

TENDER MANIPULATION BY MAGURA BNP IN FIVE YEARS

Syndicate members on the run as intelligence men in field

HOSSAIN SERAJ, *Magura*

Most of the members of much talked about 'negotiation committee', a syndicate formed by BNP leaders that manipulated tenders of different government departments in the district, are on the run as intelligence agencies are in the field to identify them and find out their bank accounts.

By manipulating tenders in last five years of 4-party alliance rule, the 'committee' illegally realised 16 per cent of estimated cost of development projects, contractors and sources in intelligence agencies said.

Assistant Director of Anti Corruption Commission (ACC) in Magura Aminur Rahman told this correspondent that he got allegations of tender manipulation by the 'negotiation committee' and was investigating the matter. He however declined to give details.

The tender manipulation syndicate comprised pro-BNP contractors and front ranking leaders of district BNP and allegedly enjoyed protection of lawmaker Quazi Salemul Huq alias Quazi Kamal, elected from Magura-2 constituency, the sources claimed.

"Contractors and party men chosen by the lawmaker deserved membership of the committee", a pro-BNP contractor said seeking anonymity.

"Actually, professional contractors had no entry at all to buy or drop any schedule as members of the 'negotiation committee' used to

control the whole process and sold works among the chosen highest bidders", well known contractor Mustafizur Rahman Swapan alleged while talking to this correspondent.

On contact over cell phone, former lawmaker Quazi Kamal however denied his involvement with the negotiation committee.

"As I was never a contractor, I was not involved in the malpractice. Rather, after learning about the so-called negotiation committee, I discouraged party men and directed officials not to follow the committee's decision in distributing work", he said.

Official sources said, LGED (Local Government Engineering Department) in Magura in five years from 2001 to 2006 implemented 25 development projects involving Tk 59.99 crore.

All the works were sanctioned by the syndicate in favour of their chosen contractors, sources at LGED office and professional contractors said.

The syndicate allegedly realised 16 per cent money of the estimated cost of projects before 'sanctioning' the work, calling it 'negotiation money'.

After realising the money, the syndicate compelled officials concerned to arrange a managed lottery, the sources said.

Such tender manipulation deprived the government of huge amounts of revenue as none but the chosen contractors were allowed to buy schedules, LGED sources said.

On March, 2004, contractor

Khan Afjal Hossain lodged a complaint when members of the syndicate and their cadres snatched his schedules for Tk 1.06 crore road development work as he went to drop those at LGED office. The report was published in The Daily Star on March 21.

The Magura LGED office earned Tk 10.46 lakh revenue by selling schedules and other documents in 2006-07 financial year as it could run the office independently, free of the clutches of the negotiation committee. Compared to this, the office earned Tk 20 lakh revenue in five financial years from 2001 to 2005 as professional contractors were barred from buying and dropping schedules, the sources said.

Same was the case with Roads and Highways (R&H) Department and PWD (Public Works Department).

Sources in R&H office said, from FY 2001-02 to 2005-06, the department implemented about Tk 70 crore development projects and contractors selected by the negotiation committee got the works in exchange of 16 per cent of the estimated cost.

Some aggrieved BNP men preferring anonymity also confirmed tender manipulation and claimed that crores of taka were realised by the negotiation committee in different departments in last five years.

They said, six per cent of the realised money was deposited with the account of 'Quazi Salima Huq Trust', a social welfare body named after the mother of former BNP

lawmaker Quazi Kamal while the rest 10 per cent was deposited with different banks in the name of party fund. The accounts were operated by influential BNP leaders.

Such an account (No. savings: 12315) with Janata Bank main branch in Magura town is still been operated in joint names of district BNP senior vice-president Aminul Islam Chandu Mian and Sadar upazila BNP president Sakhawat Hossain.

Another account (No. savings: 10274) with the same bank is run in the name of former lawmaker's PA (personal assistant), sources in intelligence agencies said.

"If law enforcers investigate the bank accounts of some pro-BNP contractors and accounts of some BNP leaders involved with the negotiation committee, they will be able to detect transactions of crores of taka", a former front ranking leader of district BNP said.

