

Arrested Khagrachhari BNP leader Belayet faces 20 cases

Allegations of land grabbing, atrocities on political opponents

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Khagrachhari

Allegations of corruption and land grabbing by an once powerful BNP leader and atrocities by his men here are coming to light as the victims are opening their mouth and the administration faces no pressure from any ruling party.

Ramgarh upazila BNP president Belayet Hossen Bhuiyan faces 20 cases, all filed since his arrest on February 13, Ramgarh police station Officer-in-Charge (OC) Nazrul Islam told this correspondent yesterday.

Most of the cases are linked to except for one for women repression, he said. "We are probing the allegations", he added.

The BNP leader who allegedly led a cadre group called G-8 is the elder brother of former Khagrachhari BNP lawmaker Wadud Bhuiyan. Wadud is also in jail for alleged corruption.

The cadre group was allegedly involved in tender manipulation, filing of false cases, land grabbing and atrocities on opponent political party men, according to sources in intelligence department and locals.

The sources said Belayet Hossen amassed property worth crores of taka in last five years.

By using the influence of the then ruling party and the lawmaker, he allegedly grabbed around 100 acres of land beside the Khagrachhari-Ramgarh road, about one and a half kilometers from Ramgarh town. He has raised a teak forest and built a luxurious house-Banabithi-, which replaces an old tin-shed.

Allegations have it that he got a huge amount for this from Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Board (CHTDB) headed by his younger brother.

Talking to this correspondent during a visit there, Joyнал Molla, one

of the victims claimed that Belayet and his cadres grabbed 35 acres of his land. He alleged that BNP and JCD cadres forcibly took his signature and forced him to sell his lands at a throw-away price. "There are many other victims like me", Joyнал said.

Ramgarh our upazila family planning assistant Jhama Rani Das alleged that JCD cadres beat her on August 6, 2002 as she did not agree to sell her land to Belayet. "I want justice", she told this correspondent.

Similar allegations were made by Rebeka Khatun of Taisala, Zehura Begum of Masterpara, Ayesha Begum alias Koli of Ramgarh Bazar, Fulu Rani Majumder and Hazera Khatun of Jagannath Para and Nasima Akter of from lake area.

When contacted, Ramgarh land revenue officials declined to make any comment on the alleged land grabbing by Belayet and his men. Cases have been filed and these will take their

usual course, they said.

Belayet's men also grabbed the brickfield of former Jatiya Party lawmaker Alimullah, and a pond and a brickfield of Ramgarh upazila BNP's founder president Kazi Ruhul Amin, the victims alleged. His cadres own six brickfields in Ramgour, sources said.

Sources at Public Works Department (PWD) claimed that the Ramgarh upazila BNP office was constructed by grabbing PWD land. They said they complained to the local administration but action is yet to be taken.

There are also allegations that in last five years, BNP cadres compelled about 300 leaders and activists of other parties to flee Ramgarh. They included former Jatiya Party lawmaker Alimullah, Ramgarh upazila Awami League president Kazi Ruhul Amin, AL leaders SM Waliullah, Mukul Chowdhury, Shah Alam, Kazi Elias, Abdul Kuddus, Mohammad Joyнал, Mohammad Mohsin, Abdul Kader, Mohammad Mostafa, Horipada Sharma, Hashem Khan and freedom fighter Abdul Hamid.

Abdul Hamid and his family had to flee Ramgour on October 3, 2001 as BNP cadres beat his son Rafiq. Abdul Hamid said he lodged a written complaint to the then home minister on December 28, 2003 but to no result.

Toll collection from government offices and realising money from development projects were the main sources of illegal income of Belayet's cadres, sources claimed.

A municipal commissioner seeking anonymity claimed that BNP cadres realised Tk one lakh from each of the nine cluster villages in the name of rehabilitation.

Truck driver Siraj of Ramgarh alleged that Belayet's cadres used to realise Tk 800 from each truck coming to the area for carrying goods.

Ramgarh upazila Awami League President Kazi Ruhul Amin blamed Belayet and his men for the murder of Jubo League activists Faruq and Yasin.

"People of Ramgarh distributed sweets on hearing the arrest of Belayet", said former Jatiya Party lawmaker Alimullah.



PHOTO: STAR

Bonobithi, Belayet Hossen Bhuiyan's mansion in Khagrachhari.

KDA, KCC at loggerheads

KDA decides to demolish Khulna Nagar Bhaban, 23 other KCC structures

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Khulna*

Khulna City Corporation (KCC) and Khulna Development Authority (KDA) are again at loggerheads over exercising their official authority and power.

KDA has decided to demolish Nagar Bhaban constructed at a cost of Tk 5.91 crore, sources claimed.

