

Irregularities tarnish Ashrayan project in Naldanga

BULBUL AHMED, Natore

The government's Ashrayan project has been lauded for rehabilitating hundreds of destitute people in different districts. But oftentimes the commendable effort has been tainted by allegations of corruption by a handful of dishonest individuals.

A number of beneficiaries of Ashrayan-2, undertaken to build houses for insolvent land owners, alleged that they had to bribe local public representatives or people affiliated with the ruling party to enlist their names in the project in Natore's Naldanga upazila.

In Piprul union, many villagers alleged that they had to pay Tk 20,000 to Tk 25,000 bribe to either Delwar Hossain, a member of local Union Parishad (UP), or Mosharraf Karim, a Jubo League leader in the area, for enlisting each household in the Ashrayan-2 project.

Many villagers of Kaliganj Sarakpara in the union said names of some of the eligible villagers, who could not comply with their illegal demands, were excluded from the list of the project that is assigned with the slogan "Ashrayaner Odhikar Sheikh Hasinar Upohar" (right to housing is a gift from Sheikh Hasina).

They also complained of including names of solvent land owners in the list in exchange for bribe.

Villager Jamena Begum, wife of Fazal Ali, said she paid UP Member Delwar Tk 25,000 for a house in Ashrayan-2.

"Delwar member took Tk 25,000 from me for giving me a house [under the project]," said Babu Hossain, from the same village.

Both of them said they had to sell their cattle to arrange the bribe money.

Abbas Ali, another resident of the village, said he also paid Tk 25,000 to the same UP member with the money he borrowed for the purpose from an NGO.

Ahad Ali of the village claimed that he could only arrange Tk 4,000 for local Jubo League leader Mosharraf. But since he failed to pay another Tk 16,000 as per Mosharraf's demand, his name was dropped from the list and the money he had paid was never returned.

After this correspondent reached for his comments, UP Member Delwar Hossain



A structure of a house being built under the Ashrayan-2 project at Piprul village in Natore's Naldanga upazila. The photo was taken a few days ago.

PHOTO: STAR

refuted the accusations and claimed that those were conspiracies against him.

However, he admitted that he had received two houses -- one for himself and the other for his mother -- in Ashrayan-2 as they both fall under insolvent category.

Contacted, Sakib Al Rabbi, upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) of Naldanga, said he was not aware of the alleged irregularities in the project and he would take necessary action if a written complaint was filed with his office.

Similar allegations of irregularities were made by villagers when this correspondent visited villages in four other unions -- Biprobeldhor, Khajura, Madhnagar and Brahmapur -- of the upazila.

Sixty-year-old panhandler Akbar Ali, from Ramshar Kazipur village in Biprobeldhor, said UP Member Bebi Begum took Tk 20,000 bribe even from a person like him, who has

to beg for food and alms.

Rehana Begum and Aleya Begum, from the same village, also had complaints against Bebi Begum.

Rehana said she was compelled to pay the UP member Tk 20,000 for a house in the project, while Aleya said Bebi did not enlist her name as she was unable to pay her the amount.

Refuting the allegations, Bebi however said she only collected Tk 2,000 to Tk 4,000 from each 17 applicants who were applying for the government's Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) card.

Patasi Sing of Adibashipara in Madhnagar union said she and many others in the village had to pay Tk 5,000 to workers of the project for each house.

In Brahmapur union, 70-year-old Yunus Ali of Yarpur village alleged that UP Member Moktar Hossain Nipu did not return the Tk 4,000 that he had borrowed

from him before enlisting his name in the list. Moreover, Moktar has been demanding more money from him in exchange for the house in the project.

Rafiq Uddin of the same village, despite paying Tk 3,000 to Moktar, said he had no complaint against him as "he always helps" them.

Regarding allegations of bribery in Khajura union, UP Chairman Khalilur Rahman said although he is aware of such allegations against some local leaders and UP members, he was unable to take any action as "they are very powerful".

Contacted, Deputy Commissioner of Natore Mohammad Shahriaz said he was not aware of any irregularities in the Ashrayan project.

He also said action would be taken once a written complaint is received in this regard.

Man arrested over 'rape of toddler'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

Police on Tuesday arrested a youth on charge of raping a two and a half-year-old girl the day before in Bhashanchar area of Sadar upazila in Faridpur.

