

Audit un.masks corruption in education establishments

In seven years, officials took Tk 40 crore more than they were entitled to

By Gobinda Bar

A section of officials and employees in the education ministry, five education boards, Madrassah Education Board and the Education Board Computer Centre misappropriated at least Tk 40 crore between 1990 and 1996 through corrupt practices and irregularities.

These include salary without work, salary and allowances more than entitlement, non-adjustment of salaries drawn in advance, fitment in higher scale than entitlement and embezzlement by issuing fake cash memo.

This was unearthed in an audit by the office of the Comptroller and Auditor General concluded recently.

Education ministry cash books showed that the institutions received Tk 23.13 crore from education boards between November 6, 1993 and April 22, 1996 but bank statements showed the amount at Tk 26.45 crore. Another cash book showed a ministry expenditure of Tk 20 crore while bank doc-

uments put it at Tk 21.83 crore. In the two cases, Tk 1.16 crore was found to be embezzled.

A total of 29,000 dollars were paid for procurement of faulty OMR machines and a local agent of the supplying company was given Tk 2.54 lakh as commission. More than Tk 17 lakh was lost on this count.

The Education Ministry also paid Tk 4.59 lakh as 'extra commission' to a local agent for buying OMR machines. The ministry did not seize the security deposit of a supplier for its failure to supply goods as per contract. The ministry also did not maintain any voucher for Tk 44.61 lakh, collected from education boards on the occasion of observing Education Week.

Taka three lakh was lost as the authorities of Dhaka, Comilla, Jessore and Rajshahi Boards did not deduct income tax from various bills they paid. The education ministry deducted at least Tk three lakh as income tax but the amount

was not deposited with the government exchequer.

The Education Board Computer Centre gave Tk 20.67 lakh to a computer service provider without any service for maintenance of 32 OMR machines. But no action was taken against the company.

The computer centre irregularly gave Tk 31,000 to a Senior Assistant Secretary of Education Ministry, ABM Mizanur Rahman. Officials at the computer centre failed to give any satisfactory answer regarding the payment, the audit report said.

An amount of Tk 4.22 lakh was 'virtually embezzled' by a section of officials of the computer centre in the name of giving advance to officials and employees. The money was not adjusted against their salaries and allowances and no action was taken for this.

In the Dhaka Education Board, a section of officials and employees were irregularly paid Tk 5.11 crore in the name of

benefit, remuneration and honorarium between 1990 and 1996. It was a unique case of violation of government rules because the amount entitled was Tk 29.22 lakh.

The Board suffered a loss of Tk 35.76 lakh between 1990 and 1996 as its officials and employees were given 'advance' at a much lower interest rate of five per cent against 10.75 per cent as per government rules.

The Board incurred a loss of over Tk 2.8 crore for payment of salary to a section of officials and employees, appointed on higher scales than they were entitled to. An amount of Tk 95.44 lakh which was given in advance remained unrealised.

Former Controller of Examinations Boyen Uddin embezzled Tk 5.15 lakh by approving fake cash memos in the name of buying steel trunks. The audit found that the trunks were not bought at all.

The Board lost Tk 85.74 lakh between 1990 and 1996 by printing answer scripts more than the requirement and ir-

regularly paid Tk 4.46 lakh to the later Education Board Coordination Sub Committee, violating rules, the audit report said.

In Chittagong Board, Deputy Controller of Examinations Mujibur Rahman did not pay back Tk 57,000 which he took as advance. Another amount of Tk 14.67 lakh, taken as advance by a section of officials and employees, also remained unrealised.

In Comilla Board, officials and employees were given Tk 3.78 crore as allowance, honorarium and remuneration, violating rules. Another Tk 13.38 lakh was given for higher salaries, violating rules. Tk 29.39 lakh disbursed as advance to officials and employees remained unadjusted with their salaries but no action was taken against the defaulters.

Tk 1.80 crore was 'virtually embezzled' as the auditors found differences between cash book records and bank statements.

In Jessore Board, Tk 1.80 crore was paid as undue benefit, honorarium and remuneration to a section of officials and employees and another Tk 1.02 crore was given as 'extra remuneration' for preparing SSC and HSC certificates.

