

# Gas pipeline costs environment in Lawachhara Reserve Forest

## Forest chosen to cut cost: Trees felled, hills cut, wildlife threatened

**RAJAT KANTI GOSWAMI,**  
*Moulvibazar*

Despite protests by local people and environmentalists, trees are being felled in large scale and hills cut for laying a gas pipeline and building a road through Lawachhara Reserve Forest, home to rare species of wildlife.

The pipeline is being laid by US company Unocal to connect Magurchhara gas well with Kalachhara well to supply gas to the National Grid. After completion, 70 million cubic feet of gas will be supplied daily from Magurchhara.

The reserve forest could be avoided by laying the pipeline through Bhanugachh-Srimongol area sources claimed. The company has chosen the short-cut route through the forest to reduce cost. A seven kilometre long and 15 feet wide road is also being built through the Reserve Forest, earlier declared a National Park by the government to preserve its wildlife.

This correspondent visited Lawachhara and Magurchhara areas in Friday and talked to administration and tea garden officials.

They alleged that trees are being felled and hills cut for the work.

Unocal has also started gas exploration work near the Magurchhara well, where a massive explosion in 1997 caused a havoc when Occidental, another US company was drilling for gas.

Unocal has brought drilling pipes, machinery and other heavy equipment at Magurchhara gas well

site and is constructing a 'camp house' and a warehouse in Fulbari Tea Estate, about 200 yards from the Magurchhara well.

Construction of warehouse and camp house in the tea garden area will damage plantations and the environment there, they said.

This correspondent did not find any Unocal official at Magurchhara and Kalachhara site camps. Security personals were on duty there.

Kamalganj Upazila Nirbahi Officer Azadur Rahman Mollik said Occidental was permitted to work in Fulbari Tea Estate lands and in the Lawachhara Reserve Forest. Unocal now owns Occidental's assets in Bangladesh and so it is utilising the scope, he said.

"It is a matter to be decided by government high-ups. I am not authorised to speak", he said.

Rubin Ahmed, Assistant Manager of Fulbari Tea Estate said Unocal has taken six hectors of land from his garden to construct warehouse and camp.

He said environment in the tea garden and Lawachhara Reserve Forest will be affected by this.

Kamalganj Unnyon Sangram Parishad had submitted a memorandum to the Energy Ministry through the Kamalganj UNO on February 2. Their demands include steps to save the reserve forest and its wildlife, compensation to victims of Magurchhara gas well explosion in 1997, a firm assurance that no more accident will take place during exploration and gas supply from Magurchhara

to the area.

In the Lawachhara Reserve Forest, the density of trees is 200 per hectare of land.

There are 300 species of flora, 10 species of amphibious animals, 30 species of reptiles and numerous monkeys in the reserve forest, environmentalists said.

Out of total 200 givons in the country, 30 are in Lawachhara. These animals are being threatened now, they said.

The reserve forest is being raked at a time when the forest

department is trying to create a mass awareness to save the Lawachhara National Park (reserve forest). It has taken up a project styled Nishorga to stop illegal felling of trees.

Nishorga project, funded by SAID, aims at conserving the biodiversity in the protected areas through partnership with stakeholders. The project also include creation of wildlife sanctuaries but the objectives will be frustrated, the environmentalists said.



PHOTO: STAR

A portion of the road being constructed by cutting hills in the Lawachhara Reserve Forest.

## No exchange of fire took place in Akhaura border

BDR commander tells Star

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria

Akhaura-Koshba border is peaceful and there was no exchange of fire between BDR and BSF on Sunday, as reported in some national dailies, Maj. Ashraf, General Staff Officer-2 of BDR in Comilla Sector told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said a Battalion Commander level flag meeting between BDR and BSF was held on Sunday near border pillar no. 2034 following abortive bids by BSF in the past several days to raise barbed wire fence on the no man's land.

BDR Battalion Commander KA Naser and BSF Battalion Commander SK Mandu led their respective sides at the meeting, Maj. Ashraf said.

At the flag meeting, BSF agreed not to raise barbed wire fence on the no man's land.

He however said BSF had made several attempts to raise fence near border pillar no. 2034 and in other areas on the no man's land but abandoned it following resistance by BDR and local people.

BDR is ready to face any situation, he added.

## MPO of 'best' college in Magura held up

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Magura

Unbelievable though, MPO (monthly pay order) of a college, adjudged the 'best' in the district last year, has been held up by the Secondary and Higher Education Directorate for 'nil' pass percentage.

Teachers of Nakol Sommoni Degree College in Sreepur upazila had gone to a local Rupali bank to draw their salary for the month of February.

To their surprise, bank officials told them their MPO is held up for 'nil' pass percentage in Degree examination held in 2003.

They were taken aback because there was no candidate from the college in Degree examination in that year. The first batch from the college appeared at the Degree examination, which began on January 10 this year.

Later, on investigation, it was found that the Education Directorate held up the MPO on the basis of wrong information that none from the college passed in the Degree examination in 2003.

