

PREPAID METERS FOR DEEP TUBEWELLS IN 7 NORTHERN DISTS

Govt to lose Tk 12 cr as BMDA chooses 'highest bidders'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT,

Rajshahi

The government will lose Tk 12 crore as the Barind Multipurpose Development Authority (BMDA) is set to award work for installation of prepaid meters in deep tube wells for irrigation to highest bidders, ignoring lower ones. The works in seven northern districts will be awarded in eight groups.

Sena Kosh Associates, which made the highest bid Tk 33.68 crore in one group got the work while other bidders offered prices between Tk 21 crore and Tk 25 crore, sources said.

Some deprived participants said, the BMDA, violating tender conditions, refused to detail necessary software architecture of

the meters to bid winners, but asked them to provide samples within seven days.

Nuruzzaman, owner of Orient Trading that got works in Rajshahi and Naogaon Region-1 by offering Tk 6.34 crore for installing 2550 meters, lodged a complaint with BMDA against the alleged irregularities.

He said, no farm would be able to provide samples without the necessary software database as BMDA sought only meters that matched existing ones.

Meantime, BMDA has asked Sena Kosh Associates, the farm quoting the highest bid of Tk 4.84 crore to sign an agreement within a month to install 1200 meters in deep tube wells in Chapainawabganj, the sources

said.

MH Corporation, one of the lowest bidders which quoted Tk 3.59 crore, was denied on the plea that it could not provide meter-samples in time.

"The irregularity may affect farmers with an increased price for irrigation water", said a BMDA official.

He explained that BMDA used to earn around Tk 45 crore annually by selling water to farmers. Its income increased by around 15 per cent since introduction of computerised meters in 2005.

The tenders for prepaid meters were floated in October last year and the lowest bidders were chosen in November 20.

Imtiaz Ahmed and Shamsul Huda Company won the work in

Naogaon Region-2 to install 1300 metres at a cost of Tk 3.69 crore while Micro Tech won works in Joypurhat and Dinajpur. Sigma Engineering won the work in Panchagarh by offering prices between Tk 24,500 and Tk 30,000 per meter.

All bid winners were asked to provide samples without necessary details and were denied after the January 25 deadline.

Sena Kosh quoted Tk 40,000 per prepaid meter. It will install 1000 meters in Thakurgaon. Two other firms allegedly chosen by it (Sena Kosh) participated in the tender, the sources said.

Earlier in 2005-06 financial year, BMDA purchased some 2000 prepaid meters for Rajshahi, Naogaon and Chapainawabganj

at about Tk 39,000 per meter from Sena Kosh, the sources claimed.

"The BMDA tender process is merely a pre-designed game with participants", said a deprived contractor.

BMDA superintendent engineer Khalekuzzaman denied the allegations and said, "Many of the tender participants were liable to be rejected as they had no experience. Yet we gave them opportunity considering their lowest offers".

"We can't show them our entire database. We detailed our designs in tender documents", he said replying a question.

He also said the enhanced project cost will not increase price of irrigation water.



PHOTO: STAR

Better late than never

Martyred freedom fighter honoured after 35 years

OUR CORRESPONDENT,

Rangamati

A monument has finally been built in honour of valiant freedom fighter engineer AKM Shamsuddin, who made the supreme sacrifice for country's independence.

It has been constructed at Kaptai upazila Sadar under the auspices of 65 Infantry Brigade.

Kaptai Regional Commander Badrul Millat Bhuiyan and Kaptai PDB Superintending Engineer

Md. Ferdous Ali jointly inaugurated the monument on Thursday in presence of army personnel, PDB officials, freedom fighters and newsmen.

The monument has been built in three parts— one coloured in red, meaning the rising sun; one is green, indicating green Bangladesh and the other is black, embodying mourning for martyrs, according to designer Capt Rumman Mahmud, who also

Monument.

Engineer AKM Shamsuddin was the first manager of Kaptai Hydroelectric Power Project in 1971. He died at Kaptai in a fight with Pakistani occupation forces on April 15 during the Liberation War.

Hailing from Bogra, Shamsuddin passed BSC engineering from the then Ahsania Engineering College now Bangladesh University of Engineering Technology (BUET).