The Board spent Tk 27.96 lakh irregularly for child education benefit and supervision benefit, violating rules.

Besides, Tk 1.94 lakh was lost as entertainment benefit, Tk 5.48 lakh as fuel cost, 1.75 lakh as travel allowance, Tk 2.43 lakh as general advance and Tk 19.31 lakh as advance for buying motor-cycle. The board unduly paid Tk 45.13 lakh as additional benefit, Tk 31.91 lakh for preparing forms and more than Tk 20 lakh for various other purposes.

In Rajshahi Board, Tk 4.92 crore was spent for paying benefits, honorarium and remuneration to officials and employees, violating rules.

The board incurred a loss of more than Tk 88.30 lakh for paying officials and employees

'advance' for housing and buying motor cycles at five per cent interest rate instead of 10.75 per cent, and another Tk 1.11 crore for paying salary and other dues at enhanced rates, violating rules.

An amount of Tk 24.29 lakh, given as advance, remained outstanding. 'No action was taken against the officials and employees for their failure to pay back the money in time,' the report said.

Another amount of Tk one crore was also misappropriated from the money collected from students as fees, in the name of payments to the illegally formed 'Inter Education Board Coordination Committee' and by preparing various forms and answer scripts more than the requirement.

In the Madrassah Education Board, auditors found a difference of Tk 1.87 lakh between accounts of current ledger and cash book. 'It seems some officials and employees have embezzled the money. The board also did not conduct any inves-

tigation into the 'gross anomaly,' the report said.

'Between 1990-91 and 1995-96, the Madrassah Board's accounts never reconciled with bank statements,' it said.

An amount of Tk 31.72 lakh was spent irregularly, showing remuneration for officials and employees in holding Dakhil, Fazil, Alim and Kamil examinations.

Officials and employees were paid Tk 46.24 lakh as honorarium, violating rules. They were paid more than the rate of Tk 1,000 a year, the report said.

Officials and employees were paid Tk 4.16 lakh as salary beyond entitlement and Tk 6.13 lakh paid as advance was not adjusted with salaries.

The board officials and employees were also paid Tk 5.77 lakh as education allowance, Tk 49.01 lakh as over time and supervision allowance and Tk 3.83 lakh as entertainment allowance violating rules, the reports said.

Zahed loses his fight for life

By Staff Correspondent

Zahed's desperate fight for life ended yesterday at the intensive Care Unit (ICU) of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) as he succumbed to his injuries 50 days after he was knocked down by a speeding night coach at Bangla Motor in the city.

At around 4.30 am, the doctors declared him dead. During the 50 days of struggle, Zahed had been in a coma. Time and again his condition showed signs of improvement and deterioration during the period.

Twenty-eight year-old Zahed was returning to his Zhitagola residence on his motorcycle at around 11 pm on April 1 when a blue night coach knocked him down. He was taken to the DMCH by the Ramna police with broken ribs and collar bones and serious head injury. His relatives found him at the DMCH nearly 20 hours after the fatal accident.



Patema-Tuz-Zohra, a leading artiste, presenting songs at a function organised by the Jatiya Press Club on its premises yesterday in observance of birth centenary of National Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam. — Star photo

Obituary

Md Ilyas Uddin Ahmed, 57, Deputy General Manager of Sylhet division of Pubali Bank Ltd died of heart failure on Wednesday, says a press release. He left behind his wife, 4 sons, 2 daughters and most of relatives to mourn his death.

Reciprocity remains the key

Buying back Bangladesh garment products will help reduce the gap, Tofail tells Indian industry leaders

From Pallab Bhattacharya

NEW DELHI, May 20: Bangladesh today urged India to consider importing readymade garments and provide special fiscal incentives to encourage Indian investors to put their money in either joint venture or in wholly-owned subsidiaries in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh Commerce and Industry Minister Tofail Ahmed told a meeting of Confederation of Indian Industry here that if India permitted duty-free import of readymade garments from Bangladesh it could be one way to help reduce the Indo-Bangla trade balance heavily tilted against Dhaka.

'We are importing yarn, cotton and fabric from India and in return India can import readymade garments from us,' Tofail said.

