

Govt food, fund misappropriation scandal: Three officials held

From Our Correspondent
RANGPUR, Sept 25: Three food officials of Nilphamari district were arrested recently in a sensational food and government fund misappropriation scandal worth Taka three crores.

The arrested food officials are Khabbar Hossain and Meherul Islam of Domar LSD and Abu Taleb, a retired official of Nilphamari LSD godown.

According to police, misappropriation scandal so far detected in Domar, Kaimari, Jaldhaka and Dimla LSD godowns of food department, a section of food officials showing false transit shortages and fraudulent carrying vouchers of foodstuff bagged huge government fund worth Taka three crore during past few years.

An enquiry by high powered team of Bureau of Anti-corruption and Food Department so far unearthed embezzlement in these LSD godowns around Taka one crore sixty-one lakh and more investigations is continuing which indicated that misappropriation of foodstuff and fund might exceed Taka three crore.

Many valuable documents and papers of Domar and Jaldhaka LSD godowns were set on fire and stolen away while similar incidents apprehended to take place happen in other LSD's shortly after the scandal detected and enquiry teams cracked down last month.

Poor condition of health centres in Mymensingh

From Our Correspondent
MYMENSINGH, Sept 25: Due to shortage of medicines, doctors and medical equipment and absence of ambulances, the normal functioning of the 11 health complexes of the district is being hampered it was alleged.

The patients coming from remote villages to the health complexes has to go back without receiving any treatment.

About 2000 to 3,000 patients come to the thana health complexes daily but 50 per cent of them return without any treatment. More over, the doctors neglecting their duties remain busy with their private practices, it is further alleged.

Many doctors of different health complexes and sub-centres are working on deputation in different health complexes of the district.

The out-door service in all health complexes is poor, patients are supplied with common tablets.

Less than half of arable land irrigated

Farmers of Chuadanga in constant economic hardship

From Md Quamrul Arefin

CHUADANGA, Sept 25: In the absence of necessary irrigation facilities, the farmers of Chuadanga district have been left at the mercy of nature for nursing crops resulting in constant economic hardships to the people living in the villages of the district.

The irrigation facilities in the district fails to provide necessary services due to frequent disorder of machines, shortage of spare parts, irregular supply of power and fuel and above all, malpractice and large-scale corruption by a section of officials in the fields.

According to Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation (BADC) sources, there are 92,233 hectares of cultivable land in the district, out of which 43,738 hectares of land have been brought under irrigation facilities.

According to BADC sources about 75 thousand hectares of land can be brought under irrigation facilities with the present network of irrigation

apparatus. However, only 45 per cent of the total land is provided with the irrigation facilities.

A total of 508 deep tubewells have so far been installed in the district. Fifty of those remain out of order. Beside, a number of engines of the main deep-tubewells need minor repair works but are left untouched due to lack of spare parts.

About 2000 shallow tubewells have been installed by the BADC and local farmers in the district. But more than 200 do not work for a long time. Moreover, many engines of these shallow tubewells are being used in rice and atta mills, it was alleged by the local people.

Some also allege that a number of people are using their shallow tubewells to run country made boats.

The BADC, meanwhile, has stopped providing any deep, shallow and power pumps in the district since 1992.

There are 568 power

pumps in the four thanas of the district. However, hundreds of them are said to be lying out of order for a long time.

Corruption and malpractices have further deteriorated the situation. Crop production in the district has shown a dramatic decline as compared to early records. Peasants and low income groups have been facing economic hardship. Many of them are leaving farming and are heading for towns for jobs.

From the British period Chuadanga district which was a sub-divisional headquarters under Krishnagar district later under Kushtia district during Pakistan period, was identified as the food deficit area.

All along Chuadanga district is a drought hit area. During the last year severe drought hit Chuadanga district as a result production of paddy in the district fell abnormally.

There are about 10,000 acres of sandy land in differ-

ent areas of four thanas of Chuadanga district which have been lying untouched for years together. These sandy lands are quite fit for ground nut cultivation but for want of irrigation facilities these land are not possible to bring under cultivation of ground nut.

According to the experts about 30 maunds of ground nut can be produced from every acre of land. At present only 100 to 200 acres of land are being used for ground nut cultivation. The experts also said that there is a bright prospect of ground nut cultivation in the district by using the said sandy land.

Growers who have already seen satisfactory results say motivation including irrigation facilities and financial aid can convince more interested growers to come forward.

Fresh irrigation network projects can help these farmers and ensure proper water supply to their crop land.