Some party insiders requesting anonymity however admitted that a small portion of the collected money was also distributed among party cadres and leaders according to their status.

But major portion of the money was deposited with banks in the name of calling 'party fund' and subsequently grabbed by negotiation committee leaders, they claimed.

US student donates stipend money to poor mothers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Patuakhali*

An undergraduate student of North Carolina University in America has donated her entire Tk 1.88 lakh scholarship for treatment of poor pregnant mothers and prevention of school dropouts at a remote village here.

Sagufta Shefa Sikder came to Aullapur, a remote village in Patuakhali Sadar upazila for doing research work on 'pregnant mothers of rural areas in Bangladesh' on August 5.

During her visit, she was moved to see the real condition of malnourished pregnant mothers of poor families in the area.

After her visit she returned to Dhaka and decided to donate Tk 1.88 lakh scholarship, she received from the Mahatma Gandhi Fund, India.

She signed an agreement to this effect with the respective Union Parishad (UP) and handed over the money to UP chairman Humayun Kabir on August 8. During the handing over ceremony, Dhaka University teacher Prof Dr Atiur Rahman, also chairman of Unnayan Samannay, a Dhaka based NGO, was present at the simple function.

According to the agreement, 50 percent of the donation would be spent for poor pregnant mothers during ante-natal delivery and post-natal care. Thirty percent of it would be spent for preventing the school drops outs while the rest 20 percent would be spent to implement the activities.

83.75 tons of urea seized

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Patuakhali*

Security forces in two separate drives here arrested three fertilizer smugglers and seized 1,675 sacks containing 83.75 tons of urea while being smuggled out to Myanmar.

The arrestees are Shahidul Islam Khan, 35, Abul Kalam Aza, 32 and Shahid, 37, hailing from different villages in Kalapara upazila, Patuakhali district and Barisal district.

On a tip-off, members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) seized a fishing trawler loaded with 600 sacks of urea on the Ramnabad in Galachipa upazila Thursday night.

As per confession of the arrestees, Rab seized more 700 sacks of urea from another trawler at night.

Police said, Coast Guards seized 375 sacks of urea along with the trawler on the Andharmanik in Kalapara upazila Friday night.



PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

Local people shifting Banari High School in Bhashail in Tongbari upazila in Munshiganj district as Padma is approaching the institution after devouring numerous houses and vast croplands.

Govt to import food to meet shortfall
No fertiliser crisis, says planning adviserOUR CORRESPONDENT, *Pabna*

Finance and Planning Adviser Dr. AB Mirza Azizul Islam yesterday said the government is importing food grains to meet the shortage caused by floods.

Food demand increases by 15 per cent a year but production increases by only 3 per cent. He however said there is no food crisis in the country now.

Azizul Islam was addressing a meeting of officials at Faridpur Upazilla Parishad auditorium. Upazilla Nirbahi Officer Nitai Chandra Sen presided over the meeting.

Earlier the adviser visited flood affected areas in f Chatmohar,

Bhangura and Faridpur upazilas and distributed relief.

Mirza Azizul Islam said there is no fertiliser crisis in the country. "There are sufficient quantities of fertilizers. Moreover, the government is importing 1.27 lakh tons of fertilizer", he told the meeting.

Fertiliser is being smuggled to India and Myanmar and their prices are higher there, he said and urged law enforcers to stop it.

Pabna Deputy Commissioner Md. Golam Mousa, Police Superintendent AFM Masum Rabbani, Faridpur Pourasava Chairman Abul Hossain Master, local Union Parishad chairman Shakwat Hossain also spoke at the meeting.

Mirza Azizul Islam said the government is taking immediate step to rehabilitate flood victims. Steps are being taken to assist affected people to rebuild houses.

The advisor stressed the need for coordination in relief operation by the government, NGOs and private individuals.

Advisor for Relief and Disaster Management Topon Choudhuri also distributed relief among flood affected people in Kazirhat, Dhalarchar, Rupper and Puran Varendra union in Bera upazila in Pabna yesterday.

