

Ex-RCC mayor claims he has zero annual income

KONGKON KARMAKER

Mostafizar Rahman, former mayor of Rangpur city, claimed that he did not have any annual income for the last 5 years even though he withdrew over 80 lakh in honorarium during this period.

He made the claim in the affidavit he submitted to the Election Commission on November 27 for the upcoming Rangpur City Corporation (RCC) elections.

As per electoral rules, each candidate has to submit an affidavit containing various information, including a financial statement, educational background, declaration of profession, and a record of criminal cases, if any.

Mostafizar was elected mayor in January, 2018, and his tenure ended in November this year. He is running with the Jatiya Party ticket.

According to RCC sources, Mostafizar withdrew Tk 1.35 lakh a month honorarium during this period. The honorarium included festival and travel allowances, alongside other benefits.

The former mayor has withdrawn over Tk 80 lakhs for his services, added an RCC official.

In the affidavit, Mostafizar said he was the former mayor of the city. He also claimed that the dependent members of his family earn Tk 20.5 lakh annually by renting out houses, shops, and other establishments.

He also cited that his wife owns a house and a building, and no one else in the family owns any immovable property.

Mostafizar and his wife jointly own movable properties worth Tk 35 lakh, including cash, jewelry, bank deposits, furniture, and electronic devices. He is not facing any criminal charges, the documents read.

Meanwhile, Mostafizar submitted another statement to the EC on the same day, announcing that he would spend Tk 14 lakhs on his campaign.

According to media reports, Mostafizar in 2017 claimed that his annual income was Tk 3.5 lakh.

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Bholaganj Shada Pathor, once a popular tourist spot in Sylhet's Companiganj, has become seriously unappealing due to constant release of dust in the air from the noisy stone-crushing machines. Local authorities have been trying for years to relocate this business but to no avail. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Fighting rages in east Ukraine

Russia says US not showing ‘constructive’ approach to war;
West eyes more sanctions on Moscow

REUTERS, Kyiv

Russian forces pounded targets in eastern and southern Ukraine with missiles, drones and artillery, Ukraine's General Staff said yesterday, while millions remained without power in sub-zero temperatures after further strikes on key infrastructure.

In a flurry of weekend diplomacy, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky spoke with the leaders of the United States, France and Turkey ahead of planned Group of Seven (G7) and EU meetings that could agree further sanctions on Russia.

There are no peace talks and no end in sight to the deadliest conflict in

Europe since World War Two, which Moscow describes as a “special military operation” and Ukraine and its allies call an unprovoked act of aggression.

Russia does not yet see a “constructive” approach from the United States on the Ukraine conflict, RIA news agency quoted Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Vershinin as saying yesterday. The two countries have held a series of contacts in Turkey.

US President Joe Biden told Zelensky during a call on Sunday that Washington was prioritising efforts to boost Ukraine's air defences, the White House said. Zelensky said he had thanked Biden for the “unprecedented defence and financial”

help the United States has provided.

On the ground in Ukraine, the Black Sea port of Odesa yesterday resumed operations that had been suspended after Russia used Iranian-made drones on Saturday to hit two energy facilities. Power is slowly being restored to some 1.5 million people, but the situation remains difficult, national grid operator Ukrenergo said in a statement yesterday.

Zelensky said other areas experiencing “very difficult” conditions with power supplies included the capital Kyiv and Kyiv region and four regions in western Ukraine and Dnipropetrovsk region in the centre of the country.

Cop withdrawn for taking away mic from journo

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A police constable has been withdrawn and attached to the police lines for obstructing a journalist when he was live in front of parliament where five BNP lawmakers went to submit their resignations on Sunday.

Constable Shahinur Rahman was withdrawn for his “unprofessional” behaviour with the journalist, DMP Deputy Commissioner (media) Faruk Hossain told the media yesterday.

“We have started the process of taking departmental action against the constable,” he added.

A section of police on Sunday obstructed Sayeed Arman, a senior reporter of Nagorik Television, and took away his boom microphone when he was live from the pavement in front of parliament.

SC to issue order on GM Quader’s role in JP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court today is to deliver an order on a petition that challenged a High Court order clearing the way for Jatiya Party Chairman GM Quader to perform the responsibilities of his post.

A three-member bench of the Appellate Division of the SC led by Chief Justice Hasan Fozz Siddique set the date after hearing the petition yesterday.

Former JP leader Ziaul Haque Mridha filed the petition seeking a stay on the HC order.

Following the petition, Justice M Enayetur Rahim, the apex court chamber judge, on November 30 stayed the HC order and also sent the plea to its full bench for further hearing.