SYLHET: Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman speaking as chief guest at the inaugural function of gas supply at Kulaura thana headquarters of Moulvibazar district Thursday. — Star photo

Kulaura of M'bazar gets gas supply

KULaura (Moulvibazar), Sept 25: Kulaura thana of Moulvibazar district has been brought under the gas distribution coverage, reports BSS.

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman Thursday formally inaugurated gas supply to Kulaura thana, its adjacent tea gardens and industrial units. In the first phase, gas will be supplied to 4000 households, 57 tea gardens, 100 commercial concerns and 10 industrial units of the thana.

Jalalabad Gas Transmission and Distribution System Limited, an enterprise of Petrobangla, implemented the project at a cost of Tk 35.5 crore. The entire expenditure was met from the government's own resources.

Speaking on the occasion, the Finance Minister said, gas and other sources of energy are the basic requirements for all economic development activities.

He said, gas distribution expansion projects supplying gas to households and industrial concerns are environment friendly since it would drastically reduce widespread cutting of trees for firewoods.

New policy to conduct rationing in cluster villages

From CHT Correspondent

MATRANGA (Khagrachhari), Sept 25: A conscience-stricken man has gone into hiding to protect his life for protesting the continued corruption, misuse of power, rowdiness and misappropriation of ration of the cluster villages being threatened by the vested quarters.

Abul Kalam, a man with social awareness of Matiranga thana of the district fed up with the continued adoption of corruption, forgery and misappropriation of the ration of the cluster villages lodged an allegation against 12 persons involved to the Deputy Commissioner of Khagrachhari hill district. The Deputy Commissioner entrusted the Additional Deputy Commissioner (Revenue) to investigate into the allegation who found it true after interrogating cross section of concerned people, officials said.

Chairman of number 6 union parishad in Matiranga thana who is a member of Alutilla Cluster Village (Adarsha Gram) project, Abdul Malek, member of the Ration Distribution Committee, Shahidullah, Akkas Ali, Abul Kashem, Abdul Mazid, Abdul Mannan, Fazul Haque, Abdul Kader, Cashier of the cluster village project and an activist of Bengalee Krishak Kalyan Parishad, Wahidur Rahman and Ali Hussain were allegedly active in misappropriation of ration, submission of false master-roll, issuance of more than one ration cards to a single family as well as to the dead men for a long period, the allegation says.

Earlier, 14 ration cards were seized by the Thana Nirbahi Officer on an allegation lodged by Abul Kalam on

Four country-made pipe-guns recovered in Mymensingh

From Our Correspondent
MYMENSINGH, Sept 25: Kotwali police recovered four country made pipe-guns from Minto College Hostel's kitchen at Mymensingh town recently.

A case has been filed with Kotwali police in this connection.

Meanwhile, police recovered an unidentified body of a middle aged man near Goffargaon railway station recently. The victim was crushed under the wheels of a speeding train.

Two outlawed party activists arrested

From Our Correspondent
JHENIDAH, Sept 25: Two activists of outlawed Purbabangla Communist Party were arrested and one shutter gun and two rounds of bullets were recovered from them at village Bilnatul in Sreepur thana of Magura district recently, it is learnt.

According to police sources, acting on a secret information Abdul Mannan, Officer In-Charge, Sreepur thana alongwith a contingent of police raided the house of Mijanur Rahman and arrested Farjana Begum Popy, 19 and Alam, 30 who were reportedly activists of outlawed Purbabangla Communist Party.

11 injured as two villagers clash

From Our Correspondent
RAJSHAHI, Sept 25: Some 11 persons were injured, three seriously, in a clash between two groups of villagers at Fagur Diar High School premises, under Bagatipara thana of Natore district recently.

The clash ensued when two groups of villagers met to solve the crisis of some youths learnt to have been ousted from the school premises for teasing and annoying students.

Tk 6 cr allocated for 62 projects in CHT

From CHT Correspondent

RANGAMATI, Sept 25: With a view to uplift the socio-economic condition of the down-trodden people of Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) region, the Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Board has undertaken different projects to implement in 1995-96 at a cost of Tk 5.99 crore, officials said.

Out of the total allocation, the Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Board (CHTDB) has allocated Tk four crore for the development of education, agriculture, communication, social welfare as well as sports and culture in the three hill districts of Rangamati, Khagrachhari and Bandarban. With this amount, a total of 62 projects will be implemented in the region, under the normal head of CHTDB in the fiscal 1995-96.

