

Third part of white paper on 20 more cases Tk 2711 cr public funds misused during AL rule

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP-led coalition government has released the third part of a white paper on alleged grafts and malpractices that caused the public exchequer a loss of Tk 2710.54 crore during the five-year rule of Awami League.

It listed 20 cases of alleged graft, irregularity and abuse of power by the immediate past AL government.

Political Secretary to the Prime Minister Haris Chowdhury released the white paper at a press briefing at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) yesterday afternoon.

"This white paper is only a sample of the large-scale graft committed by them (AL men). It is not possible to project all those in such a limited purview," Haris said.

The process would continue to unveil more acts of alleged graft and irregularities by the AL government, he said. "We need much time to overcome the crisis caused during

their five years of corruption, irregularities, indiscipline and mismanagement."

He said disclosure of the corrupt practices is not aimed at earning cheap popularity or undermining the previous government. It is intended to ensure accountability and transparency in the administration. "It is also a warning for future."

In reply to a question, Haris said the white paper is based documents and it has no ill motive to malign opponents of the government.

About filing of cases on the alleged grafts, he said the Bureau of

Highlights

- 1. White paper detects 20 alleged cases of graft, irregularity
- 2. Grafts involve Tk 2710.54 crore
- 3. Frigate purchase, PSC scandal, plot scam and dev. Funds misuse dominate list
- 4. Seven former ministers accused
- 5. More white papers to come

Special funds for five top army officers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief of Army Staff Lt Gen Harun-Rashid, former army chief Lt Gen Mustafizur Rahman and three other top army officers were given Tk 80 lakh as special allocations from the Upazila Parishad Development Assistance Fund during the immediate past rule of Awami League.

The then Speaker, 18 cabinet ministers and advisors, 20 state ministers and whips, 72 ruling party lawmakers and 31 others also got special allocations from the fund, according to the third part of the 'white paper' released by the government yesterday.

The allocations, approved by the then LGRD minister Zillur Rahman,

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White paper mum on men behind frigate purchase

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Purchase of a naval frigate was designed to benefit DAEWO Corporation, supplier of the warship, the third part of the 'white paper' said.

The white paper mentioned three vital irregularities in the defence purchase. These are: flaws in the process of purchase contract, negligence in supervision during construction of the warship and hasty sailing for handing it over to the Bangladesh government.

The first chapter of yesterday's white paper containing the irregularities however did not specify names of the people responsible for this purchase. But it is widely known that Abdul Awal Minto, a leading businessman who joined BNP last year, was involved in the purchase.

Prime Minister's Political Advisor Haris Chowdhury faced a volley of questions while releasing the part of the white paper dealing with purchase of the warship. But, he avoided most of the questions,

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Bid to divert attention from govt failures, says Zillur

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Main opposition Awami League yesterday sharply reacted to the publication of another white paper by the government depicting alleged grafts and malpractice during AL's five-year rule from 1996 to 2001.

Government released the third part of a series of white papers yesterday.

Giving his reaction to The Daily Star yesterday, AL general secretary Zillur Rahman said, "Failing to contain the deteriorating law and order situation and the economic downturn, the government is now

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Dhaka-Agartala jt festival on Liberation War begins in city

UNB, Dhaka

As a festival on Bangladesh's Liberation War began here yesterday under Dhaka-Agartala joint aegis, ruling BNP leader Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan hoped Bangladesh and India would be able to solve existing problems to further strengthen bilateral relations.

The three-day Bangladesh Liberation War Festival started with a renewed pledge to contribute to building a peaceful, friendly relationship among peoples of all faiths in the region through people-to-people contacts and increased cultural exchanges.

Major General KM Shafiqullah, Bir Uttam (Retd), one of the sector commanders of the 1971 Liberation War and former Awami League MP, inaugurated the function at Osmani

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PHOTO: STAR

Women sprinkle petals as a mark of honour to freedom fighters at the Liberation War Festival jointly organised by Dhaka and the Indian state of Agartala at the Central Shaheed Minar yesterday.

