

From piracy to parliament

Case against Shahidul Alam Talukder of Patuakhali for looting police outpost was dropped

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Patuakhali*

Alleged corruption by former BNP lawmaker Shahidul Alam Talukder and atrocities by a section of his party men is a talk of the town in Baufal.

The lawmaker from Patuakhali-2 (Baufal) constituency, now on the run, faces two cases for keeping illegal arms and relief goods and also several general diaries (GDs) with Baufal police station allegedly for torturing officials, journalists and minority community people. The two cases were filed on February 17 this year, police said.

Shahidul was elected from Patuakhali-2 (Baufal) in 2001 election with BNP ticket.

Sources in law enforcers said, after proclamation of emergency, they raided Shahidul's house to nab him for his alleged corruption and protecting musclemen and listed terrors.

Joint forces raided his residence at Baufal town on February 16 and recovered two magazines of a pistol, two pistol covers and some relief goods including 19 pieces of Sharee, 18 pieces of T-shirts, 9 blankets, 4 sacks of sports goods including football, volleyball and cricketsets.

SM Miazur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Baufam thana filed two



cases in this connection, one of them under the Arms Act.

Investigation officer (IO) of the arms case SI Rafiq said, "We will submit charge sheet (in the case) as early as possible." The Anti Corruption Commission (ACC) is investigating the other case for misappropriation of relied goods.

Joint forces demolished Shahidul's three storied market cum residence at Kalishuri Bazar in Baufal upazila as it was built by occupying 15 acres of government land, official sources said.

Joint forces recently arrested two of his close aides. They are Baufal upazila Jubo Dal president Salauddin, arrested on February 28 from Mirpur in Dhaka and and its secretary Giasuddin, held from Kalaiya Bazar in Baufal on February

13. Both are in Patuakhali jail now. Shahidul started his life as an alleged pirate leader on the Tetulia river in the upazila, police told this correspondent showing records. He had formed a gang named 'Talukder Bahini' with 25-30 armed members. The gang attacked Dhulia police outpost in Baufal in 1973 in which two police men were killed and all 22 rifles looted, police said. Shahidul was the prime accused among the 14 people sued in the case.

He joined Jagodal, a political party floated in late 70s by Ziaur Rahman. The case for looting police outpost was withdrawn after he joined Jagodal, police and other sources said.

When HM Ershad came to power, Shahidul joined Jatiya Party and was elected Baufal upazila chairman. After fall of Ershad, he joined BNP in 1991.

Sources claimed that Shahidul had also links with Hawa Bhaban in Dhaka, which opened up the scope for him to establish his supremacy in the area.

On May 29, in 2004 Shahidul assaulted ASM Feroz, former Awami League lawmaker from the same constituency, at Upazila Nirbahi Officer's (UNO) office. He also assaulted Kazi Hanif, officer-in-charge of Baufal police station on

October 7, 2004 at his office room. The OC filed a GD (no. 205) with the police station but the record was missing from the GD book after Hanif was transferred, police said.

On August 9, 2005 Monjur Morshed, Baufal upazila correspondent of daily Jugantar, was beaten by Shahidul as he reported on alleged fish looting by his cadres.

Kamruzzaman Bachu, upazila correspondent of the daily Janakantha filed a GD (no. 208) with Baufal thana on May 8 in 2002 against Shahidul as he threatened him for another report published in the daily.

Paris-based international organisation Sans Frontiers (RSF) listed Shahidul on its list of people who 'tortured' journalists.

Allegations have it that his men collected percentage from all development works and tool from businessmen in the area.

Shahidul and his men snatched arrested Giusuddin from police on October 29 last year at Kalaiya Bazaar and also assaulted the then OC Nur Mohammad of Baufal thana and SI (Sub-Inspector) Shah Alam. Giasuddin was arrested on charge of corruptions, police said.