An amount of Tk 1.48 crore has been allocated for the implementation of the projects aided by UNICEF in CHTDB in 1995-96.

To contain the landslide of land and increase of fertility as well as conservation of ecological balance of the slopping hill lands, an amount of Tk 11 lakh is allocated for the upliftment of the pilot demonstration plots in the region in Slopping Agricultural Land Technology (SALT) projects in 1995-96.

Low quality rice stocked in godowns

From Our Correspondent
GAIBANDHA, Sept 25: District Food Department are in trouble with some two thousand metric tons of rice lying in three different food godowns in the district.

The worst quality of said rice is not up to the standard for use as food which was earlier shifted from different food godowns of Dinajpur district under the order of internal movement of food grains and stored in Gobindaganj, Palashbari and Gaibandha sadar supply depot godowns.

BKB to give Tk 13 cr loan in Jhenidah

From Our Correspondent
JHENIDAH, Sept 25: Bangladesh Krishi Bank has taken a plan to distribute Taka about 13 crore in the district in current fiscal year, it is learnt.

According to Bangladesh Krishi Bank (BKB) sources, they will disburse Taka 7 crore 84 lakh as short term loan, Taka two crore one lakh as medium term loan and Taka two crore 84 lakh as long term loans. These loans will be given for crop farming, purchase of buffalo and irrigation equipment, small and cottage industries.

TV relay centre to start functioning soon in Jhenidah

From Our Correspondent
JHENIDAH, Sept 25: Broadcasting of Jhenidah television relay centre is expected to be inaugurated by this month, it is learnt.

According to sources, construction works of the Jhenidah TV relay centre was completed at a cost of Taka seven crore fifty lakh near Jhenidah town recently.

Normal life, development projects disrupted as terrorist attacks continue

From AKM Zahoorul Huq

RANGAMATI, Sept 25: Extortion of tolls, abduction of people for realisation of ransom and other continued criminal activities stepped up by the tribal insurgents have jeopardised the normal life and created an impasse in the on-going development as well as rehabilitation activities in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), officials alleged.

A major portion of the population of CHT have been passing their days half fed or unfed being victimised by this marauding group of PCJSS with their ceaseless extortion of tolls and abduction of people in their so-called declared ceasefire in CHT.

The government has taken a project to uplift the socio-economic condition of tribal and non-tribal people of CHT, who were once affected by the tribal insurgents and extending assistance towards their rehabilitation entrusting the Local Government Councils to implement the project as implementing agency, the official sources said, adding that the programme has already been chalked out to provide financial assistance to 45 families from each Union Parishad of CHT.

About 95 per cent families of Aimchora, Bhushanchhora and Bora Harina union parishad and 80 per cent families from Borkal and Shuvalong union parishad in Borkal thana of the district do not dare to register their names with the Rangamati Hill District Local Government Council (RHDLGC) to become beneficiaries of the government programme as the tribal insurgents have been threatening them with dare consequences, the sources alleged, adding that simultaneously, another faction of the tribal

insurgents have asked the affected families to register their names and handover the amount of money to them whatever they receive.

Meanwhile, the tribal insurgents with the connivance of respective local tribal leaders have already pocketed a sum of Taka 75 lakh from the affected tribal people of Zurachhari thana of the district which was reportedly allocated by RHDLGC, a source from RHDLGC alleged.

The tribal insurgents, who have been fighting to change the lot of their community people, have not only been jeopardising the on-going development and rehabilitation programmes but also carried out sabotage to earlier implemented rehabilitation project, an official source alleged, adding that about 550 rehabilitated Jhumia families of nomadic nature were evicted from their rehabilitation places at Razashkali, Dhanuchhari, Raikhal and Razvilia in Razashkali thana of the district on repeated provocation and threatened with dare consequences. A total of 750 Jhumia families were rehabilitated in that zone in 1980-81 with a cost of Taka 75 lakh by the Pulpwood Plantation Division, Kaptai of Forest Department.

After realisation of ransom, keeping the abducted persons as hostage or killing is only admitted by the ethics of the tribal insurgents of CHT, said a tribal leader at Bandarban. While elaborating, he cited the example of abduction of the Chairman of Roangchhari Union parishad who was also the president of Roangchhari thana unit of BNP on July 26 at gun-point. The abductors who also took away the licensed gun asked the members of his family to pay a ransom of Taka three lakh within five days, in fail-

ure, his body will be returned.