PSC was highly influenced by ruling party

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The White Paper on corruption and irregularities of Awami League government said that the chairman and members of Bangladesh Public Service Commission did not maintain neutrality and were highly influenced by the then ruling party in recruitment of people in cadre services through the 20th BCS examination.

Although PSC is the highest constitutional institution, its officials acted as tools and selected party men for government jobs, it said.

In the quota for freedom fighters' children, the PSC recommended appointment of nine applicants in administration, police, medical and family planning cadres, it said.

The nine applicants selected

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PHOTO: KAMRUL AHSAN

The dock labour unions-called strike for their 64-point demand has led to suspension of activities at the Mongla Port.

Some BNP men out to 'suppress' Jamal murder case

ABUL KALAM AZAD, back from Kapasia

A section of ruling party men are out to 'suppress' the case regarding the murder of brilliant college student Jamaluddin Fakir allegedly while in custody of Kapasia police on April 19.

Local people alleged that BNP leader Obaidullah and some other local leaders and activists of the party and its student front Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) have resorted to various tactics including 'false propaganda' to suppress the murder case.

"They have already damaged evidences of the murder and are openly intimidating eyewitnesses to the incident," said an elderly man at Kapasia Bazar on Thursday.

Obaidullah, who joined BNP from Jatiya Party before the October 1 parliamentary election, has set up an 'office' in front of Kapasia police station and is 'controlling' activities at the thana and in Kapasia upazila, locals alleged.

Backed by an influential BNP leader from the area who failed to win the last two general elections, Obaidullah is running an 'unofficial administration' in the area since the present government took over. He is getting active support from Kazi Aftab, who also joined BNP from JP and is now president of Kapasia unit of JCD, and other JCD leaders including Halim, Mesbah and Ripon. Aftab sits at Obaidullah's 'office' everyday and 'handles' affairs at the

Mongla Port workers on strike

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Mongla Port workers began an indefinite strike on Thursday to press home their 63-point demand including increase in salary.

The strike has virtually paralysed activities at the port.

A meeting between Mongla Port Authority and striking dock workers yesterday failed to resolve the dispute.

At present, there are eight foreign vessels at the port with imported goods, said a source of Mongla Port Authority.

Award trap!

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Different business personalities in the city are being lured to the award "Businessman of the Year" in exchange for Tk 1 lakh each.

The Daily Star obtained five letters issued by the Arthakantha, a local newsmagazine, to different leading businessmen -- each saying the Arthakantha has selected the recipient for the award. In a separate letter, the magazine seeks Tk 1 lakh from each recipient in sponsorship of the event in which the recipient will be awarded.

The businessmen told The Daily Star that those who refused to sponsor were threatened with 'negative exposure' by the 'journalists' of the magazine.

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Dubious dredging deal Work in Pussur suspended for 8 months

SHAHRIAR KARIM

Uncertainty looms large over completion of dredging in the Pussur channel at the Mongla port, thanks to a dubious joint venture deal.

The work, which began more than two years ago and was scheduled for completion by June this year, has remained suspended since August 25 last year and there is little possibility that it would begin anytime soon.

According to sources, in November 1999, a local company roped in an Indonesian company, formed a joint venture and won the contract with blessings from some shipping ministry high-ups. The company quoted Tk 44.09 crore for

the contract. Questions about the technical capability of the PT Rukindo Basic Dredging Partnership, the joint venture company, were raised when the agreement was signed in February 2000 and they were proved right soon.

A few months into the work, the Indonesian company lost interest in the job and withdrew its experts and equipment, leaving its local counterpart high and dry.

The Basic Engineering Construction, the local company in the joint venture, is yet to either procure or arrange for a trailing suction hopper dredger to resume dredging in the channel.

Now, it is trying to have the

deadline extended and is highly likely to have the shipping ministry's nod, highly placed sources in the Mongla Port Authority (MPA) said.

The MPA has already forwarded the plea for time extension to the shipping ministry, they added.

However, there is still doubt whether the company would be able to complete dredging even if there was a time extension.

"It seems to us that the company is not financially sound to bring trailing suction hopper dredger from any country. However, we are in favour of giving it some more time to complete the job," a top source in MPA told The Daily Star over telephone.

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