



TK 2,000CR LAUNDERING CASE Key suspects get clean chit

Six Faridpur syndicate men excluded from charge sheet; court orders re-submission

SHARIFUL ISLAM

As members of a powerful syndicate, they allegedly manipulated tenders left and right and took cuts from numerous contracts across government offices in Faridpur.

Led by former minister Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain's brother Khandaker Mohtesam Hossain Babar, now behind bars, they "pocketed big money" during the first two terms of the Awami League government.

Their roles in the syndicate came up prominently in separate confessional statements in a high-profile case over the laundering of Tk 2,000 crore since Mosharraf became a minister in 2008.

Yet six of them were excluded from the charge sheet as the Criminal Investigation Department, which investigated the case, did not find "sufficient evidence" to charge them.

CID officials said some accused in their

confessional statements mentioned these names, but the investigators did not fall for it.

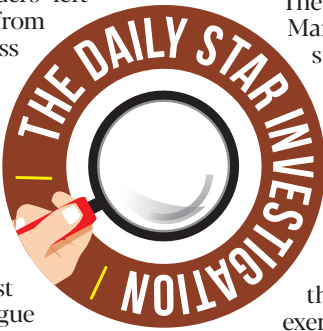
The charge sheet submitted in March last year caused quite a stir in the police department and also among the local politicians who had long known about the "aggressive" tender manipulation by this syndicate.

Local police and intelligence sources said these syndicate members exercised absolute power during their heyday to control who gets to bid for government tenders and how the proceeds are shared.

Two superintendents of police and an additional SP told The Daily Star that they suspect some of these syndicate members were let off the hook in exchange for money. All three officials had direct knowledge of the investigation.

Mahbubur Rahman, who was the CID chief at the time of the charge sheet

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Construction of the 16-km Chattogram Elevated Expressway, stretching from Lalkhanbazar to Patenga, is going on. The Chattogram Development Authority is implementing the project at a cost of Tk 3,250 crore. The project's deadline is June 2024. The photo was taken in the port city's Agrabad recently.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

PICK-UP HITS BIKE

Infant dies falling from mother's lap

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

Shanta Khatun held her 45-day-old son tightly in her arms on the back of her father's motorcycle as they were taking their ailing child to the upazila health complex in Kaliganj, Jhenidah, yesterday morning.

Before they could reach, a pick-up rammed the bike from behind near Kaliganj bus stand. Shanta lost her grip on the baby, Sizan Hossain, as the three fell off the motorcycle.

Just then, the speeding pick-up ran over the child and sped off, leaving Sizan dead on the spot.

Shanta fell unconscious as she suffered severe head wounds. Sizan's grandfather Abul Kalam sustained minor injuries, witnesses said.

Locals rushed Shanta, Kalam and the dead infant to the health complex. Kalam received primary treatment, but his daughter was kept under observation as she had not regained consciousness till 7:00pm, when this report was filed.

Some locals chased and seized the pick-up and handed the driver over to police.

"How will I face my daughter? How will I tell her that we have lost our Sizan? We were taking him to the hospital

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COVID-TIME MEDICAL EQUIPMENT

Tk 30cr lost to purchase graft

CAG audit finds anomalies in 15 public medical college hospitals, healthcare institutions

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and MOUDUD AHMED SUJAN

Public hospitals in the capital purchased medical equipment at astronomical prices during the first four months of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, according to an audit report.

The Comptroller and Auditor General in the audit report found that the government lost at least Tk 29.94 crore of the Tk 320.23 crore it spent during the early stages of the pandemic due to such irregularities in the 2019-20 fiscal year.

The first cases of Covid were detected in the country in early March 2020.

The report was placed in parliament in the last budget session in June this year.

According to the audit report obtained by this newspaper recently, Kuwait-Bangladesh Friendship Government Hospital (KBFGH) in the capital's Uttara bought two ECG Machines at Tk 6.25 lakh each when the market price was Tk 1.99 lakh.

Kurmitola General Hospital purchased a high-flow oxygen therapy device for Tk 7.5 lakh from a supplier when its price was Tk 4.9 lakh. Mugda General Hospital bought a Video Laryngoscope -- a device that allows indirect visualisation of the vocal cords -- for Tk 6.25 lakh when its price was Tk 1.99 lakh.

The report also found similar financial irregularities in purchase of medical and surgical requisites (MSR) and Covid-19 quarantine expenditure of 15 public medical college hospitals and specialised healthcare institutions in the capital.

