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Graft-ridden Wasa sees union change its colour

ERSHAD KAMOL

Ruling party backed trade unions within Dhaka's Water and Sewerage Authority (Wasa) have over the last two decades been at the centre of a network of corruption involving crores of taka being siphoned off from the organisation every year by its revenue inspectors, commonly known as 'meter readers'.

A number of Wasa's senior officials privately admitted to The Daily Star that the corruption by meter readers now causes the organisation to lose over Tk 8 crore every month. Wasa Chairman Gholam Mostafa acknowledged to The Daily Star that the agency is 'corruption ridden'.

The main union in power during these years has been Dhaka Wasa Sromik Union (DWSU). It started its life in 1986 with the support of Gen Ershad's Jatiya Party -- becoming Wasa workers' collective bargaining agent (CBA) in 1988. However, in 1991, with the election of BNP, the CBA leaders changed their spots and were able to gain BNP's support. In 1996, with Sheikh Hasina being elected as the prime minister for the first time, the union made an even more extraordinary about-turn and affiliated itself with Awami League.

During these fifteen years of power between 1986 and 2001, the union leaders became rich. Hafiz Uddin, who has been the union president since the beginning, purchased a series of properties in his home district Gazipur. Three were named after his daughter -- four-storey Humaira Poultry Farm, Humaira Fisheries built on two acres of land, and Humaira Brick Field. In addition, he built a large complex. The land is held in his name and of his brother. Jaber Hossain, who was the union's organising secretary, and is now its acting general secretary, also purchased a six-storey property in

Banasree Residential Area in the capital. A tiled mural of Jaber and his father is on the outside of the building. On visiting the plot, the building guard told The Daily Star that Jaber is the 'most senior officer in Wasa'. Jaber has now put the property in the name of his close family members. During the period these properties were purchased, both men were on salaries of less than Tk 7,000 a month. However, with BNP's election to the country's seat of power again in 2001, DWSU lost its preeminent position, and was replaced by a BNP affiliated union. In January 2002 a group of

14 JMB men arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

Police yesterday arrested 14 members of banned militant outfit Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) from a house near the district truck terminal in Jhenidah. From the house, owned by a primary school teacher Malek Joarder, police also seized nine mobile phone sets, copies of Quran and Bible, Islamic booklets and a copy of the first information report of the August 21 grenade attack on Awami League rally. The arrestees are Shafikul Islam of Maktabpara, Alamgir Hossain of Suzanagar, and Hasan under Pabna, Shajahan and Laltu Sheikh of Jhenidah town, Akram Ali of Bhutiarigati, Mintu of Chowgachha under Jessore district, Rabiul of Kotchandpur upazila of Jhenidah, Faruk Hossain, Tuhin Mahmud, Shahinur, and Abu Sayed of Kaliganj upazila of Jhenidah, Ali Hossain of Meherpur and Nazrul Islam of Gaibandha. Superintendent of police in Jhenidah Rezaul Islam said they launched a drive in the truck terminal area acting on a tip-off and arrested 14 JMB activists.

Dacoit leader killed in 'gunfight'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

A leader of inter-district dacoit gang was shot dead in a gunfight with police at Salabhara bus stand under Kaliganj upazila, Jhenidah early yesterday. He was identified as Hazrat Ali alias Daku Hazrat, 35, of Patbila village under Kaliganj upazila. Acting on a tip-off, a patrol team of police cordoned off Salabhara bus stand where a gang of robbers was preparing to commit a robbery by felling trees on Dhaka-Khulna highway early hours of yesterday. Officer-in-Charge of Kaliganj Police Station Mehedi Hasan said.



PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

Homegoers during their patience-test for Eid tickets take naps on Kamalapur Railway Station premises in the early hours yesterday.

Mob kills 1 after death of farmer

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

An angry mob killed a man and critically injured two others suspecting them to be the murderers hours after a farmer was strangled to death at his house at Aliganj in the district yesterday. Police recovered the bodies of the deceased farmer Lal Muhammad, 36, from the spot while Alamgir, 30, of Godagari succumbed to his injuries at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital (RMCH). Alamgir's accomplices

22pc deaths caused by environmental pollution

Finds WB study on Bangladesh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a seminar yesterday said referring to a World Bank study that environment pollution is responsible for 22 percent of all deaths from diseases in Bangladesh. They said half of the deaths attributed to environmental factors are caused by indoor and outdoor air pollution. The international seminar styled "Air Pollution: Perspective Dhaka", jointly organised by the Franco-Bangladesh

Association of Scholars and Trainees (FBAST) and the Embassy of France in Bangladesh, was held at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel. "Dhaka's air quality is among the worst in the world," said Dr Zia Wadud, assistant professor at department of civil engineering, Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet). "Particulates are the worst pollutant," he said. World Bank's environmental and social unit representative M

Khaliquzzaman said, reducing environmental risks could increase the national income by 3.5 percent and it is often overlooked. "Studies show that air quality in the city is best during the rainy season and at its worst during the winter," he said. The speakers also said converting vehicles to compressed natural gas (CNG) system has been a big boon for the environment. "Once all the vehicles are converted to

Taliban men blow up Pakistani school

AFP, Peshawar/ Muzaffarabad

Taliban militants blew up an empty school in a tribal town in northwest Pakistan on Saturday severely damaging the building, officials said. Militants planted explosives near the building in the Khyber region's Bara town, around 20 kilometres (13 miles) south of Peshawar, local administration chief Farooq Khan told AFP by telephone. "The explosive device was fitted with a timer," he said. It went off in the afternoon when the school was closed, he said, adding that nobody was injured. Taliban militants blew up a government-run girls' school in the same area on Monday night.