4,628-acre coastal forest lands recovered in 4 days

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

The Coastal Forest Department (CFD) with the help of district administration, army, Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and police recovered 4,628 acres forestland from land grabbers in three upazilas in Patuakhali district in four days till Friday.

The lands were part of Paraban, a coastal forest raised by government. Most of the lands were grabbed in last five years by local influentials enjoying political clout.

Illegal structures were demolished during the eviction drive and possession of the lands taken over from local influential land grabbers.

The CFD earlier last month submitted a list of 142 land grabbers in Kalapara, Galachipa and Dashmina upazilas to the Deputy Commissioner with a request to hold it recover the lands.

The DC's office issued notices to land grabbers but they ignored

it.

"We knocked down all make shift structures as those were illegal", Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Md. Jahirul Alam told this correspondent.

The Paraban is spread over vast offshore areas in Kuakata, Gangamoti, Nishan Baria, Shib Baria, Lata Chapli, Dhuhalash in Kalapara upazila and Choto Char Kazal in Galachipa upazila.

The lands were grabbed in fictitious names, sources said.

Despite cases filed by the forest department, land grabbing in the district continued unabated, mainly to create shrimp enclosures.

The massive land grabbing also triggered protests by local people and environmentalists who demanded government steps to declare the area an exclusive tourist zone. They had also submitted memorandums to the administration to conserve the forest.

Land grabbing in last five years

exceeded all previous records, sources said.

Around 48,000 acres were grabbed over the years, they said.

The forest department filed 457 cases against 125 grabbers in last five years, but to no effect.

"We are still filing cases. But legal steps were virtually useless in recovery of lands as the influential grabbers manage persons and officials concerned", the DFO said.

The failure to bring culprits to book in fact encouraged land grabbing, he said.

"Earlier we have yet to take any eviction drive due to lack of manpower and logistics. On the other hand, the grabbers warned us against any drive", he said.

Yunus Ali Mollah, legal advisor to the forest department, told a section of high officials were involved in the land grabbing by political leaders and influential groups.

3 hurt in bomb attack in Kushtia

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Three persons including a woman were injured, two of them critically, robbers threw bombs on them during robbery at a house at Sehala village in Daulatpur upazila in the early hours of yesterday.

According to police, a gang of ten stormed into the house of

Nazir Mondol at about 2.30am. They confined the family members at gunpoint and started looting the house.

As one of the inmates cried out, neighbours rushed for help.

The gang threw two bombs in the room where some inmates were confined.

Nazir Mondol, 65, his wife

Zidannessa, 50 and their son

Ismail, 30, were injured.

Zidannessa and Ismail were admitted to Kushtia General Hospital in critical conditions, hospital sources said.

Armed robbers increased in the upazila this month, when at least 8 such incidents took place, according to police records.



PHOTO: STAR

2000 sacks of fake fertiliser seized in Dinajpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Law enforcers detected a fake fertiliser factory at Bhawalaganj village in Debiganj upazila in Panchagarh on Friday and seized at least 2,000 sacks of the fake item.

Julfiker Ali, the owner of the factory, was arrested and sent him to jail yesterday, police said.

Julfiker Ali had been running the illegal business for long, they said.

The so-called factory was sealed and some chemicals, packaging materials and other equipment were seized.

2 pirates held by coastguard

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Coastguard arrested two notorious pirates yesterday from Modinabad village in Koiria upazila in Khulna district and recovered three illegal firearms from their possession.

The arrestees are Mahbubur Rahman Fakir, 50 and Wahiduzzaman alias Jamal Dhali, 46.

The recovered firearms are one point two-bore rifle, one nine-shooter gun and one six-shooter gun.

According to coastguards, the arrestees are being interrogated suspecting their involvement in recent gunfights in the Sundarbans that left at least five persons killed and twenty injured.



Khudiram's amazing orange

SHANTIMOY CHAKMA, Back From Bolipara, Rangamati

Khudiram Tripura has done something amazing alongside changing his lot. He has produced good quality orange, never grown before in Chittagong Hill Tracts.

The Nagpuri (Indian) orange in his orchard is bigger in size and sweeter than the commonly available winter fruits in the country.