Tk 1.53cr arrear power bills with 45 defaulters In Barisal

10-day deadline given

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Barisal*

The West Zone Power Distribution Company (WZPDCO) yesterday published a notice giving a 10-day deadline to 45 defaulters for payment of Tk 1,53,66,644 crore arrear bills.

The notice was published in a local newspaper.

The notice said that power supply connections will be snapped and legal action taken if the bills are not cleared by the deadline.

The defaulters with more than Tk one lakh arrear dues include government officials, businessmen, political leaders, religious and educational institutions and some clubs in the city.

Of the arrears, 15 government offices account for Tk 74,61,466; 22 mosques and madrasas Tk 22,17,370 and 17 private organisations account for Tk 56,84,808.

The top 15 defaulters included the office of the Commanding Officer of Armed Police Battalion (Tk 20,47,599); Oviruchi Cinema complex owned by BCCI (Barisal Chamber of Commerce and Industries) president and FBCCI (Federation of Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industries) director BNP leader Ebaidul Huq Chan (Tk 16,66,678).



PHOTO: STAR

Joint forces in a raid yesterday seized 160 sacks of imported rotten rice from a godown in Katia Laskar Para in Satkhira town.

PROBE INTO HAFIZ IBRAHIM'S ASSETS IN BARISAL

Taskforce collects papers on Tk 34cr loan, cases

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Barisal*

The taskforce now in Barisal yesterday continued investigation into assets of former BNP lawmaker from Bhola-2 Hafiz Ibrahim and alleged irregularities done by him.

Ibrahim is the brother of Giasuddin Mamun, a close aide to BNP senior joint secretary Tarique rahman, now in jail for alleged corruption.

Banks remained open in the city yesterday on orders from Bangladesh Bank here to help the taskforce in its probe but there was no transaction.

The team visited some branches of Rupali Bank, Islami Bank and Ambia Memorial Hospital and collected some documents, sources said.

Abul Kalam Azad, manager of Rupali Bank branch at Nathullabad in the city and Biplob Nag, media officer of Ambia Memorial Hospital, acknowledged the visits by the taskforce but declined to give details.

However, sources said that the taskforce inquired about alleged irregularities in sanctioning Tk 34 core loans, recommended by Hafiz Ibrahim and his wife Mafruza Sultana when they were directors of Rupali Bank. It collected documents on the loans and copies of the cases lodged with a Barisal court and police station in this connection.

Ambia Memorial Hospital at Bogura Road in Barisal city was built with Tk 25 core loans sanctioned to BNP leader Jannatunnessa Nayon by Nathullabad Rupali Bank branch allegedly in an irregular way, the sources added.

Banking sources said the taskforce team led by Maj Mamun met with bankers at Barisal Circuit House on Friday, seeking their cooperation in the drive against corruption. The team inquired about transactions of Hafiz Ibrahim, his family members and aides.

At Friday's meeting, Sudhir Chandra Das, general manager of Bangladesh Bank in Barisal, verbally ordered all bank officials not to leave station and their branch managers to remain in their offices with computer and data base operators to give all kinds of information to the taskforce.

So managers of all banks stayed inside their close-door offices said Safiur Rahman, assistant general manager in-charge of Rupali Bank at Sadar Road.

Saifur acknowledged that Hafiz Ibrahim's wife Mafruza Sultana and nephew Reazul have two accounts with his bank but declined to give details.

Sources also said the taskforce may visit Hafiz Ibrahim's property at Port Road in the city.

Earlier on Friday night, the team visited Gournadi and met with the

upazila nirbahi officer and inquired about family members of Hafiz Ibrahim's the father-in-law at Kandopasha village in Nalchira union.

The taskforce comprise officials of the Anti Corruption Commission, intelligence department and the army.

Tk 50 lakh goods gutted in Nilphamari

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Nilphamari*

Property worth about Tk 30 lakh was gutted in a devastating fire at Noor Market at Chilahati in Domar upazila at about midnight Friday.