That school was also badly damaged. Bara is close to Peshawar, the capital of North West Frontier Province, which has been hit by a series of bomb blasts in recent weeks. Earlier three suspected militants blew themselves up after police surrounded them in Pakistani-administered Kashmir on Saturday but there were no casualties, police and officials said. "Police chasing the suspects surrounded them in Sarar village" on the outskirts of Muzaffarabad, capital of the Pakistani zone of the divided Himalayan region, local police official Raja Faisal said. "The militants, who were on foot, blew

2 journos sued for extortion

Lawsuits follow reports on dubious destitute fund

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Netrakona

An extortion case has been filed against The Daily Star Netrakona correspondent Jahangir Alam and Jai Jai Din correspondent Mizanur Rahman Nannu. Shahidul Islam, a Jubo League activist and resident of Jubarajpur village under Durgapur upazila, filed the case with Durgapur police station Friday night. In his case, Shahidul alleged that the two journalists who are the residents of Netrakona district town and senior members of Netrakona Press Club demanded extortion from him and threatened him of rough up if he fails to give them extortion money. Shahidul however did not mention the amount of extortion money or the date of demanding money, Durgapur police

10 injured as train rams auto-rickshaw

UNB, Dinajpur

Ten people were injured as a local train hit an auto-rickshaw at Dhukurjhari level crossing in Birol upazila yesterday. Local sources said the train rammed the auto-rickshaw when it was passing the level

Prayer Timing		
November 22		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	6-05	6-40
Zohr	1-45	2-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-21	6-24
Esha	8-00	8-30

Source: Islamic Foundation

The Daily Star

11th 'O' & 'A' Level

Award Presentation Ceremony, 2008-2009

Announcement for 'O' & 'A' Level Private Candidates and Schools

Private Candidates

Private candidates who fulfill the criteria described below are requested to register their names at The Daily Star office for inclusion as awardees. The criteria to be fulfilled are as follows:

Criteria for 'O' Level
Minimum 6 (six) 'A' grades in two consecutive sittings within May/June 2008 to May/June 2009

Criteria for 'A' Level
Minimum 3 (three) 'A' grades within 1 academic year (May/June 2008 to May/June 2009)

Eligible candidates are requested to contact Mr. Khairul Islam at The Daily Star office with their original Results Certificates along with a photocopy and 2 (two) passport-size photographs in person on 12, 13, 14 or 15 December 2009, between 11:00am to 3:30 pm.

Schools

Any school that has students meeting the criteria above but has not been contacted by The Daily Star (i.e. has not been informed of the first scheduled meeting through regular post, email or phone) is requested to contact Mr. Khairul Islam at The Daily Star office at the aforementioned dates and times or email him at khairulbd@gmail.com by December 17, 2009 with:

- The name of the school, phone number of a responsible representative (who will attend the meetings) and a valid email address that is checked regularly.

The schools are also requested to promptly prepare a list of the candidates meeting the above criteria, the number of 'A' grades achieved by each candidate, and photocopies of results certificates for each candidate.

NOTE: If you know of any private candidate(s) or school(s) that may be unaware of this, please communicate the above information to them so that we may include them in this ceremony as well.

বিআরটিএ'র সতর্কীকরণ বিজ্ঞপ্তি

এতদ্বারা সর্বসাধারণের অবগতির জন্য জানানো যাচ্ছে যে, বিআরটিএ ড্রাইভিং কম্পিটেন্সি টেস্ট বোর্ড এর মাধ্যমে পরীক্ষা গ্রহণ করে কৃতকার্য প্রার্থীদেরকেই কেবল ড্রাইভিং লাইসেন্স প্রদান করে থাকে। কেহ যদি এ পরীক্ষায় অংশগ্রহণ ও কৃতকার্য হওয়া ব্যতীত অন্য কোন অবৈধ পন্থায় জাল বা ভুয়া ড্রাইভিং লাইসেন্স সংগ্রহ করেন উহার দায়-দায়িত্ব বিআরটিএ বহন করবে না। এ ধরনের জাল বা ভুয়া ড্রাইভিং লাইসেন্সধারীদের বিরুদ্ধে আইন প্রয়োগকারী সংস্থা ও বিআরটিএ'র মোবাইল কোর্ট আইনানুগ ব্যবস্থা গ্রহণ করছে।

জিডি-৫২৩৪

বিআরটিএ

OnlinePoll

Do you think the communications ministry should have carried out feasibility study before inviting for tender bidding to the billion-dollar project of elevated expressway?

Yes (67.7%)

No (28.9%)

No Comments (3.4%)

Total votes: 810

TODAY'S POLL

Do you think Tarique Rahman's return to politics will help BNP rebuild its image and organise the party effectively?

Please cast your vote at www.thedailystar.net

42 die in China mine blast

AP, Beijing

A gas explosion tore through a state-run coal mine in northern China yesterday, killing 42 people and leaving 66 others trapped underground as rescuers worked hastily to save them. China's mines are the world's deadliest, and the blast shows the difficulties the government faces in trying to boost safety in an industry where large state-owned coalmines are considered safer than smaller, private ones. A total of 528 people were working in the Xinxing mine in Heilongjiang province at the time of the 2:30 am explosion, the State Administration of Work Safety said in a statement. It said 389 escaped after the blast. China Central Television reported that 42 were dead, 31 rescued and the others trapped about a third of a mile (500 meters) underground. The report said the explosion was caused by a gas buildup. Television footage showed smoke billowing out of the mine, with a collapsed building nearby.

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