He said India could increase its imports from Bangladesh under the World Trade Organisation accord for tariff concession to Least Developed Countries without reciprocal basis.

In 1997 Bangladesh's imports from India stood at US\$ 3.8 billion dollars while exports to India stood at 20 million dol-

lars. Tofail said Indo-Bangla trade could be significantly raised through Foreign Direct Investment flow from India and Indian investors were welcome to take use of the opportunities Bangladesh offers to either on full ownership or joint venture basis.

'We would like to see more Indian investors coming forward to form joint ventures with buy-back arrangements with their Bangladesh counterparts,' he said.

I request the Indian government to seriously consider providing special fiscal and other incentives to encourage Indian investment in Bangladesh,' Tofail said. He said Indian investment in Bangladesh would not only increase trade between the two countries but also result in efficient allocation of resources and competitive production in the region as a whole.

The Bangladesh Commerce Minister said direct foreign investment from India would be 'mutually' beneficial to both countries.

'Intra industry and intra-firm trade within this framework would also go a long way in mitigating the problem of a large balance of trade deficit Bangladesh has with India,' he pointed out.

'Seeing that India had agreed to extend tariff concessions to Bangladesh on 2014 goods at the third round of bilateral negotiations under South Asian Preferential Tariff Agreement, Tofail said speedy implementation of this decision could contribute greatly to narrowing Indo-Bangla trade imbalance.

He said the government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was committed to pursue the policy of trade liberalisation and press ahead with policy changes for this.

Tofail Ahmed ruled out export of natural gas to India in near future saying this could be considered only after proper evaluation of Bangladesh's domestic needs.

Meanwhile, the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) said intensification of Indo-Bangla

joint ventures should mainly focus on upstream and downstream projects of natural gas.

A detailed note prepared by FICCI for the interactive meeting with Tofail Ahmed tomorrow listed urea production as a trail-blazer for intensifying joint ventures between India and Bangladesh.

It said there was considerable scope for India to set up gas-based power plants in Bangladesh which, apart from meeting some power requirements of Bangladesh, could be used for fertilizer plants and spongy iron plants with Indian collaboration.

The FICCI note said these sectors which hold back Indian investment in Bangladesh.

One such factor is the inability of Indian partners to finance the entire project on their own and therefore sourcing of funds from a third party acquired importance.

It emphasised on the need for toning up the infrastructure in Indo-Bangla border to facilitate more bilateral trade. Tofail Ahmed, who arrived

here last night on a five-day official visit, held talks today with Indian Industries Minister Sikander Bakht and Commerce Minister Ramakrishna Hegde separately.

During the meeting with Bakht, Tofail invited Indian investment in garments manufacture, leather products, textiles and cement sectors in Bangladesh.

At the discussion with Hegde, Ahmed and the Indian Commerce Minister discussed evolving a common Indo-Bangla strategy to deal with World Trade Organisation issues and other trade matters in international fora, official sources here said.

Ahmed and Hegde also discussed promotion of transit and border trade, they added.

Bangladesh Commerce Minister visit The Technology Park and Indian Space Research Organisation in Bangalore before returning to Dhaka on May 24.

Ahmed is accompanied by a nine-member business delegation, including FICCI President Abdul Awal Minto.

GSS in trouble

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office, violation of certain rules in recruiting foreign nationals and so on.

When contacted, Dr Hassan told The Daily Star that NGO Bureau went beyond its jurisdiction while conducting its investigation. 'Besides, the DG of the Bureau told us that his team did the investigation very hastily and there is still room for correcting the report,' Hassan claimed. The DG of the NGO Bureau, however, rejected Hassan's claim. About the allegation of sexual harassment against the organisation's PABX station manager Mamtaj Begum, Dr Hassan said, 'The girl had accused me of harassment - not sexual harassment.'

When his attention was drawn to the allegation of lapses in auditing of funds, gender imbalance in the management body and centralisation of power in one hand, Dr Hassan said, 'We had some limitations in these areas, but corrective measures are underway to improve the situation.'

