

Ex-BNP MP in Kushtia faces seven cases

Allegation of corruption, vandalising opposition rallies against Shahidul Islam

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia



SHAHIDUL ISLAM

Sahidul a lawmaker from reserved seats.

This opened up scope for Sahidul and gradually he established his supremacy in Mirpur-Bheramara area.

As former BNP lawmaker from the constituency, veteran freedom fighter Abdur Rouf Choudhury, declined to take part in the farcical February 15 polls in 1996, Sahidul availed the chance and became a 'lawmaker' in the one party election that was later scrapped.

Sahidul was nominated in the June 12, 1996 national election and was elected. It is alleged that he used ousted party cadres to rig vote.

Sahidul allegedly used notorious outlawed leader and the then Gono Bahini (GB) chief Sirajul Islam Siraj alias Koshai Siraj in 1996 election. Koshai Siraj campaigned for Sahidul, intimidating voters not to go to polling centers.

During Awami League rule, when Siraj surrendered to law enforcers at the call of the then home minister Mohammad Nasir in 1999, Sahidul asked a BNP man run the gang earlier led by Siraj. The BNP man was the then chairman of Ambaria Union Parishad. He was killed in April 21, 2004.

Sahidul also brought into his fold Abri Hasan, a top cadre of Janajuddho faction of Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP-ML) in 2000. Abir campaigned for Sahidul in 2001 election.

Three Awami League (AL) activists—Asadul, Sawapan and Ferat Ali were killed in July 15, 2001, allegedly following an altercation with Sahidul's men over use of low quality materials in a road reconstruction work. A construction company allegedly owned by Sahidul's relative was doing the reconstruction work.

Chatra League leader Gama, brother of slain Adul, filed a case with Mirpur police accusing Sahidul. Police dropped Sahidul's name from the charge sheet. The case is still pending as the plaintiff submitted a narai petition against the charge sheet.

Mirpur upazila BNP president Al-Mamun-ur-Rasul alias Babu Khan was killed in April 2004 by some unidentified criminals when he was returning home from Mirpur Bazar at night.

Soon after the killing, Sahidul phoned local journalists and police and said that Janajuddho cadres did the murder.

But Janajuddho later said its cadres were not involved in the murder, saying the murder was done by hired men in a sequel to internal feud in BNP.

Sources said Sahidul had a feud with Babu Khan over local party politics. The Babu Khan murder case is still pending.

Police searched Sahidul's house in Bheramara town on April 1, 2001, arrested his cadre Sanjoy Kumar and recovered one rifle and five revolvers. Police filed case accusing Sahidul but the case is still pending.

On March 24 last year, another case was filed against Sahidul in connection with the murder of BCL activists Sanwar Hossain Jibon, Mizanur Rahman Majnu and Miton Hossain.

The case is still pending.

It was gathered that development projects involving at least Tk 600 crore were sanctioned for Mirpur-Bheramara area in last five years.

Nine construction companies carried out the works. Sahidul's relatives owned six of them.

Different sources claimed that huge amounts were misappropriated by the firms owned by Sahidul's relatives.

The company owned by his close relatives got the Tk 85 crore Sagarkali-Barabara irrigation project work in Amla in Mirpur upazila last year.

They also constructed Mirpur municipality building involving Tk 96 lakh and implemented several project including construction of Talbaria, Chatian and Sadarpur Union Parishad complexes involving Tk 1.5 crore, several primary schools at Tk 2 crore, Mirpur-Poradah road reconstruction work at 55 lakh, Malihad-Sadrupur road at 3.5 crore, Sadarpur-Amla GK canal at 52 lakh, Paharpur-Lakmipur bridge at 1.30 crore and Mosharrupur bridge at Tk 88 lakh. Sources alleged massive corruption in these works.

Sahidul's musclemen forcibly occupied five government approved sand quarries (balu mahal) in Padma river. Even lessees of the sand quarries could not establish their rights there, some of them alleged.