The arrestee, Mintu Sheikh, 19, son of Kabir Sheikh in Bhashanchar village, is driver of battery-operated auto-rickshaw known as easy bike.

Mintu lured the child, playing near her house, to a bamboo grove and raped her, locals alleged, adding that he fled the scene after they rushed to the spot in response to her screams.

She was then admitted to Faridpur Medical College Hospital, they added.

Abu Sayed Chowdhury, a member of Ambikapur Union Parishad, confirmed the incident, saying, "We advised the victim's family to file a case against Mintu."

AFM Nasim, officer-in-charge (OC) of Sadar Police Station, said, "We arrested Mintu on Tuesday evening in Bhashanchar area. But family members of the victim did not file any case as of 4:00pm [yesterday]."

"After the incident, on Monday night, the victim was admitted to Faridpur Medical College Hospital and on Tuesday afternoon she was moved to One-Stop Crisis Centre (OCC)," added the OC.

Salma Zahan, a lawyer at OCC in Faridpur, said, "We asked Sadar Police Station to take all necessary steps against the offender."

Lightning kills one, injures another of same family

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

A woman was killed and a member of her family injured in lightning strike in Hosnabad village of Dashmina upazila yesterday morning.

The deceased was identified as Antesa Bibi, 55, wife of late Mojibor Rahman, said SM Jalal Uddin, officer-in-charge (OC) of Dashmina Police Station.

The injured, Anwara Begum, 60, is related to the deceased, the OC said, adding that both Antesa Bibi and Anwara Begum were struck by lightning while they were collecting grass for their goat at a nearby field.

Locals and their relatives took both the women to Dashmina upazila health complex where doctors pronounced Antesa Bibi dead and gave primary treatment to Anwara Begum.

The body of the deceased was handed over to her family, the OC also said.

BGB, BSF officials meet at Banglabandha

Two sides agree to maintain peace on border, resolve issues thru talks

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) and Indian Border Security Force (BSF) agreed to maintain peace along the border and resist trans-border crimes through joint cooperation in a sector commander level border meeting in Panchagarh yesterday.

Thakurgaon Sector Commander Col Mohammad Samsul Arefin led the 14-member BGB delegation while a 19-member BSF team was led by Shiliguri Sector DIG Ajit Kumar at the meeting held at the conference room of Banglabandha land port in Tentulia of the district.

The meeting started at 11:00am and continued till 4:00pm in a cordial atmosphere.

After the meeting, the BGB officials told the reporters that both sides agreed to develop a mutual relationship between the border forces of the two neighbouring countries.

They also agreed to maintain peace in the border area, show highest restraint in special circumstances and resolve border related problems through discussion.

The two sides also agreed to take up programmes to develop awareness among the people to follow rules.

The other issues discussed at the meeting were cross-border smuggling, drug smuggling, trafficking of women and other trans-border crimes.

Among others, Commanding Officer of 18 Panchagarh BGB Battalion Lt Col Mohammad Ershadul Haque, Commanding Officer of 50 BGB Battalion Lt Col SNM Samiunnabi Chowdhury, Commandant of 51 BSF Battalion K Umesh and Commandant of 155 BSF Battalion Manish Chandra, were present.

Earlier, at around 11:00am, the BSF officials entered into Bangladesh through Phulbari-Banglabandha land ports and BGB officials received them with bouquet.

How would I see a doctor now?

Traumatised victim says after Monday's assault by doctors of MARMCH in Dinajpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Still reeling from physical and emotional trauma of getting severely beaten up by doctors on Monday night, Moinul Alam Rocket is now too scared to see a doctor for his injuries.

The 33-year-old man and his cousin, son of a patient at M Abdur Rahim Medical College Hospital (MARMCH) in Dinajpur, were knocked around indiscriminately by a gang of interns and doctors of the hospital after they protested physical assault on the patient's wife.

Later that night, the attackers handed over the two cousins to police, but police released them hours later as no case was filed against them.

Bruised and battered Moinul still has not gone to a doctor and is taking medicines only from local drugstores. "How would I go see a doctor now to get treatment for my injuries?" he said while talking to this correspondent yesterday.

On Monday, Moinul went to MARMCH to see his maternal uncle Aminul Islam, 55, who was admitted to the hospital's medicine ward in the afternoon after being diagnosed with tuberculosis, he said.