Dr Hassan believes that 'certain quarters' are 'in the growth' of international NGOs and GSS and some insiders who received foreign degrees on GSS scholarship but presently desperate to get rid of bonds they had signed are out to destroy the organisation.

However, all the GSS offices have been closed since the second week of April, while a section of GSS workers are in the streets to press home a set of demands including resignation of Dr Hassan from the post of Executive Director. The controversial management of the GSS closed all its offices *sine die* on April 14, due to what it said was fund constraints.

The investigation team of the NGO Affairs Bureau has held Dr Hassan responsible for the present chaotic situation in the organisation. It has recommended immediate replacement of the executive director with an interim ED, who is neither a member of the present managing body nor he is involved with either of the feuding GSS groups of employees.

While making the recommendation, the NGO Bureau referred to an observation made by the appraisal team that stressed on 'need for change in leadership style - from charismatic to pragmatic management.'

and independent views and analysis.

The appraisal team found the 'current programmes and management' structure of the GSS to be 'clearly designed on male terms and thinking, leaving the issues and concerns of half of the target population unattended'. It therefore suggested that 'the Board should be gender balanced and without any GSS employees.'

However, the NGO Bureau team strongly felt that investigation into the allegations of sexual harassment of some female workers by Dr Hassan should be conducted seriously. In this regard, it said, the probe committee formed earlier to investigate the case of Mamtaj Begum has to resume its function. 'The committee might also look into the similar allegations of harassment against other female workers including Nasima Akhter and Shaika Morshed by the same person.'

Another Bureau recommendation said that the GSS must stop all financial transactions with Advocacy Trust, Mudrak Ltd and Media Centre until a legally defined relation with them is established. Besides, 'no money - excepting the amount necessary to meet the salaries, allowances and day to day expenditure - will be withdrawn from the bank accounts of the three organisations.'

The donors sponsored special audit team, which had examined the financial documents of the GSS, also found that the donors' funds had been used in violation of norms to create the profit-making organisations - Advocacy Trust, Mudrak Ltd and Media Centre. The team further discovered that the organisations were later converted into private limited companies and were not audited since their inception in 1995, 1996 and 1998 respectively. 'We find it serious that the donors' fund has been used to procure machinery for profit-making ventures, while the income has not been accounted for and kept outside the GSS,' the audit team observed.

The special audit team found 'serious lack of adequate internal audit', while the NGO Bureau investigators found it objectionable to have a brother-in-law as the chief of the GSS's audit department.

The Bureau report suggested that the government appoint an administrator in the GSS, in case it fails to take steps to implement the recommendations within a week of such instructions are being issued.

Analysing various clauses of the latest constitution of GSS, the Bureau probe found that the organisation has been running entirely in an autocratic manner, with almost all powers concentrated in the hands of its executive director Dr Mahmood Hassan. Besides, the GSS submitted its amended constitution to the NGO Bureau more

than a year after it was introduced in 1994. It is yet to get the constitution approved by the registrar of Joint Stock Companies.

The report recommended rewriting of the constitution to make sure that all democratic clauses of the GSS constitution, especially the one making Dr Hassan the lifetime executive director, are removed and both the Executive Committee and the General Body are made accountable.

The report also suggested that the DG of the NGO Affairs Bureau could request the GSS donor consortium not to disburse any fund, until the recommendations regarding appointment of an interim ED, amendment of the undemocratic constitution, re-constitution of both the executive and general bodies are implemented by GSS, and approval of the government authorities concerned is secured by the organisation in these regards.

Accusing Dr Hassan of running the NGO in an autocratic manner, the investigation team said that he got the organisation's service rule amended under which the authorities can sack any staff at any time without giving prior notice to the worker or employee concerned. Dr Hassan sacked Dr Manjur Rashed Chowdhury, coordinator of primary health education programme, only two hours after the circular was released.

Dr Chowdhury had reportedly discussed with the GSS authorities the issue of 'sexual harassment' of Mamtaj Begum by Dr Hassan.

While probing the allegation of nepotism against Dr Hassan, the NGO Bureau investigation team found that he had provided undue financial benefits, in the name of 'pay protection', to many of his cronies including his wife, friends and relations.