Copies of the latter holding up the MPO were sent to the bank first and then to the college.

The principal of the college, Moklesur Rahman said Degree courses were introduced in the college in 2002 and the first batch appeared at examinations this year.

The college was adjudged the best in the district for its performance in HSC (Higher Secondary Certificate) examination and good academic atmosphere, he told this correspondent.

# 2 Khulna Jamaat MPs face death threat from extremists

## Law and order committee meeting told

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Khulna City Ameer of Jamaat-e-Islami Mia Golam Parwar MP and party central leader Shah Mohammad Ruhul Quddus MP were threatened with death by extremists over call phones.

This was disclosed at a meeting of the District Law and Order Committee, held on Sunday.

Presided over by Khulna city Mayor Shaikh Tayebur Rahman, the meeting was addressed by, among others, Ali Asgar Lobi MP, Moulana Sakawat Hossain of IOJ (Islamic Oikkyo Jote), Babar Ali of Jatiya Party, Police Commissioner Javed Patwary, City Jamaat leader Master Shafigul Alam, Deputy Commissioner Mahbubur Rahman and KCCI (Khulna Chamber of

Commerce and Industries) President MonirAhmed.

No one from a BNP faction lead by city BNP president M Nurul Islam MP and Whip Ashraf Hossain was present at the meeting.

Nayeb Ameer of Jamaat Master Shafigul Alam informed the meeting that the death threats came after the murder of Shaikh Belaluddin, Khulna Bureau Chief of Dainik Sangram and also a Rokon of the party.

Alleged involvement of Khulna Additional Police Superintendent Mofazzel Hossain in the bomb attack on Dainik Jugantor journalist Dip Azad was not discussed at the meeting although the murder of Shaikh Belaluddin came up for discussion.

The Mayor in his address as

chief guest spoke highly of police and Rab in containing terrorist activities as well as maintaining law and order.

He strongly condemned the murder of Belaluddin and asked police officials to detect the killers and the mastermind.

All the speakers expressed their indignation at failure by police in detecting the killers of political leaders and journalists and submission of charge sheets leaving out the godfathers.

The two Jamaat MPs alleged that they are not being provided with adequate security.

The Police Superintendent later said the Jamaat MPs did not inform police officials earlier about the threat.

# Manhunt in Bagerhat for 3 Bangla Bhai cadres

QUAZI AMANULLAH, Khulna

Bagerhat police launched a special combing operation on Saturday to track down three cadres of Bangla Bhai Siddiqur Rahman, a ringleader of outlawed Jagrato Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB) and Jamaatul Mujahedin (JM).

The three cadres are Hekmat Molla, 55, of Gaola village in Mollahat upazila in Bagerhat and his two sons Abdul Matin Molla, 35 and Shariful Islam, 19.

They are fleeing since launch of the countrywide hunt for Bangla Bhai.

According to police, JMJB leader Siddiqur Rahman had made an abortive bid to kill Tarapada Poddar, a leader of Hindu community on August

17, 2002.

Tarapada Poddar, 60, his son Tapan Poddar, 28 and daughter Pravati Poddar, 19, were injured severely when they came under armed attack by Bangla Bhai cadres in their house at Gaola village.

Police had arrested Bangla Bhai Siddiqur Rahman, 45, and his cadres Hekmat Molla, Matin Molla and Shariful Islam on August 17 midnight in 2002 from Gaola village and recovered from their possession a blood-stained sword, a dagger, two khaki shirts and half pants, three belts used by army, one bomb, seven black masks, a pair of boots, a blood-stained lungi and a cell phone.

Police also recovered a book containing 18 tactics of 'commands

operations' and how to make bombs.

The arrestees including Bangla Bhai had told interrogators that they belonged to Jamaatul Mujahedin, which aimed at establishing an Islamic state.

They also admitted to police that their main base was in Rajshahi district and there was a training centre in Khulna city.

Meanwhile, Rajshahi police on Friday night arrested three persons identified as Abdullah Al Asad, Monirul Alam and Hedayetullah from Jessore. Asad and Monirul are cadres of Jamaatul Mujahedin, and Hedayetullah of JMJB, Jessore Police said quoting Rajshahi police. They were taken to Rajshahi Saturday morning.

## MISAPPROPRIATION

# IRCB sues former DG's son, IBBL officials

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Islamic Relief Committee Bangla-desh (IRCB), an affiliated organisation of Patiya Al Jameya Al Islamia, on Sunday filed a case accusing its former Director General's (DG) son Hossain M Yunus and IBBL bank officials for misappropriating Tk 57 lakh.

The court of Metropolitan Magistrate Maqsoodur Rahman has directed the Bakalia Police Station Officer-in-Charge (OC) to take necessary measure after investigation into the matter.

IRCB collected money for the victims of the devastating cyclone of 1991. The relief committee deposited

the money in different banks here and entrusted the then IRCB DG with the responsibility of taking care of its accounts.

