



PHOTO: STAR

The Shahbajpur Gas Field project is only less than a kilometre from the erosion spot. Every day the mighty Meghna devours big chunks of land in the area.

IU appointments stayed, court notice on VC

STAR NATIONAL DESK

A court in Kushtia on Thursday issued a temporary stay order on appointment of 40 people in Islamic University (IU) for not preserving the freedom fighter's quota and issued a show-cause notice on the Vice-chancellor, Treasurer, Registrar and two Syndicate members for this.

They have been given three days to reply.

The IU authorities recently appointed 40 people including 12 teachers, 20 officers and eight third and fourth class employees.

Preservation of a 30 per cent quota for wards of freedom fighters in government service is mandatory but this provision was violated in the appointment process, sources said.

The court order followed filing of two cases with the court of Senior Assistant Judge Mahmuda Kahtun. One case was filed by Sajedur Rahman Bablu of Kushtia unit of Muktiyoddha Sangsad and Nasim Ahmed, member-secretary of Bangladesh Muktiyoddha Oikya Parishad and the other by Zebunnahar Nasrin Lipi and Sammi Akter Lili.

The VC is out of the country now. When contacted over phone, the treasurer declined to comment.

Registrar Dr Moslem Uddin, who is also a freedom fighter, however said the university authorities will reply to the notice in time.

The Daily Star published a report on the alleged anomaly in the recruitment on Thursday.

## Erosion threatens Shahbajpur Gas Field

### Tk 40 cr scheme awaits finance ministry approval: High-power team visits site

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

The Shahbajpur Gas Field Project and its Tk 300 crore equipment in Bhola is threatened by Meghna erosion.

The mighty Meghna may devour the project at Hakimuddin Bazar in Borhanuddin upazila if protection work is not started right now, according to its officials.

The river is less than one kilometre from the project area now and the installations may be affected if the erosion continues at the present rate.

In last one year, the river devoured about three-fourth of a kilometre land near the project. Five years back, the river was about seven kilometres from the project site, they said.

Laying of a 33-kilometre gas pipeline from the project to supply 0.35 TSE gas to Bhola and drilling of the second well of the project is going on now. Costly and sophisticated equipment are at the site. A five-member high-power team including the Director (IWOS) and Assistant Director of Water Development Board (WDB) and

Chief Advisor of CEGF visited the project area on March 24. Sources in the team said a major portion of Hakimuddin Bazaar has already been devoured by the river and the project including valuable equipment is under serious threat. River erosion is unpredictable and anything may happen during the coming monsoon, they said.

The team's visit followed submission of a Tk 40 crore scheme to Water Resources Ministry in January to build protection embankment and other work to save the project and nearby areas from erosion.

During its visit, the team also held a meeting with local lawmaker Hafiz Ibrahim. He later said the protection work should begin immediately and the government will do everything in time to protect the gas project.

Sources in the project told this correspondent that the team agreed in principle that the protection work should be given priority and work should begin immediately. The scheme has been approved by the water resources ministry and sent to the finance ministry. Steps are

being taken to start the work this year, they said.

The 40 crore taka project also includes proposals for protection of other areas nearby so that the project is not threatened by Meghna erosion in near future, they said.

Water Resources Minister Maj (Rtd.) Hafijuddin Bir Bikram, also a lawmaker from Bhola, in recent remarks also emphasised implementation of the protection scheme not only for Sahbajpur Gas Field project but also for other erosion-affected areas.

Awami League leader Tofael Ahmed, a former lawmaker and minister from the area, has also demanded immediate government steps to save the gas project. Talking to this correspondent over phone, he however said the protection work should be transparent and corruption-free.

BJP Chairman Naziur Rahman Manju, also from Bhola, alleged that over Tk 150 crore was misappropriated in the name of such projects in the last 30 years.