The investigation also revealed that the rural level female workers of the GSS were compelled to go on maternity leave without pay. 'This practice is tantamount to repression on pregnant mothers,' the probe report observed.

The NGO Bureau team found the over-head costs of the GSS were more than the approved ones and criticised its top boss for misusing donors' fund, collected in the name of helping poor, by observing moon-lit nights or by giving grants to the country's eminent citizens.

The appraisal team was critical about the GSS steps to buy lands worth crores of taka to build its headquarters in the city. 'In the long process of NGO development in Bangladesh, many NGOs have certainly empowered themselves with structures and buildings, while empowerment of the poor beyond better services has been rather limited,' the team commented.

Out patients are 'outcasts'

No wheelchair, no stretcher at Bangabandhu Medical Hospital

By Staff Correspondent

Most of the patients admitted through Out Patient Department (OPD) at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) Hospital have to undergo immense sufferings due to lack of stretcher or wheelchair.

'Patients have to make their own arrangements to reach respective ward or cabins for treatment. All hospital wards are located at a distance not less than 500 yards from the OPD.'

There is no wheelchair or stretcher at the OPD to carry the patients who are unable to walk. Once admitted at the OPD, located virtually outside the hospital premises across a road, a patient is asked to reach the respective department on his own.

Soycedur Rahman, 52, was admitted to medicine ward of the hospital last week with acute stomach pain. He was unable to sit up properly. After necessary formalities at the OPD, the resident physician sent him to medicine ward on the fifth floor, some 600 yards

from the OPD.

In absence of any facilities from the hospital authorities, his 17-year old son had to pull Rahman by his shoulder to the ward.

'I was looking for a wheelchair but an official at the OPD said there were no wheelchairs,' said Rahman's son.

Another patient, who was referred to the hospital from Mymensingh Medical College Hospital for a critical surgery in her abdomen, said, 'Finding no stretcher my husband hired a rickshaw to take me to Block-C building of the hospital from the OPD.'

Other patients and their attendants complained of similar sufferings to this correspondent during recent a spot visit. One of the patients said, 'We come to the hospital to get relieved of pain but seem sufferings increase the moment a patient is admitted.'

A resident physician, preferring anonymity, said, 'This is the reality here. It is very unfor-

tunate ... after the hospital turned autonomous, people expected better facilities but we really did not give much attention to the problem.'

On an average, about 150 patients are admitted to the hospital everyday through the OPD. The hospital has more than 30 departments.

A senior consultant of a private hospital on condition he not be named said, 'Ideally, a hospital should have arrangements for wheelchair or stretcher.'

'Once a patient is admitted, it is the responsibility of the hospital authorities to take care of the patients including providing him or her with necessary facilities for the patient's transfer to the respective ward or cabin.'

When contacted, Vice-Chancellor of the university hospital Prof M A Quaderi regretted for not being able to provide the facilities. 'We are looking into the problem and it will soon be addressed.'

Gully

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intelligence of the rest of the team members which can never bring about any positive changes in the team psychology.

It was incomprehensible that the Indian bowlers should have conceded a staggering 37 wide and no balls which warranted more than 6 extra overs and 51 extras in a total of 252 was inexcusable. This has hardly happened to the Indian bowlers, who are generally very cautious, in the past. The extra overs posed the additional problems for them as they were penalised by the match referee deducting four precious overs from their normal quota of 50.

On that bouncy wicket this target was always achievable and the Indians went about their business rather briskly. Weather was good but going was bumpy. The initial hiccup of the Indians were smothered by Ramesh and Jajeya and at later stages the innings was beautifully crafted by Robin Singh, Mongia and Srnath. Azhar Khan and other irresponsible innings and gave the impression that his mind was not in the game but somewhere else. The Indians were always ahead of the run-rate and when everything appeared rosy in the garden, like many other previous occasions the batsmen buckled. Henry Olunga was no match-winning bowler yet Campbell had to take that gamble and it paid off most unexpectedly.

Three wickets in six deliveries for five runs and Olunga was an instant hero. Victory was so near yet so far. It is not for nothing Geoff Boycott calls it a 'foony' game.