The five sand quarries are at Baro Mile, Kaldah, Krittangan, Bishalchandi and Minapara on the Padma, leased from the Mineral Resources Development Bureau (MRDB) in 2003.

4 illegal pumps seized from Hakaluki haor

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Officials of the Department of Environment (DoE) yesterday seized four pumps while those were being used to remove water from Hakaluki haor in Baralekhia upazila.

These pumps were fielded there to dry up the water body for fishing, which is illegal, the officials said. Acting on a tip off, DoE officials with the help of police conducted a drive in Kaier Kuna Beel in the haor (water body) and found the illegal pumps. Operators of the pumps fled away, sources at Kulaura DoE office said.

Md. Shibli, Assistant Director at Kulaura office of the coastal and wet land bio-diversity management project (CWBDM) under DoE told this correspondent that some local people Saturday night informed them about use of the illegal pumps.

The seized pumps have been handed over to Kulaura Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO). The official said, they seizes 29 illegal pumps from Hakaluki haor in last one month.

He said pumping out water and fishing is strictly prohibited in the haor, now under the CWBDM.

Prof Taher's family seeks speedy filing of charge sheet

RU CORRESPONDENT

Family members of slain Rajshahi University teacher Prof Taher Ahmed yesterday met with the university vice-chancellor and requested for taking steps for trial of the murder.

Prof Taher Ahmed, a senior teacher of Geology and Mining department was killed by allegedly by hired killers on February 01 last year at his campus residence.

Prof Taher's son Sanjil Ahmed Himmel yesterday met with RU VC Prof Altaf Hossain at his office and urged him to

request police for early submission of charge sheet.

Himmel told newsmen that he also requested the VC for steps to disburse his gratuity and other dues from the university.

The VC assured Himmel of necessary steps for speedy submission of charge sheet and disbursement of the money.



Land grabbers have occupied the bank and shore areas of Beri Lake in Moulvibazar town.

A 'beauty spot' falls to land grabbers

Moulvibazar townspeople demand eviction of encroachers from Beri Lake

OUR CORRESPONDENT Moulvibazar

Beri Lake in Moulvibazar town is shrinking as encroachers have grabbed major portions of the natural water body by filling earth on all sides.

Once called a 'beauty spot' in the middle of the town, the lake came into being over 200 years ago when Munir river changed its course. It was around a 50-acre sheet of water that added to the scenic beauty of the town.

Even few years ago, there was a children's park with amusement facilities on its south bank. Now, major portion of the south bank has gone to land grabbers.

A bus terminal and other business establishments have been constructed on its south bank by encroaching the bed. Some open spaces are still there but those become safe havens for drug addicts after sunset.

On the west bank, a big market

has

been constructed. A residential area called Beri Char has been created by filling up the bed along the north bank. Land owners in this residential area have encroached the bed of the lake by earth-filling to increase sizes of their plots. Same is the situation on the other sides of the lake.

Moulvibazar municipality owns the lake, once used a flood water retention point. In rainy season, water from different areas of the lake can provide such facility if the encroachments are removed and the banks are buffered in a planned way.

Moulvibazar Municipality Chairman Fayzul Karim Mayun said on several occasions earlier that the municipality had a plan to turn the lake into a tourist spot like the Foy's Lake of Chittagong. Journalist M A Salam said, there is no entertainment facility for people of Moulvibazar town. The lake can provide such facility if the encroachments are removed and the banks are buffered in a planned way.

They said the Beri Lake can be turned into a tourist spot like the Foy's Lake of Chittagong. The town dwellers have demanded that the Beri Lake be freed from encroachers and developed into a recreation spot that would benefit all.

Wife beaten dead for cooking late

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

A housewife was beaten to death at Pokkhia village in Madarbari union in Patuakhali Sadar upazila.

The victim has been identified as Kohinoor Begum, 26, wife of daylaborer Jahangir Hossain.