Four people were also injured when crowds from nearby areas rushed to bring the fire under control.

Eyewitness said that the fire originated from a shop and engulfed the whole market within minutes.

The businessmen in the market claimed that property and goods worth about Tk 50 lakh were gutted by the fire.

Fire fighters from Nilphamari, 45 kilometres from the spot, brought fire under control in about two hours.

Fire brigade sources said the fire was caused by a short circuit.

Woman lawyer held for torturing maid in Mymensingh

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Mymensingh*

A woman lawyer was arrested in Mymensingh town yesterday for allegedly torturing her house maid.

Advocate Rehana Akhter of Mymensingh judge court allegedly tortured her maid Jesmin, 12, on March 3, police said.

During beating, Jesmin fell on gas burner and lower parts of both of her legs where burnt severely.

Jesmine was now undergoing treatment at the burn unit at Mymensingh Medical College Hospital (MMCH), police said.

Jesmin, daughter of Abdus Satter, came to work at Rehena's house five months ago.

Following the incident, the victim's mother filed a case with Kotwali police station on March 15. Police arrested her from her residence at Shankipara in the town.

She was produced before a court, which sent her to jail, court sources said.

Stop work on Tipaimukh Dam

NGOs demand on International River Protection Day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Rajshahi*

Some non-government organisations at a joint press conference in Rajshahi yesterday stressed the



PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

ICD, an NGO, holding a press conference on a boat on Kirtankhola in Barisal marking the Int'l river protection day.

need for a coordinated campaign to save country's rivers.

Observing the International River Protection Day yesterday, they demanded immediate stoppage of work on Tipaimukh Dam on the upstream of Shurma and Kushiya rivers in India, government steps to save rivers and ensure safe water for people.

They said flows of most rivers in Bangladesh are shrinking day by day due to construction of dams on upstreams, unilateral withdrawal of their water. Pollution of their waters is also seriously affecting the ecology and the environment, they said.

Ongikar Bangladesh, in association with Barendra Unnayan Prochesta (BUP) and Niskriti held the press conference on a boat on Padma river.

Niskriti director SKL Muhammad Lalon and BUP director Fayeazullah Chowdhury addressed the press conference.

Officials and workers of Bangladesh Environment Lawyers' Association and Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon were present.

The speakers apprehended that fresh conflicts on river water sharing might emerge in the world in future.

They said, big chars emerged in Padma river following unilateral withdrawal of its water by India.

Underground water extraction by deep tube-wells of Barind Multipurpose Development Authority also added fuel to deposit of silt in the Padma, they said.

Tk 2cr down the drain!

Sluice gate being built on 'dead' canal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Satkhira*

Construction of a sluice gate on a silted canal at Bangdah in Sadar upazila is going on in full swing ignoring protests by local people and an order by the Water Development Board (WDB) Chief Engineer to stop it.

WDB Chief Engineer Nurunnabi Chowdhury ordered to stop the construction work after visiting the site but the contractor concerned is continuing the work in collaboration with a section of officials and staff, sources said.

The new sluice gate is being constructed where the old one became inoperative as the canal died due to deposit of silt. Local people protested construction of a new one, saying it is wastage of money as sluice gate would be totally useless now.

On the other hand, two families were compelled to leave their ancestral homesteads due to construction of the new sluice gate, the sources alleged.

The new sluice gate being constructed about 50 yards of the old one involves Tk 2 crore, some sources in WDB told this correspondent. The old one was built in the 70s to drain out water of 21 beels (water bodies) to Marichchap river, WDB sources and locals said.

As Marichchap river lost navigability due to massive deposit of silt, the Bangdah sluice gate also became inoperative as the river bed rose.

On contact, Satkhira WDB Executive Engineer Muzibar Rahman said, the chief engineer ordered to stop the construction work. So there is no question of continuing the work, he added.

8X3

8X4