KDA has also decided to demolish 23 out of 31 offices of KCC ward commissioners and one KCC slaughterhouse.

KDA alleges that the Nagar Bhaban and the 23 offices were constructed without legal authority. KCC should have taken approval before constructing these structures, said a senior official of KDA.

The list made by KDA for demolition also includes KCC-run Khulna Collegiate Girls' School.

Khulna City Mayor Shaikh Tayebur Rahman, when asked, claimed that he took permission from the LGED ministry before construction of the Nagar Bhaban and other structures.

"I need not take approval from KDA as per warrant of precedence. I am holding a position and status higher than the chairman of KDA. My services are accountable to the ministry concerned and not to the Khulna Development Authority", the Mayor said.

KCC Estate Officer Abdul Ahad said KCC is not at all bound to submit design of any building for construction.

"Under KCC Act, we are not accountable to KDA for implementation of development projects", the estate officer said.

An Executive Engineer of KCC alleged that KDA has been standing in the way of KCC's revenue earning for the last 15 years. KDA is doing a job to damage revenue earning sources of KCC on different pretexts, executive engineer Zaid Hossain said.

The chairman of KDA could not be reached over his cell phone and land phone for his comment despite several attempts.

4 more diagnostic centers closed in Barisal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Barisal*

Four more diagnostic centers were closed and five others were fined Tk 2,45,000 during a drive by a mobile court in Barisal city yesterday. Another diagnostic center ordered to submit valid documents within six hours.

The closed diagnostic centers are- Sandhani, Seba, Green and The Laboratories Diagnostic Center. Owner of Apollo Diagnostic was ordered to submit valid documents by 8 pm yesterday.

The court fined Ahmed Laboratories Tk 25,000 and realised Tk 30,000 each from Prime and Globe diagnostic and Group Laboratories and Tk 1, 00,000 from Konika Diagnostic and Laboratories.

Magistrate Munim Hasan led the team that included Deputy Civil Surgeon Dr. Golam Murtaza and Capt Mansur of RAB.

7 JMB men sent to Joypurhat jail after quizzing on remand

Bss, *Rangpur*

A Joypurhat court yesterday sent seven militants of outlawed Jama'atul Mujahidin Bangladesh (JMB) to jail when police produced them before the court after interrogation during a 10-day remand, officials said.

The JMB militants are Mahfuzur Rahman, Nuruzzaman, Monsur Ali, Isahaq Ali, Afzal Hossain, Abdul Mabud and Khalilur Rahman. They were arrested in raids in different areas of Khetlal and Kalai upazilas in Joypurhat district on March 6 and 7.

A Joint Interrogation Cell in Dhaka interrogated Mahfuzur Rahman and Monsur Ali. The rest were interrogated by police of Khetlal and Kalai police stations.

After expiry of the remand, police produced all seven JMB militants before the court of First Class Magistrate Golam Kibria yesterday.

The JMB militants provided important information during interrogation, police said but declined to give details.



PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

Mighty Padma is now vast sheets of sand in many areas in Rajshahi due to withdrawal of water across the border. This has triggered a desertification process in northern districts.

Waterlogged for years as cry for succour goes unheeded

IQBAL SIDDIQUEE, *Sylhet*

While croplands, canals and even rivers are drying up in many areas in summer, it is a different picture in Bilpar area in Sylhet city. Water-logging there is a round-the-year problem, caused allegedly due to land grabbing.

The gabbers have occupied the

Bashu Khal (canal), clogging the drainage system, locals said.

They claimed that they submitted at least 100 applications to the Sylhet City Corporation (SCC) and other authorities in last five years, but to no effect as the grabbers enjoy political clout and have good links with a section of SCC officials.

The latest written appeal was

submitted on March 4 to the Deputy Commissioner, who sent it to the SCC Chief Executive Officer, the locals told this correspondent.

Housewife Ruby Begum there said, "We are to wade through water whenever we come out of house". A child drowned in the water three years ago, she said.

Shamsu Miah said the problem

started five years ago after a grabber occupied a portion of the canal and constructed a wall clogging the drainage system. The Bashu Khal flows into the Surma river.

Residents of Bhatiali and Kajolshah areas also suffer due to this problem, they said.

The problem will not be removed unless the canal is freed from encroachers, they said.

A portion of the wall was demolished when floodwater engulfed Bilpar, Bhatiali, Kajolshah, Laladighirpar and adjoining areas in 2005. But it was reconstructed when water receded.

The SCC mayor and other officials also visited the area several times and assured measures, but nothing happened, other residents said.

The SCC took up a plan to re-excavate the Bashu Khal and acquire lands without recovering its grabbed portion from the occupiers. But the project did not get nod from the LGRD ministry.