Shahnewaj, Second Officer of Patuakhali Sadar police station, said Kohinoor was beaten dead at night and the body was hung from a tree near the house to show the incident as a suicide. Her husband Jahangir and all members of his family are absconding, the police official said.

Informed by neighbors, police recovered the body and sent it to Patuakhali General Hospital for autopsy. Quoting neighbours, [police said she was beaten for cooking late.

Amjad Howlader, father of the victim, lodged a murder case in this connection but none could be arrested till yesterday evening.

One held with arms

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Joint forces arrested Sanjib Kar, manager of BNP leader and Jhalakati municipal chairman Abdul Halim Gazi yesterday.

Halim Gazi was arrested and relief materials were recovered from the house on Saturday. Acting on his confession, law enforcers also recovered a foreign-made revolver while arresting his manager, police said.



PHOTO: STAR

Amropali trees full of buds in a garden at Kongchhari Para in Khagrachari Sadar upazila.

Amropali creates new hope for CHT farmers

JASIM MAJUMDER, Khagrachari

Amropali, a new variety of hybrid mango, is showing signs of a bumper production this year in Khagrachari.

Amropali cultivation that began in the hills six years ago has opened up great prospects for farmers in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), promising hefty gains.

The production in Khagrachari this year may be much more than that of last year, Horticulture Department officials and farmers said. The hills with suitable soil and climate may be turned into mango orchards as in Chaitwanabagan, they said.

Amropali is now being cultivated in at least 650 small gardens and 46 larger ones in Khagrachari district, said horticulturist Mizanur Rahman at Khagrachari Horticulture Centre. Most of the gardens are in Dighinala, Matiranga, Ramgour, Khagrachari Sadar, Panchhari, Manikchhari, Mohalchhari and Laxmichhari areas.

"Budding started a bit early this year. The climate and soil are suitable for Amropali cultivation in the

(CHT) hills," Mizanur Rahman told this correspondent yesterday.

In a modest target, yield from the gardens in Khagrachari may be 95,000 mounds if weather remains favourable for two months more, he said.

The horticulture centre distributed 47,000 Amropali plant in Khagrachari, Rangamari and Bandarban districts in last three years, Mizanur Rahman said.

But the gardens are facing the biggest threat from brick fields. There are more than 140 brick fields in CHT and around 44 of them are in Khagrachari, he said. Smoke from the brick fields badly affects mango buds.

Farmer Mongshi Marmar in Kongchhari Para said price of Amropali mango is higher by at least Tk 20 per kilogram than that of other mangoes.

The Amropali has created hopes among hill people as it yields fruit within a short time.

Deputy Director of Agriculture Extension Office TM Monjurul Islam said, as climate and soil in the hills are suitable for Amropali, they are trying to expand its cultivation.

'Mongla port still under control of mafia gang'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Action is yet to be taken against eleven members of a 'Mafia group' who virtually controlled all activities at Mongla sea port till last year.

Members of this Mafia group were accused by the parliamentary standing committee on shipping ministry of destabilising activities at the sea port.

The accusation was made by members of the parliamentary standing committee in its two meetings held on April 3 in 2005 and on January 11 last year. They are still active through their men at the port, sources said.

It was resolved in both the meetings that drastic legal action must be taken against the eleven mafia men responsible for making the port a losing concern due to gross irregularities in financial transactions and some other machinations which helped them earn huge illegal money under political influence. The meeting also took note of the fact that they mafia group enjoyed support of a section of corrupt officials of Mongla Port Authority (MPA).

The ministry of home affairs did not go for any legal action then despite several reminders sent by the shipping ministry, sources at Mongla Port Authority.

As per the list sent to the home ministry, members of the notorious mafia group include former president of Khulna Chamber of Commerce and Industries Shaikh Nazrul Islam, president of Mongla Sramik Sangha Shahjahan Shikari, proprietor of Mac Shipping Company Kamrul Islam and proprietor of Mongla Cement Factory Anwar Hossain.

