urban areas, learn more about those, they are likely to shift their diets,

Annually Bangladesh produces 1.42 crore tonnes of vegetables, the third largest in the world.

planning to organise such fair at district and upazila levels.

Writ filed for judicial probe

Jahid Hasan filed the petition as public They also prayed to the HC for an

victim a compensation of Tk 3 crore.

recommendations. Details of the probe report submitted on Saturday could not be known.

Saturday. On January 9 night, Masud and his subordinates allegedly beat up Rabbi

Rabbi's physical condition is very bad, and it is doubtful whether he will fully recover from injuries. "So, he

body.

Rabbi submitted an application to

he added.

status in order of precedence.

grade 3 to grade 2 within five years of appealed to the High Court that the government should take steps to their service as professor and a further promotion to grade 1 after a certain

and this strike is depriving the students

their grievances heard in court if there

early last year, training farmers. It is expecting to start export in a few months of vegetables grown using the technology.

Hamidur Rahman, director general of DAE, said food production was now at a crossroads in Bangladesh, and the

Through the fair, we are trying to introduce and popularize them," Hamidur said.

incorporating more vegetables in their

The report gave full details of what happened between SI Masud and Rabbi on January 9. But it didn't make any recommendations, said Biblob Kumar Sarkar, deputy commissioner

Metropolitan Police. "I will not say anything about the report. I have sent it to commissioner sir, and he will decide on the next

Though Biblob received the report on Saturday, he forwarded it to DMP Commissioner Asaduzzaman Mia yesterday.

The commissioner could not be

reached for comments despite repeated attempts. On January 11, DMP Deputy Commissioner Biblob formed a onemember committee comprising Assistant Commissioner Hafiz Al Faruque of Tejgaon division to investi-

Rabbi. Four days later, the police headquarters formed a three-member committee led by Additional DIG (ICT) Harun-ur-Rashid to probe the

incident. The committee is also investigating the alleged police torture on Bikash Chandra Das, a cleaning inspector of Dhaka South City Corporation, in

Jatrabari area on January 15. 18 militants

The IS assault puts the group in control of around 60 percent of Deir Ezzor city, which is capital of the surrounding province of the same name, an oil-rich region that borders

most of the province, but regime forces have dung onto part of the city and a neighbouring air base despite repeated IS attacks. If confirmed, the death toll in the assault would be one of the highest in a

single attack by IS, though the jihadists have carried out mass murders before. In 2014, its fighters killed hundreds of members of the Sunni Shaitat tribe

opposed the jihadists. And in August 2014, the group massacred some 200 Syrian soldiers

gate the alleged police torture on

fROM pAGE 16 It denounced the deaths as a "massacre".

The jihadist group already controls

in Deir Ezzor province after they

when it overran the Tabqa military

and SM Zulfiqure Ali and journalist (Tejgaon division) of Dhaka step," Biblob told The Daily Star.