Swechchhasebak League leader’s arm severed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

Criminals severed an arm of a union-level Swechchhasebak League leader in Narail's Lohagara upazila on Sunday night.

The victim, Akbar Hossain alias Lipon, 45, is the convener of Mallickpur union unit Swechchhasebak League.

His family said criminals attacked Akbar with sharp weapons when he was returning home in Mangalhata village around 9:30pm. They cut off his right arm from the elbow.

Safeguards not working

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Export Processing Zones Authority, shows documents.

Using customs officials’ login credentials for the NBR server to release imported goods illegally is not a new phenomenon.

Last year, at least 21 import consignments were released illegally using the IDs of at least seven revenue officials.

Investigators at that time said a cyber-criminal gang was involved.

To thwart the practice, the NBR in December last year took a number of measures.

One of them was the introduction of a one-time password for customs officials for logging into the server.

The password appears on the official’s registered mobile phone for accessing the server. It was done so that no one other than the concerned customs official can enter the secured server.

Besides, the basic information of a consignment is also sent to the registered mobile and email of the

importer and its C&F agents to alert them against any possible intruders.

Islam denied his involvement in the incident, blaming the unlawful release of the consignments on a cybercriminal gang.

Ahmed declined The Daily Star’s request for comment.

“I don’t know who was involved in this incident,” said Faizur Rahman, managing director of Supersonic Fried Service.

Asked how it was possible to enter the NBR server and submit the BL without the C&F’s ID and password, Rahman refused to make any comment.

Chattogram Customs has formed a four-member investigation committee to find out the culprits involved in the incident.

An official of the investigation team told The Daily Star that they were collecting the related documents and had started the hearings of the involved parties.

“It is too early to say anything about the involvement of the officials

whose names have come up until the investigation is wrapped up,” he said, adding that the user IDs of the two officials have been temporarily suspended.

The accused remained unidentified in the previous incidents due to incomplete investigation and not taking punitive measures against the culprits, said a customs officer on the condition of anonymity.

“It will happen this time around if the investigators delay in detaining the culprits of the incident,” he said.

The Customs Intelligence and Investigation Directorate will soon form an investigation committee for all such incidents, said Masud Sadiq, NBR Member for Customs Policy.

The NBR has recently approved the hiring of some IT experts and is also engaging other agencies to investigate such incidents.

“I hope if an investigation committee is formed with experts in this regard the real picture will emerge,” he added.

Metro ready to roll this month

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the third week of this month [for the launch] and it would be inaugurated on the day set by the prime minister.”

Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), which is providing a soft loan for the Tk 33,472 crore project, yesterday arranged a press tour at the metro rail depot and Uttara North Station.

Representatives of contractors and consulting firms involved in the project, formally known as Mass Rapid Transit Line-6 (MRT Line-6), demonstrated different elements of services and showed their readiness for partial commercial operation.

As per the pre-announcement, around 12km line from Uttara to Agargaon would be launched in December this year, while the rest eight km by December next and the one km extended part from Motijheel to Kamalapur by June 2025.

The original cost of the project

was Tk 21,985 crore, but it rose to Tk 33,472 crore after revisions. The escalation was mainly due to acquiring new land to change the station design and building the extended part.

FULL-FLEDGED OPERATION IN 3 MONTHS

Siddique said they have started service trials from December 4, which are expected to be completed within 15 days. Dry runs are expected to start from December 18 or 19.

The service trial is the final checkup after the system integration, while the dry runs means operating the trains without passengers to ensure every aspect is ready, officials said.

The MD said that, as per the international practice, the metro trains will initially operate with less than capacity and an increased “dwelling time” -- the time a train is stationary for boarding and disembarking.

The “dwelling time” will be one

to two minutes at the beginning, but will eventually be reduced to 30 seconds once the people are accustomed.

He said once in full-fledged operation, the trains will arrive in about three-and-half-minute intervals.

“We will go for full-fledged operation within three months.”

Siddique said 10 sets of metro trains are ready for the partial operation, while two more are on stand-by.

They will start selling MRT cards, for regular users, once they get the inauguration date, he said, adding that the cards will initially be sold only at the stations, but later can be refilled at other dedicated establishments.

Ichiguchi Tomohide, chief representative of JICA Bangladesh Office, said the MRT Line-6 is one of the most successful projects being implemented with JICA assistance.

Two legends on collision

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down like, but that is the cutthroat nature of the World Cup. And one more such painful exit awaits tonight as Lionel Messi's Argentina take on Luka Modric's Croatia.