Mongla Port incurred a loss of Tk 12.31 crore in 2004-05 financial year, Tk 8.4 crore in 2003-04 and Tk 5.51 crore in 2002-03.

water remains stagnant till the Bangla months of Chaitra and Baishakh, affecting cultivation for about nine months a year, local people said.

Neither people's representatives nor the local administration took any initiative to remove the water-logging despite repeated appeals, some local people told this correspondent during a visit. The Water Development Board (WDB) also did not take any step, said chairman of Mongla UP and freedom fighter Abdul Kader.

Lutfur Rahman, member of Fingri Union Parishad said, local people at a meeting decided to remove the water with irrigation pumps.

They collected money from villagers and installed hired irrigation pumps. The stagnant water has been pumped out in about 15 days at a cost of Tk over 35,000, spent for hiring the pumps and their fuel, he said.

"We will be able to cultivate Boro in the current season," said farmer Nazibul Islam of Fingri village.

Belayet Hossain, deputy director of agricultural extension department in Satkhira said water has been removed from most areas of the five water bodies and the lands are now suitable for cultivation.

When contacted, WDB Executive Engineer Mosharrif

Hossain

said the problem can not be solved without dredging the silted river at that point.

3 of a family given life for murder

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

The Divisional Speedy Trial Tribunal here yesterday gave life term imprisonment to three members of a family for a murder in Chunarughat upazila in Habiganj district.

In the verdict given by Judge Biplob Goswami, Abdul Khalique, his wife Zahera Begum and their son Bokul Mia were convicted in absentia. The court acquitted five others.

On February 28, 2004, Mofiz Uddin, 30, a sharecropper in Lalkare village was stabbed to death in a sequel to earlier dispute over land. Mofiz died on the spot. His wife Fatema Begum filed a case with Chunarughat police station accusing Abdul Khalique his wife Zahera Begum and their son Bokul Mia and five others.

Police submitted charge sheet against eight persons on November 28, 2004.

The case was transferred to Sylhet Divisional Speedy Trial Tribunal in December last year. The convicts are absconding since the murder.

Halim Gazi was arrested and relief materials were recovered from the house on Saturday. Acting on his confession, law enforcers also recovered a foreign-made revolver while arresting his manager, police said.

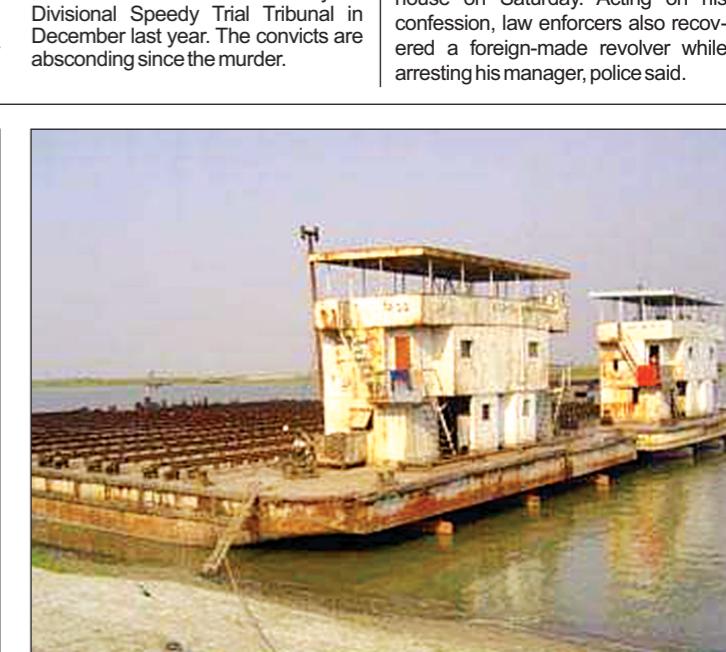


PHOTO: STAR

Tk 100cr rly goods decaying in Gaibandha

Business