



Workers, allegedly being paid by the government's "Employment Generation Programme for the Poorest", building the Juba League office on the bank of the Barnoi river.

PHOTO: STAR

Juba League builds office on 'school land' on river bank

BULBUL AHMED, *Natore*

Juba League men on Friday started constructing an office on a disputed piece of land on the bank of the Barnoi river.

During a visit to the area, labourers were seen filling up one bigha of land, ownership of which was claimed by a secondary school and a charity.

Besides, 45 women labourers working at the site were reportedly being paid by the government's "Employment Generation Programme for the Poorest".

The labourers at the site on the eastern side of Kaliganj High School near Kaliganj Bridge told this correspondent that each of them was getting Tk 200 a day and their supervisor Abdul Halim Tk 250 a day from the government programme.

Headteacher Md Enamul Haq said he had asked local leaders of the ruling Awami League to stop the construction but in vain. The school authorities were planning to file a formal complaint with the administration, he added.

Local charity Radha Gobinda Bigraha Mataji also claims ownership of the land and has been engaged in a legal battle with the school for seven years.

General Secretary of Ward 8 unit Juba League Md Mosharraf, bragging to be the main initiator of the construction, said, "The local chairman

and residents of the area have agreed to give the land for the construction."

He showed a piece of paper with signatures of 36 people including the Union Parishad chairman and the words "Land for Kaliganj Club" written on top.

He also admitted that there was no approval from the administration. "But the activists and leaders of the party [Juba League] are willing to construct the office."

Asked if the office would encroach on the river, he said, "It is the bank of the river. There will be no trouble."

Mosharraf also tried to justify employing government paid labourers by saying, "We are the people running the government."

Organising Secretary of Ward 8 unit Awami League Shudhanya Sarker visited the spot when this correspondent was there.

"We are supporters of the ruling party. We need a place to sit. That is why we are constructing an office on the bank. Some markets will also be constructed around the office," he noted.

Contacted over phone, Union Parishad Chairman Kalim Uddin said he sent the workers for the job upon request from the Juba League leaders.

Upazila Nirbahi Officer Sharmin Akhter Jahan said she was not aware of the matter.