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25 injured as AL men attack CPB rally

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Local ruling party men and police allegedly assaulted 25 leaders and activists of the Bangladesh Communist Party who were protesting against the rising prices of essentials in Netrakona's Kalamkanda upazila yesterday.

CPB Secretary Ruhin Hossain Prince, Central Committee Member Dibalok Singh, local CPB leaders Nalinikanta Sarker and Mustaq Ahmed were among the injured, said Nalinikanta.

Contacted, Abdul Ahad Khan, officer-in-charge of Kalamkanda Police Station, said local Awami League supporters and the CPB activists and leaders were engaged in a clash when police intervened and brought the situation under control.

Nalinikanta said, "The activists of the ruling party suddenly attacked the rally. They vandalised the chairs and loud speakers. Police also reached the venue and beat up CPB men."

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BNP looks to turn up the heat on govt

Set to announce fresh programmes as demos over price hike end today

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Considering the ongoing countrywide protest programmes a "success", the BNP now mulls over spreading the demonstrations to cities, divisional headquarters and districts to keep their presence on the streets.

The BNP has been organising demonstrations across the country since August 22 protesting the hike in prices of essentials and fuel. It's protests end today with a plan for organising fresh agitations to take the movement to the next level, party sources said.

As part of the plan, Dhaka North and South city units of BNP have drawn up programmes, including 16 public rallies, till September 27 to protest the increase in prices of essentials, transport fares, load shedding and the killings of Bhola Chhatra Dal leader Noore Alam and Narayanganj Swachhasebak Dal leader Abdur Rahim "by police".

Speaking to The Daily Star, BNP standing committee member Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury yesterday said, "We are waging the movement for the people and to pursue their causes. They [people] are turning out in huge numbers in all our programmes, which

is a big success of our movement. We are now planning to hold protests in the divisional headquarters."

He said people are taking to the streets defying attacks and arrests and it is the responsibility of the BNP and other "pro-democracy" political parties to raise their voice in favour of the people.

BNP leaders alleged that the party men were obstructed from joining demonstrations and they even came under attacks in many places across the country. In some places, they were even denied to hold demonstrations.

On July 31, a BNP man was killed in a clash between police and the party activists in Bhola town when they were holding demonstrations protesting power outages and "mismanagement" in the energy sector.

On August 3, Chhatra Dal leader Noore Alam died at a hospital in the capital of his injuries he sustained in the Bhola clash.

In Narayanganj, another BNP activist was killed in a clash with police on September 1.

Party sources said over 1,000 BNP leaders and activists were arrested and about 150 cases filed against them across the country last month. At least 52 protest

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QUEEN'S DEATH

Bangladesh observing 3-day state mourning

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh yesterday declared three days of national mourning in memory of British Queen Elizabeth II who died on Thursday.

From September 9 to 11, the national flag will be kept at half-mast at all government, semi-government and autonomous organisations, educational institutions, non-government buildings and Bangladesh missions abroad, according to a notification issued by the Cabinet Division.

Special prayers for the departed soul will also be arranged.

Queen Elizabeth II, Britain's longest-reigning monarch died on Thursday afternoon at the age of 96.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has expressed profound shock

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PHOTO: AFP

A woman reacts near floral tributes placed outside Buckingham Palace in London yesterday, a day after Queen Elizabeth II died at the age of 96.

'More than a monarch'

World leaders pay tribute to Queen Elizabeth II; gun salutes fired as royal mourning begins

AGENCIES

Presidents, prime ministers, monarchs, leaders and ordinary people around the world have paid tribute to the life and service of Queen Elizabeth II, many of them reflecting on a 70-year reign that encompassed some of the most turbulent and decisive moments in modern British and world history.

As Thursday wore on and news of the Queen's ill-health eventually gave way to news of her death, global figures spoke of what she had meant to them.

Among the most frequently invoked words were "duty", "steadfast" and "constant", but mention was also made of her sense of humour, and of her life and role as a mother and grandmother as well as a monarch.

The US President, Joe Biden, and the first lady, Jill Biden, said, "Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II was more than a monarch. She defined an era."

In a world of constant change, she had been "a steady presence and a source of comfort and pride for generations of Britons, including many who have never known their country without her", they added.

Minutes after the Queen's death was announced, French President Emmanuel Macron posted a simple picture of the Queen on his Twitter account, unaccompanied by any words.

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