Following death of the DG in early 1992 the concerned bank branches were informed about it and the deposited money was withdrawn from all branches except Chaktai branch of IBBL.

Later, it was learnt that the bank officials in collusion with the son of IRCB's former DG misappropriated the money.

Plaintiff Mohammad Reza, Estate and Administrative Officer of Al Jameya, appealed for measures to realise the embezzled money along with compensation and exemplary punishment to persons involved in it.

# Udichi Tragedy Day observed in Jessore

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jessore

Different socio-cultural bodies, political organisations and NGOs observed the Udichi Tragedy Day here yesterday through various programmes demanding speedy trial of the persons responsible for the gruesome incident.

Ten people killed and 150 injured as several bombs tore through a Udichi cultural function at Jessore Town Hall ground on March 6, 1999.

Hundreds of townspeople joined the programmes that included a blood donation programme held on the Udichi office premises, a human chain and remembrance meeting in front of the Bar Library, processions and rallies. A memorandum was submitted to the district administration.

Convenor of a body styled Culture Protection Organisation, Advocate Kazi Abdus Shahidial,

presided over the remembrance meeting, also addressed by, among others, local Awami League leader Farazi Shahadat Hossain, Workers Party leader Iqbal Kabi Zahid, Jessore Mahila Parishad President Habiba Shefa, Shammilita Sangskritik Jote President Abul Hossain and cultural activists Harun-ur-Rashid, Abu Saleh Tota and Assoke Sen.

The speakers demanded immediate arrest and punishment of the culprits involved in the bomb blasts.

Members of Udichi, along with other cultural bodies including Biborton and Uchcharan brought out a silent procession covering their faces with black cloth on the government MM College campus.

After the procession, president of college unit of Biborton Sajib Biswas and its secretary HR Tuhin addressed a rally

## EVE TEASING

# 2 cops among 50 hurt in B'baria clash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria

Two police constables among 50 persons were injured, four of them critically, in a clash over teasing schoolgirls at Kautoly on Sunday.

The clash ensued when unruly youths teased a few schoolgirls of Bhadrughar High School near to it. As soon as the news spread all over, people from Bhadrughar and Kautoly armed with lethal weapons rushed there and locked in a bloody clash.

Being informed, police rushed to the spot. They fired 37 rounds of gunshots and lobbed 17 rounds of teargas shells to quell the situation. Police brought the situation under control after frantic efforts for two-and-a-half hours. Road communication on the Comilla-Sylhet highway was also disrupted for a while.

Seriously injured police constables, Sayedur Rahman and Helal Uddin and two other persons, Anis Mia and Basir Mia were admitted to

Brahmanbaria Sadar Hospital.

A tense situation prevails in the area.

# 10 tribal youths surrender to army with arms

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

Ten indigenous youths, having links with a 'foreign gang', have surrendered to the local army camp along with arms in the last few days, army sources told The Daily Star on Sunday.

They were involved in terrorist activities including extortion and kidnapping for ransom in Bandarban Sadar upazilla, Betchara, Baiddapara and in remote Roangchari, the sources said.

They identified one of the youths as Chochi Marma, 23, who surrendered on Saturday night at Betchara army camp in Roangchari with an LG.

The rest nine surrendered in the past week, the sources said. Their identities are yet to be ascertained, the sources said. They are from Roangchari upazilla.

Mentionalby, civic committees were formed recently in Zamchari, Baghmara, Kibukchari and Suaklock in Bandarban Sadar upazilla and in Betchara and Baiddapara in Roangchari upazilla to resist crimes like extortion and kidnapping for ransom.

# Orientation course for Patuakhali UP leaders

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

A three-day orientation course for Union Parishad chairmen began at Patuakhali Deputy Commissioner's (DC) conference room on Sunday.

Patuakhali DC Prasanta Bhusan Barua presided over the opening session of the course organised by the National Institution for Local Government (NILG).

About 50 UP chairmen are taking part in the training.



PHOTO: STAR

Unitrend Ltd, an advertising agency, held its annual review meeting at Cox's Bazar recently. The all-smiling employees were snapped during a break at a session.

**SNAPS**

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**Abducted girl yet to be rescued**

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sathkira

Rupa Rani Mondal, 17 daughter of Dinabandhu Mondal of Jhapa village in Shyamnagore upazilla, abducted on Wednesday, is yet to be rescued. Quoting local people police said she was abducted by gang allegedly led by Patil Paban of village Kamalkati in the same upazilla from near her house. Her father filed a case with Shyamnagore thana. He alleged that a local Union Parishad leader is sheltering the miscreants.

**Village police killed by outlaws**

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sathkira

A *chowkidar* (village police) was slaughtered on Saturday night by armed cadres of the Purba Banglar Communist Party (PBCP)-Janauddha at village Sreemanta Kali in Tala upazilla. Police arrested Shahadat Hossain of the same village and Sohrab Hossain of village Jalalpur for their alleged involvement in the gruesome murder. The victim was Dulal Chandra Das, 42, who was also a member of the village police of Jalalpur union.