Collecting subscription, loan and disposing off property, his relatives sent Taka three lakh in cash on July 31 at dead night in the deep forest as was directed by the abductors in their reminder on the third day of abduction. Ironically the fact is that, like

Ky Shai Jhoni Marma or bank officer Masud Aktar, a noticeable number of kidnapped persons did not returned even after payment of demanded ransoms, the source added.

The truce, which was unilaterally declared by the PCJSS on August 10, 1992 has been violated by its

armed group in 430 times till August 31, 1995, officials said. During the period of ceasefire, the tribal insurgents have so far killed 147 tribals, 10 non tribals and 33 members of security forces, now inactivated by the government in honour, of the on-going ceasefire. Injuring seven troops, the militant

insurgents were locked in battles with the security forces for more than 76 times, the sources said.

The tribal insurgents during the truce have so far abducted 85 tribals, majority of whom were local leaders and well-to-do men and 75 non-tribals for realising ransoms. They have held meetings in 40 places for extorting tolls and provoking the people, officials said, adding that majority of the incidents of atrocities carried by the tribal insurgents could not come to the notice of the urban people as those are being carried out in the inaccessible remote hamlets of CHT.

Extortion of tolls by the tribal insurgents has already exceeded all the previous records during the on-going truce, the victims alleged. They have been extorting tolls regularly from government service-holders, innocent and peace-loving people, contractors, farias, major development agencies like Forest Department, CHT Development Board and from whom not, said an officer of the government agency requesting not to be named. He said nobody can stay outside districts headquarters avoiding to pay tolls to the insurgents. Contractors and development agencies are compelled to pay tolls on percentage basis at an abnormally higher rate. Payment of tolls to insurgents in CHT is mandatory, he said, adding that the service-holders serving in the inaccessible areas of CHT and directed to pay at the rate of two per cent of their drawing salaries.

Citing a lot of instances of extortion of tolls by the tribal insurgents, Farooque Khan of Mainmukh Bazar in Langadu thana said, on May 21 last, a group of tribal insurgents marauded on 26 engine-fitted

passenger-carrying tempoo boats in Maini valley near Bagaichhari and looted the personal belongings and goods from 8:00 am to 3:00 pm in the name of extortion of tolls in Commando style at gun-point.

The tribal insurgents have been extorting highest amount of tolls from the CHT's dominating forest produces. They have been extorting tolls on forest produces at 50 times higher than the government scheduled rate of royalty. They have been reportedly extorting tolls daily Taka five lakh minimum from the forest produces, transited out from CHT, legally or illegally, an executive from Timber Merchants' Association said.

Making the people of CHT as hostages, the tribal insurgents' extortion of tolls is an open secret. Nobody can do anything as the administration in the inaccessible areas is virtually crippled by their activities, he added.

Taking advantages of the on-going truce, moving almost anywhere without any impede, the tribal insurgents have virtually captivated the undone innocent people of CHT, said Maniruzzaman Mahir, Secretary General of the Parbatya Gono Parishad, an organization working to strengthen harmony and amity between tribals and non-tribals of CHT. Public representatives, government officials, timber merchants, contractors and people in general have fed up with the continued abduction, demanding ransoms, extortion of tolls and rowdiness, he said adding that during the last two months 25 persons were abducted from different places of CHT by the tribal insurgents. On payment of ransoms, 21 were freed, the fates of the rest four are still uncertain.

The Jhumias - tribal people who live on shifting cultivation and the members of their group who returned to their normal life giving up the arms are also not spared from the atrocities of the tribal insurgents. Many public leaders like Chairman of union parishad have abandoned their places and took refuge in the district headquarters following increased atrocities.

Robin Chakma, a tribal insurgent, who had surrendered in 1993 with two sophisticated firearms, was kidnapped in late June 95 not yet freed. Earlier, Baoumon Bom an union parishad member of Painkhitongpara of Bandarban was abducted and on realisation of ransom, Bom was freed after one and a half month. Four construction labourers who were engaged in construction of a primary school in Nachalongpara were abducted for non-payment of tolls and were freed on payment. Four youths were also abducted from Bagmara village an outskirts of Bandarban about a month ago and freed on payment of ransom. Thairo Marma and CHT, union parishad members were abducted from Betchharimulchpara and were freed on payment of a large amount as ransom, the local leaders and social workers alleged.

Executive Engineers from CHT Development Board, Roads & Highways Department of Public Health Engineering, Public Works Department and Local Government Engineering Department told The Daily Star, if the atrocities of the tribal insurgents are not contained, carrying out of development work in question, will be very much difficult for us.

MAP OF CHT

