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DEEDS OF A DEED WRITER

He started out as a tea boy and now is the richest in his village taking huge cuts for his 'services'



Nasir

Azibor Rahman

With Aladdin's lamp seemingly in hand, Nasir Chowdhury from a small town in Jhenaidah amassed a fortune in a mere decade.

The once tea-boy does not have a flourishing business nor did he inherit a taka from his family. Yet he is touted to be the richest in the village.



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Mere wealth was not enough for him. The insatiable Nasir craved political and social status.

He went on to become the chairman of Rokonpur Union Parishad under Kaliganj upazila, and general secretary of the upazila unit of Bangladesh Dalil Lekhok Samity (deed writers' association).

So how is it that the 48-year-old is now under the scanner of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), which recently launched an investigation to find out the source of his wealth?

Poverty stricken Nasir worked as a day labourer in his early years. He used to sell coconuts at a local market to make ends meet, said locals, who knew him since childhood.

At one point, he landed a job as a tea boy at a local sub-registrar office. This gave him a chance to continue his studies up to class eight in 1997.

He later also worked as a helping hand in the household of then sub-registrar, who helped him obtain a licence with his existing educational qualifications. Thus, he began his job as a deed writer at the sub-registrar office in 1999.

This was the beginning of his rise.

A year after Awami League government assumed power in 2008, Nasir formed an association of deed writers in his upazila and became the general secretary of the association that had three other members. He established himself under the patronage of local politicians.

Following a story in a Bangla national daily on the existing corruption at the sub-registrar's office on November 26, the ACC began the investigation into him.

ADDITIONAL FIVE PERCENT

According to the government rules, the cost of land registration is nine percent of the value of the land at the union level and 10 percent at the municipality level.

But in Kaliganj upazila, locals would have to bear an additional five percent for registration and other expenses.

This practice was introduced by Nasir, and if any other deed writer would try to protest, they would be threatened that their licence would be cancelled, said members, seeking anonymity.

When asked, Sub-Registrar Amina Begun of Kaliganj said she was unaware of such extra charges. She was not available for any further comment, despite repeated attempts.

Shariful Islam of Shabaria village in the upazila said, “I recently went to the Kaliganj upazila sub registrar’s office for land registration. I knew that I had to bear a cost of nine percent of total land price, but I had to pay 14 percent. This is nothing but corruption.”

Nazmus Sardar, deputy director of ACC in Jessore, said Nasir is currently under investigation to know the source of his wealth. “If proven guilty, action will be taken against him.”

The Daily Star learnt that Nasir has deposited around Tk 3 crores in different bank accounts, which are operated by him and some of his family members. This correspondent has collected these account numbers and statements.

Apart from cash, Nasir has four apartments, a bungalow and around 60 bighas of land in the upazila.

Contacted, Nasir told The Daily Star that some rivals were spreading propaganda against him. “The local assistant commissioner (land) has investigated my property and found that I only have 10 bighas of land,” he added.

However, Jhenaidah AC (land) Bhupali Sarkar said her office didn’t conduct any survey on Nasir’s land.

Regarding his bank balance, Nasir said he did not commit any crime. “Rather, I earned the money legally through deed writing.”

Contacted, Upazila Nirbahi Officer Suborna Rani Saha said action would be taken against Nasir if she receives any written complaint.

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