He urged political parties and affluent people to help the affected people and asked the local administration to coordinate their efforts.

BSF returns body of Bangladeshi

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Satkhira*

The body of a Bangladeshi cattle trader was returned to Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) at a flag meeting yesterday.

Bangladeshi cattle trader Ziarul Haque of Raipur village in Kalaroa upazila was gunned down by Indian Border Security Force (BSF) near Bhadiali, a border village in Kalaroa upazila on August 5 night.

BSF took away the body, BDR said. BSF handed over the body to BDR at the flag meeting held at zero point on Bhomra border.

Meanwhile, another Bangladeshi cattle trader was injured by BSF early yesterday morning.

The injured is Abdul Mannan of Noapara village in Debhata upazila.

Local people rescued and sent him to Satkhira Sadar Hospital in a critical condition. Later, he was shifted to a Khulna hospital as his condition deteriorated

37 Satkhira BNP leaders for reform under Khaleda

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Satkhira*

Thirty-seven front ranking leaders of Satkhira district BNP and its front organisations in a joint statement have said they want reform in the party under the leadership of Begum Khaleda Zia.

Expressing their full support to Khaleda Zia's leadership, they said a section of leaders led by BNP secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan is 'hatching conspiracy against the party and its chief Begum Zia'.

They are also making indecent remarks against Begum Zia, which are creating confusion among leaders and activists at grassroots level, the statement issued recently said.

Terming reformists 'corrupt and opportunists' they claimed that they are 'implementing a blue print to divide the party in the name of

reform'. Existence of BNP will be at stake without Khaleda, signatories to the statement said.

They said they want to remove corrupt, non-political elements and musclemen from the party to make it stronger, but of course keeping Khaleda at the top.

Grassroots level leaders and activists in the party will not accept any reforms without Khaleda, they said.

The statement also castigated reformists, saying they are conspirators and giving anti-party and false statements, which are weakening the party.

They urged party men not to be misled by reformists' statements and called upon Khaleda Zia to expel the reformists from the party.

Signatories to the statement included district BNP member secretary Samsuzzoha Bablu and member Sirajul Islam; Satkhira

poura BNP president Imamul Islam Sharif; district Mahila Dal president Hosne Ara Ahmed; district Krishak Dal secretary Abu Zahid Dablu; district JASAS president Syed Eklesar Ali Bachchu district Sechchasebak Dal president Ahsan Habib, Debhata upazila BNP president and secretary Nazibar Rahman and Mahiuddin Siddique; Kalaroa upazila BNP president Bazul Karim; Kaligoni, Assassuni and Shyamnagar upazila BNP convenors Khoda Baksa, SM Akbar Hossain and Abdul Wahed; central Juba Dal leader Mudasserul Haque Huda; and district Jatiyabadi Chhatra Dal president and secretary Tajkin Ahmed Chisti and Hafizur Rahman.



PHOTO: STARIFOCUS BANGLA

Relief being distributed yesterday at a flood shelter in Tongbari in Munshiganj district and Ujani Paroihati village in Moheshpur upazila in Gopalganj.

4x4

Outlaw held in Kushtia

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Kushtia*

Villagers caught an outlaw with a double barrel rifle and five bullets from a house at Jhoudia village in Sadar upazila.

They caught Gono Mukti Fouz (GMF) member Abdul Kuddus while he was holding a meeting with his party members at the house on Friday. Later, mob handed him over to police, police said.

Earlier, villagers besieged the house at about 11.30:pm and informed police. On information, police arrested Kuddus. But his two accomplices managed to escape.

Hailing from Kalicharanpur village in Sadar upazila, Kuddus is a top cadre of GMF and a close associate of the outlawed party leader Azibor Rahman, police said.

Kuddus is an accused in several cases filed with Jhenidah and Kushtia police stations.

He was being interrogated till filing of the report yesterday afternoon.

Two GMF cadres were killed here in 'crossfire' with police this month.

8x3