POSTAL SAVINGS IN 5 NORTHERN DISTRICTS

## Over Tk 2 cr defalcation detected so far

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Worried depositors on Thursday crowded postal savings banks in Nilphamari, Gaibandha, Rangpur and Lmonirhat to know about their accounts as news of defalcation of funds were published in newspapers.

The amounts were defalcated by sections of the postal staff, according to findings by probe bodied.

Our Nilphamari Correspondent reports: The amount defalcated from accounts with the postal savings bank in Nilphamari Head Post Office may cross Tk one crore as Tk 56, 22,000 was found missing after scrutiny of only 500 out of 14,000 savings accounts and 17,000 general accounts, according to sources in the probe team yesterday.

Assistant Post Master Mir Nural Islam Munna and Ledger Operator Ahmedul Islam Raju at the postal savings bank were arrested on Wednesday on charge of forgery.

Another accused, Postal Operator Taslim Uddin, is absconding since Monday after he appeared before the inquiry committee.

The probe team in investigation so far found that Mir Nural Islam Munna, Ahmedul Islam Raju and Taslim Uddin were involved in the scam.

The team handed over Munna and Raju to police at the Head Post Office.

Torab Uddin, Post Master of Nilphamari Head Post Office filed a case (No. G.R.87/5) with Nilphamari thana under Section 409/34.

Police on Thursday produced the two before court, which rejected their bail prayer and sent them to jail.

The amount was misappropriated between 2003 and 2004.

The money was withdrawn at different times through false voucher, over payment and repetition of payment.

A source at the Head Post Office told this correspondent that Taslim Uddin and Ahmedul Islam Raju were serving at the bank since 1994 and Assistant Post Master Mir Nural Islam Munna was there since 1972, starting as a Postal Operator.

The Deputy Post Master General (Northern Region), a member of the probe team, told newsmen that they are probing all savings accounts, savings bonds, money orders, fixed deposits, prize bonds and stock of phone cards since 2000.

A process is on for suspension of the accused persons, he said.

Our Gaibandha Correspondent reports: Anxious account holders thronged Gaibandha Postal Saving Bank on Thursday to know deposited amounts, but the authorities closed all its counters and suspended transaction.

Newly posted Post Master In-charge Anjad Hossain filed a case on Friday against six employees including two Assistant Post Masters on charge of defalcation of money from accounts.

The accused persons are assistant post masters Golam Nabi and Rafiqul Islam, postal employees union leader Habibur Rahman and

postal operators Mozaharul Islam, Solaiman Alia and Rafiqul Islam, Postal operators are now at large since the defalcation unearthed.

"I am worried about my account with the postal saving bank, but the authorities did not reply to me satisfactorily", said account holder Shamsuzzoha of V-Aid Road.

On filing of complaints by some depositors, a team headed by Diponkor Mondol, Deputy post master General, rajsahahi Division, began the probe on April 4.

Mondol declined to give the amount defalcated, saying the probe is on.

But sources at the bank said the amount could be around Tk 60 lakh.

Our Rangpur Correspondent reports: Highpowered probe bodies have detected defalcation of about Tk 87 lakh from postal savings accounts by postal employees in Rangpur, Kurigram and Lalmonirhat districts.

The probe teams also detected that lack of proper audit for years encouraged the employees to misappropriate funds.

A four-member team headed by Additional Director General Mobasher-ur-Rahman have detected misappropriation of Tk 24, 91,339 from accounts with Kurigram Head Post Office. A section of employees withdrew the money in the last two years through forgery.

A case was filed with Kurigram thana. Police arrested Acting Post Master Abdul Malek, Postal Operator Ashok Kumar Nag and Accountant Mofu Rahman. Court sent them to jail.

In Rangpur, a five-member probe body headed by Director of Postal Department AKM Saifur Rahman detected Tk six lakh forgery by a section of employees.

Police arrested Inspector Abu Taher Mohammad Shamsuzzaman of Rangpur Head Post Office after a case was filed.

Police said two postal operators are also involved in the scam but did not disclose their names for the shake of investigation.