So brace for more drama and heartache as the semifinal kicks off at the Lusail Iconic stadium. It will be a shame as these two legends gave so much to the world of football, having forged their careers against so much adversity.

Despite playing in different positions and having their own unique set of skills, both players have long carried the expectations of their nations. They may have grown up in vastly different atmospheres and cultures, but both were up against enormous challenges: Messi battling against a growth hormone deficiency and Modric escaping a bloody civil war.

Both child prodigies, they soon caught the eyes of football scouts and it did not take long for either to rise through the ranks before making their debuts at the Germany World Cup in 2006.

Messi, a seven-time Ballon d'Or winner, has achieved all at club football and also guided his country to a first-ever Copa America title in 28 years. The 35-year-old has appeared in all World Cups since 2006 and has overtaken Diego Maradona's record

of World Cup goals. He has also recently broken his duck of scoring in World Cup knockout games. With all those trophies in the bag and all those feats, there is just one trophy missing from his cabinet; the one that matters most, the glaring absence of which could define the legacy of one of the greats of all time. It is win or bust for Messi tonight.

Like Messi, Modric, too, has won everything at club level and an era-defining Ballon d'Or. The 37-year-old missed out on the 2010 World Cup as Croatia failed to qualify but as his stature as a midfield marshal grew, Croatia only got stronger. The Real Madrid midfielder pulls the strings in the midfield and orchestrates the attacks of a resilient Croatia side, his own resilience and doggedness reflected on the whole squad. Like Messi, Modric too suffered the heartbreak of losing a World Cup final.

With another World Cup final at stake, certainly the last for either of them, the stage is all set for an all-time classic, not just between two great footballing nations but also between two all-time legends. We'll have to wait for just a few more hours to find out who ends in tears like Ronaldo or Neymar and who fights to live another day.

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it was not possible to form an alliance but a movement for a single cause -- election under a non-partisan administration -- could be waged.

“There are some left political parties and religion-based political parties. All may not come under a single platform. So, we are planning to wage a united or simultaneous movement like the political parties did in 1990's against Ershad,” a standing committee member of the party, told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said the BNP-led a seven-party alliance, Awami League led an eight-party alliance, and the left a five-

party alliance against Ershad and this strategy could be replicated.

Party sources said it was in close contact with some of the religion-based parties, especially Hefajat-e-Islami, and if situation favours, it might join the planned simultaneous movement.

Meanwhile, Ganatantra Mancha, an alliance of seven parties, has said it would go to the BNP's Nayapaltan office today to discuss formation of a liaison committee for waging a concurrent movement.

Nagorik Oikya President Mahmudur Rahman Manna said a statement announcing the Mancha's

BB sends observers to Islami Bank, FSIBL

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Group has significant stakes at Social Islami Bank, too.

The Anti-Corruption Commission, BB, the Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit and the Criminal Investigation Department of Police have been asked to submit probe reports to the court by April 5.

If the allegations of loan scams are found to be true in the probes, the agencies will have to inform the court about the actions taken against the persons involved in the scams.

The central bank usually appoints observers in banks whose financial health is fragile. The observer takes part in the board meetings and keeps watch on the bank's operations.

The observer is withdrawn once the financial health improves.

Including yesterday's appointments, BB has sent observers to nine banks.

The central bank appointed an observer to Islami Bank in 2010.

Despite being among the best-run and the most profitable bank in Bangladesh in the past decade, Islami Bank had an observer on its board the entire time.

The observer was withdrawn in March 2020 without any reason and the country's largest private sector bank tumbled into chaos.

The central bank is now carrying out an investigation into Islami Bank for authorising Tk 7,246 crore in loans

to nine companies in recent weeks violating banking rules. Most of the companies used fake addresses in their loan application forms.

The re-appointment of the observer in Islami Bank may not bring positive output as the directors of the lender are highly politically connected, said Ahsan H Mansur, executive director of the Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh.

The central bank should disband the Islami Bank board for an unbiased investigation.

In 2017, the Islami Bank board was populated with representatives of the S Alam Group. The companies the directors represent exist only on paper, shows the bank's internal

documents.

“It is a good initiative that the central bank is now carrying out an inspection. But the board members of the bank may intervene in the investigation, which is why the board should be dissolved.”

In addition, the central bank earlier did not get any good results from appointing observers in the weak banks in most of the cases, said Mansur, also the chairman of Brac Bank.

Fahmida Khatun, executive director of the Centre for Policy Dialogue, also expressed doubts that the observers would yield any positive outcome for the banks.

She, however, said that this is a positive move taken by the bank.