However, local ward commissioner Amena Begum Rumi opposed the idea terming it a faulty one. The SCC should recover the grabbed areas of the canal first, she said.

The water-logging problem can be resolved to some extent by cutting the earth in about 150 feet at two points, she said.

The locals alleged that political influence and some corrupt employees of SCC stood on the way of resolving the problem.



PHOTO: STAR

Persistent waterlogging in Bilpar in Sylhet city that poses health hazards to residents.

Motaleb's moneymaker Saudi date saplings

AMINUL ISLAM, *Mymensingh*

Motaleb did not know that the dates he brought home from Saudi Arabia out of curiosity would open up the door to fortune.

Abdul Motaleb returned home in 2001 with a dashed hope. He sowed some seeds on the courtyard. As seedlings grew, he sowed the rest of the seeds on 70 decimal land at his Para Goan village in Bhaluka upazila.

The young man also harvested dates during last Ramadan and expanded the garden.

Unbelievable though, the saplings earned him around Tk 2,50,000 in last six months.

The Daily Star and some TV channels earlier ran stories on successful growing of Saudi date plants by Motaleb.

This drew enthusiastic people from different corners of the country who are visiting Motaleb's date orchard to buy saplings. A sapling is sold at between Tk 800 and Tk 6000 depending on the size, he said. The demand is increasing day by day, Motaleb told this correspondent during a recent visit.

A small size sapling with two leaves is sold at Tk 800 to 1200, a medium size at Tk 2000 to 3000 and bigger plant at Tk 6000. There are some 2500 saplings in his orchard ready for sale now.

Each tree releases eight to ten shoots from the bottom which grow into saplings. These can be planted in new gardens or sold, he said.

The dates produced in his orchard are big in size like the Saudi dates. Now there are 162 trees in his orchard. In last season, 14 trees bore flower but fruits were harvested from only four as 10 of them were identified as male trees, Motaleb said.

There are three varieties of Saudia date in his 90 decimal garden. They are Azua (large size), Bakri (small size) and Sukkaria (long size).

He named the orchard after his son Mofazzol.

At first he planted 265 saplings but 103 of them withered away due to lack of proper knowledge, he said.

An enthusiastic Motaleb said he harvested around 17 kgs of ripe date in August last year from the four trees and sold a portion of it at Tk 45 per kilogram.

"I distributed most of the dates among friends and relatives. This was very exciting for me to offer Saudi dates grown in Bangladesh", he said.

He expects more production this year as seven more trees are now in flowering stage. At least 100 trees will bear fruit next year, he hoped.

"The demand for saplings encouraged me to expand my garden", Motaleb said.

Like the native date trees, juice can also be extracted from the Saudi variety trees. But this decreases fruiting, he said.

A farmer can earn up to Tk 25000

from 10 decimal land per year, said Motaleb adding it is more profitable than cultivation of any other traditional crops.

Motaleb who studied up to class eight flew to Saudi Arabia in 1998 and worked there in a date orchard.

"When I was in Saudi Arabia, I thought land of my country is more fertile than that of Saudia Arabia and dates might grow there better.

"I carried 35 kilograms of date with me out of curiosity. But all my relatives laughed away the idea.

"I did not lose heart. I kept some of the seeds in water for some hours and then wrapped in a sack.

"When they germinated, my son planted those in the courtyard."

Motaleb said he invited local agriculture extension officials, but they also ignored it.

"When saplings grew, my wife Majeda Khatun and son Mofazzol worked with me to nurse the plants.



PHOTO: STAR

The date trees in Motaleb's garden that release shoots which grow into saplings.

CI sheets recovered, BNP leader held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Manikganj*

Joint forces arrested Manikganj Sadar upazila BNP joint convener and Nabogram Union Parishad chairman Nurul Islam Nuru and recovered 77 pieces of relief CI sheets from his house at Charbaroil village yesterday. The CI sheets were used on the roof of his house, police said.

However the arrestee BNP leader said he bought the used CI sheets from a shop at local Ghusta Bazar.

Acting on a tip-off, the joint forces led by First Class Mmagistrate Abdul Hakim also searched his house and adjacent areas.

Tk 8.7 lakh snatched from trader in Sylhet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Sylhet*

Armed miscreants stabbed a businessman and snatched Tk 8,70,000 from him when he was going to a bank in Sylhet city yesterday.

The victim, Islam Uddin, was admitted to Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College hospital.

Police said wholesale shop owner Kamal Ahmed and his employee Islam Uddin were going to bank in a motorcycle. Some miscreants intercepted them at Jailroad and asked them to hand over the bag containing the money. As they declined, the miscreants beat them and stabbed Moslem and snatched away the bag.

Pedestrians sent them to hospital.