Moinul's aunt, 47-year-old Begum, was staying with her husband as an attendant at the ward.

Around 10:30pm, a physician by the name of Dr Foyzal asked his aunt what medicines she had given to the patient. The doctor became upset when she told him



Moinul Alam Rocket shows his bruises caused by physical assault on him by interns and doctors of M Abdur Rahim Medical College Hospital in Dinajpur on Monday night.

PHOTO: STAR

that she had given the patient all but three of the four prescribed medicines, as instructed by another doctor who had come to the ward earlier.

When Moinul's aunt argued that she only followed instructions of another doctor, Dr Foyzal became extremely furious. And suddenly, to her shock, his aunt found herself getting punched by the doctor in the back of her shoulder, Moinul said.

Hearing the incident nearly 30 minutes later, Moinul, his cousin and a few other relatives went on the hospital's third floor where the medicine ward is located.

Dr Foyzal did not answer to anyone when the concerned relatives asked him about the reason for attacking the woman. But instead, he kept making calls on his cellphone, Moinul added.

Within a few minutes, a huge number of

interns were came running to the ward and attacked Moinul and his relatives. At one stage all but he and his cousin managed to flee the wrath of the doctors.

The mob of doctors then swooped on Moinul and his cousin after locking up all exit ways of the ward. His relatives, however, could not leave the hospital complex as the doctors locked down all gates of the complex.

"They pounced on us and beat us up mercilessly. They locked up all the gates of the hospital so none of us could get away," Moinul also said.

Showing his injuries on his back, he said, "Many people saw how brutally they attacked us. What was my fault?"

However, on Tuesday, Dr Ishrak Shahriar Angel, president of Intern Doctors' Association of MARMCH, claimed that relatives of the patient had assaulted them physically.

Ruling out his claim, a witness requesting anonymity said, "Everything will be clear if the CCTV footage is reviewed."

This correspondent was unable to reach Dr Mohammad Shahjahan, director of MARMCH, for his comments on Tuesday after waiting at his office for half an hour.

The same day, interns and doctors of MARMCH staged a demonstration against an alleged attack on them. During the time, they confined over 1,000 patients and attendants to the hospital building for nine hours by locking up all exits.



Mafizul Haque, father of murdered housewife Kamrun Nahar Turna, yesterday demanded trial of the culprits who killed his daughter and sought security for himself.

PHOTO: STAR

Murder victim's father seeks security

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

Hanging a portrait of his beloved daughter on the chest, father of Kamrun Nahar Turna, who was killed allegedly by her husband in 2017, yesterday demanded trial of his daughter's killers and sought security from the authorities concerned.

During his hour-long stand in front of Brahmanbaria Press Club Mafizul Hoque, 65, of Chartola village in Ashuganj upazila, said he is a lonely person now as he has no other family members except his late daughter Turna, who was strangled to death by her husband Ariful Haque Rony on April 24, 2017.

After securing bail in the murder case, the culprits are now threatening him with dire consequences and pressuring him to withdraw the murder case, he alleged.

Mafizul said out of greed to grab his property, Rony lured his only daughter Turna, who completed her masters from Eden College, and tactfully married her in 2012.

Since the marriage, Rony, son of his younger brother Aminul Haque, often used to torture Turna for the property.

"Failing to grab the property, Rony strangled my three-month pregnant daughter to death and concealed the body in a rooftop abandoned water tank on 24 April, 2017," Mafizul said, adding that Rony went into hiding after police recovered Turna's body from his house.

Later, police detained Rony after victim's father filed a case with Ashuganj Police Station accusing him.

After investigation, police pressed charges against Rony in August the same year.

But recently Rony came out of jail on bail and had been absconding since then.

Mafizul said since coming out of jail, Rony has been threatening him with dire consequences over phone and pressuring him to withdraw the case.

Man jailed for slaughtering pregnant cow

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

A mobile court sentenced a butcher to one month's jail for slaughtering a pregnant cow in a slaughterhouse in Thakurgaon municipality yesterday afternoon.

The convict is Shariful Islam, 30, of Dakkhin Salondara village in Thakurgaon Sadar upazila.

"Acting on a tip, I went to the slaughterhouse and found that a pregnant cow carrying a five-month embryo was slaughtered by the butcher," said sanitary inspector Akter Farukh.

Informed, a mobile court led went to the spot, handed down the verdict and sent the butcher to jail.