In Lalmonirhat, another probe body detected misappropriation of about Tk 56 lak.

Police arrested Post Master Abul Katam Azad and postal operators. Abdur Rahim and Kabir. They are now on six days' remand.

A correspondent reports from Lalmonirhat: The three arrested postal employees in statements to police yesterday confessed their involvement in the misappropriation of funds from savings accounts at the head post office.

They are on six days' remand.

They said there is a network of forgers in the post office involved in the scam. They also disclosed their names but police did not disclose their for the sake of investigation.

Two others accused in the forgery case are absconding. They are Nurul Islam and Kamakhkha Nath.

Police said they called Nowab Ali, who retired recently as Assistant Post Master, but he did not come to Lalmonirhat thana.

Bangala New Year festival begins in CHT

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

The Bangladesh Adibashi Forum (BAF) in Chittagong Hill Tracts yesterday began a four-day programme in Rangamati to celebrate the Bangla new-year with festivities.

The festival began with an Adibashi Football Tournament, held at Rangamati Stadium.

CHT Regional Council Chairman Jiotirindra Bodhipriya Lama alias Santu Lama was the chief guest.

Deputy Minister for CHT Affairs Moniswapon Dewan, Rangamati Hill District Council Chairman Maniklal Dewan and Chakma Circle chief Raja (King) Devashish Roy also attend the inaugural function Four Garo, Santal and Monipuri teams from Mymensing and Sylhet and another from CHT will take part in the tournament.

Besides, sports events including Boli Khela (wrestling), Ghila Khela, Nadeng Khara, Potti Khara, Gudu Khara, Fur Khara, Bansh Khorom Dhaba, Badul Marana, Shel Bonduk Marana and Shor Bansh Marana will be held at the stadium amid fanfare.

AL SATKHIRA COUNCIL TOLD

## No polls without caretaker reform

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Reforms in the caretaker system and Election Commission will be the main agenda of opposition parties' in the anti-government agitation, Awami League (AL) Organising Secretary Abdul Mannan said yesterday.

The reform proposals will be finalised this month and placed before all opposition parties, he said while addressing a triennial conference of Satkhira district Awami League.

"If there is no reforms, there will be no election", he said.

The immediate past Chief Justice who is likely to be a man of BNP's choice will not hold the next election in a free and fair way, he alleged. "If will be suicidal if opposition goes to election without necessary reforms."

"The President is theirs. The Chief Advisor (of the next caretaker government) is theirs. In such a situation how can one expect an impartial election?" he said.

This prompted AL and other opposition parties to think of reform the caretaker system and the EC, Abdul Mannan said.

He also expressed his party's concern over what he called growing religious fanaticism in the country.

Islamist zealots operating in the country under the shelter of the alliance government, are the "main threat" to the nation.

The alliance government has failed to run the country and has politicised the administration, he claimed.

He also termed the BNP-Jamiat government "champion in corruption". People are suffering from a

sense of insecurity due to custodial deaths.

He called for unity of pro-liberation forces to establish rule of law and people's rights and to put an end to "misrule" of the government. He called upon AL leaders and workers to build a mass movement to dislodge the autocratic government and free the country from their misrule.

The conference was held at Shahid Abdur Razzak Park with Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in the chair. It was addressed, by among, others AL central leaders Talukdar Abdul Khaleq MP, Mustafa Rashidi Suja, S M Kamal Hossain and Abdul Mazid.

Sit-in by tobacco factory workers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

Over 300 terminated workers of leaf processing factory of Dhaka Tobacco Industry, a concern of Akij Group, began a sit-in at the main gate of the factory at Golora here since Thursday evening demanding reinstatement and payment of arrears.

They also held a rally yesterday. Speakers at the rally said they were terminated illegally and deprived of dues. They will continue the programme till their demands are met.

They brought out a procession on Thursday in the factory area. The workers were sacked one year ago.

Mohammad Sona Mia, president of the workers' union, presided over the rally yesterday.