It was a big surprise for this correspondent during a visit on Friday to his garden in bordering Bolipara hills in Ghilachhuri in Rajashahi upazila. Khudiram, 30, is the son of Rajendra Tripura.

Most of the about 300 plants in his 3 acre garden adored a charming look with bright coloured oranges. Two-thirds of the plants are fruit-bearing now. Only ten plants yielded fruits last year.

Iliterate Khudiram earned about Tk 40,000 this year and expects to earn more Tk 10,000 by selling oranges.

"I want to expand my orchard as it is very profitable".

"Initially I was not so hopeful when Brigade Commander Badrul Millat Bhuiyan and Kaptai Zone Commander Lt. Col. Munsi Mizanur Rahman PSC gave me the saplings three years back".

"I started with a lukewarm response but devoted all my energy and resources when plants became lively and started growing", he told this correspondent.

Expressing deep gratitude to the army officers and the 65 Infantry Brigade in Kaptai, Khudiram

said, "I remember them whenever I look at my orchard and will remember them forever as they have done a lot for me."

"The 65 Infantry Brigade gave me 310 saplings in 2004 and later provided me with Tk 15,000", Khudiram said.

Talking to this correspondent, Lt. Col. Munsi Mizanur Rahman said he is also pleased with the tribesmen in Bolipara hills.

"They are very much interested to raise orchards like Khudiram. They have requested me for more saplings in the coming rainy season. We will try our best to help them with saplings and financial assistance. This is something new in the hills which will change their life", he said.

Mobin Uddin Ahmed, Deputy Director of DAE, Rangamati, said the climate and soil of Rangamati is very suitable for orange cultivation like in Sylhet district.

He also revealed some interesting information about orange trees. The number of fruits increase with passage of time as trees grow older. Now there are up to 200 oranges per plant in Khudiram's garden.

A 15-18 year-old tree bears up to 500 fruits and they increase up to 1000 when trees grow 30 years old.

The number of fruits go on increasing. Normally, an orange tree survives and gives fruit for 70 to 80 years, Mobin Uddin said.

Its cultivation is easy. Cow dung and chemical fertilisers like TSP, MP, Urea and SP are applied in proportion. Plants have to be pruned, the DAE director said.

In the new system, shrimp is grown in blocked pond water. It ensures environment friendly cultivation by saving trees and paddy fields in surrounding areas keeping other fish species there intact, the WorldFish expert said.

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Like many in the district, disabled Mohinur Islam Sardar had also abandoned shrimp farming after incurring heavy

losses in consecutive years. He is now back to the profession with a renewed energy.

He achieved a tremendous success by cultivating virus-free shrimp by using the new technology provided by the WorldFish.

Talking to this correspondent, Mohinur said he released 3,24,000 virus-free fries in four ponds measuring 2.6 hectares and produced 2,807 kilograms of shrimp in two seasons last year.

He sold those at Tk 11, 36, 370 and earned a profit of Tk 5,42,519.

"In traditional system, I got only 470 kg shrimps from the four ponds two years back because of virus infection", said 39 year-old Mohinur of Gava village in Fingri union in Satkhira Sadar upazila.



PHOTO: STAR

Mohinur Islam with shrimps produced in his farm at Gava village in Satkhira.

ABU AHMED, Satkhira

A newly introduced method will revolutionise shrimp production, raising the yield by five to seven times.

The method is environment friendly and produces virus-free shrimps and easier than the traditional method.

Introduction of 'Modified Traditional Technology' and 'Close system' have brought many shrimp cultivators back to the profession after years of heavy loss.

The new method is provided by the Shrimp Quality Support Project (SQSP), a USAID funded project, conducted by the WorldFish Centre, an international NGO. Virus-free shrimp fries are also supplied under the project.

Production per hectare in the new method is around 1.1 tonnes, said Zakir Hossain an expert of the

WorldFish Centre, which is providing technical support to farmers.

Use of the new technology is very important for Bangladesh as it increases the yield while buyers in Europe have also put a restriction on import of virus-infected shrimps, he said. The new cultivation system to produce virus-free shrimps is being used by most of the shrimp exporting countries, now, Zakir Hossain said.

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