Sri Lanka had the Proteas almost on the ropes at Northampton with wickets falling at regular intervals. The South Africans are not normally accustomed to such situations and as the stranglehold of the Lankans became tighter, Lance Klusener launched his desperate attempt in the last over that took his side one short of the two hundred mark. Ranatunga must have been smiling through his eyes. But the TV umpire Ken Palmer, I do not believe that at this level of the game an umpire does not know that benefit of doubt goes in favour of the batsman and that a catch is deemed to have been completed beyond any doubt within the playing area. All these four players received raw deals from the umpires. Wrong decisions can always have far reaching effects in any tournament.

Kiwis upset Aussie applecart

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on his spinners. Michael Bevan and Shane Warne, to break their rhythm, Cairns crashed them both over long on for six.

Waugh next tried the pace of Damien Fleming and McGrath - but Cairns smashed them both back over their heads for further boundaries.

He fell just before the end. After hitting five fours and three sixes, he tried again to deposit Fleming into the stands and holed out.

Australia, second favourites to win the tournament behind South Africa, now have one win from two games, while New Zealand have two successive wins.

Waugh's side, who had won four of their last six games against the Kiwis, began the day with a stop-start batting display.

Choosing to bat, they were pegged back immediately by pace bowler Geoff Alford.

The left-arm strike bowler, who finished with four for 37, trapped Mark Waugh leg before, then had pinch-hitter Adam Gilchrist caught off a late cut that flew to second slip to make it 32 for two.

Well placed at 164 for four with 10 overs to go, they managed just 49 runs from the last 60 balls. Australia's last six wickets fell for 87 runs.

Australia seemed to give themselves a chance when Adrian Dale removed opener

Matt Horne with his second ball, the delivery brushing his glove on the way through to the keeper.

Fleming then had Astle caught at point. McGrath produced the perfect yorker to hit the base of Stephen Fleming's middle stump and McMillan, after apparently wrenching a hamstring, fell to Warne after toe-ending a sweep to mid on.

What's on today . . .

Premiere show: The premiere show of 'Jamuna Parer Shamsuddin' the first production of Binota Visuals will be held. The premiere will be followed by a discussion or the production. Venue: Muktiyuddha Jadughar. Time: 10.00 am.

Reception: Khelaghar will accord a reception to Kalim Sharaf, Shantosh Gupta and Syed Hasan Imam. Chief guest: National poet Shamsur Rahman. Venue: Khelaghar auditorium at 273/3, Elephant Road (Katabon). Time: 11.00 am.

Film show: Three French movies *La bataille du rail* (The railway battle), *Presume innocent* (Presumed innocent) and *La reine Margot* will be screened. Venue: Alliance Francaise de Dhaka auditorium. Time: 11.00 am, 4.00 pm and 6.00 pm respectively.

Rally: Bangabandhu Sangskritik Jote stage a rally in observance of the birth centenary of national poet Kazi Nazrul Islam. Venue: Ramna Park gate to Press Club. Time: 11.30 am.

Conference: The 4th national conference at Samajtantrik Sramik Front will be held. Venue: National Press Club auditorium. Time: 4.00 pm.

Package Forum formed

By Staff Correspondent

Television package programme producers on Wednesday floated a forum in the city in the wake of an anti-package movement in Bangladesh Television (BTV).

Package producers, writers, representatives of different production houses and advertising firms held a meeting at the Liberation War Museum and expressed deep concern at the 'anti-package' movement in BTV, says a press release.

The meeting, chaired by Hanif Shanket, called for immediate telecast of all package programmes as per schedules.

At the meeting, they formed the new organisation styled as 'Package Forum' with Mamunur Rashid and Badal Rahman as its joint convenors and Kazi Ilyas Kollol as member secretary.

Members of the forum are: Humayun Ahmed, Abdul Hayat, Imdadul Haq Milon, Afzal Hossain, Hanif Shanket, Saiful Anam Tutul, SM Solaiman, Shaikh Siraj, Mohon Khan, Arun Chowdhury, Ahmed Yusuf Saber, Nima Rahman, Kays Chowdhury, Rezanur Rahman, Faria Hossain and Mohammad Hossain Jeni.