

NILPHAMARI POSTAL SCAM

Bigwigs coming to swindlers' rescue

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Vested quarters including some political leaders are active to save the postal employees accused of defalcation of crores of taka from depositors' accounts in Nilphamari Post Office, sources said.

Those political leaders are reportedly trying to secure bail of the arrested postal employees.

Accused Assistant Post Master Nurul Islam Munna and Ledger Operator Ahmedul Islam Raju, both arrested on April 6 and Postal Operator Liaquat Ali, arrested on April 13, are in Nilphamari District Jail now.

Accused Postal Operator Taslim Uddin is absconding.

Bail prayers for Munna and Raju were moved thrice, but rejected by the court. Bail prayer for Liaquat Ali is yet to be moved.

A team of high officials of the postal department led by Rezaul Islam, Deputy Post Master General (DPMG) of Dinajpur postal region, who is also now DPMG-in-Charge of Rangpur region, met with the Nilphamari Deputy Commissioner yesterday and requested him to take all possible steps so that the probe team can work without any interference by vested quarters and things can go as per law.

The DC assured them all cooperation, the sources said.

Talking to this correspondent, Rezaul Islam said probe in the savings account section will begin today.

Defalcation of more Tk 15 lakh in saving certificate section and another Tk six lakh through fake voucher was detected yesterday, raising the total to Tk three crore seven lakh.

An influential leader of an opposition party went to the court to secure bail of the accused, it is widely alleged.

Sources also claimed that the opposition leader repaid his huge bank loans by taking money from Munna ahead of the last municipal polls.

It is also alleged that police, under the influence of vested quarters, are showing a lenient attitude towards the accused. They did not

take them on remand though cases were filed ten days ago.

The duty officer at Nilphamari Sadar thana however told this correspondent yesterday that they sought 15 days' demand for Munna and Raju on Friday. The court is yet to hear the remand prayer, he said.

Accused Mir Nurul Islam Munna was an influential leader of postal employees' union. Ledger Operator Ahmedul Islam Raju and Postal Operator Taslim Uddin belonged to the same group led by Munna. They had considerable influence on high officials, the sources claimed.

Munna had contested for the post of general secretary in the last postal CBA election held in 2004 but was defeated by a narrow margin.

The accused persons belonged to a gang, which includes some employees and CBA leaders in five head post offices under Rangpur region, the sources claimed.

Habibur Rahman, central president of the Postal Employees Union and an employee of Gaibandha Head Post Office, is now absconding after being accused in connection with defalcation of depositors' money in his post office.

Another CBA leader, Mofiuur Rahman, an employee at Kurigram Head Post Office and general secretary of greater Rangpur postal employees union, has also been arrested for his alleged involvement in postal forgery.

Some high postal officials in Rangpur region could also be involved in the scam, sources close to the probe team hinted. A DPMG and a former DPMG of postal life insurance in Rangpur have also been found involved in the postal forgery. But they are yet to be arrested.

A source in Nilphamari Head Post Office on condition of anonymity told this correspondent that the defalcation rose to such a scale as audit was not done in last ten years.

According to postal law, audit is to be done every year and each head post office is obliged to send important papers to the postal department audit section in Dhaka. But this was also ignored.

Meanwhile the Officer-in-charge (OC) of Nilphamari Thana, who is

the investigation officer (IO) of the case, has requested the Nilphamari postal authorities to provide him with necessary papers and documents.

The papers sought might be handed over to police in a day or two, police sources said yesterday.

Worried account holders yesterday continued to crowd the Nilphamari Head Post Office either to check their accounts or to withdraw money.

This has created a liquidity crisis in the postal bank. Many account holders said they could not withdraw money yesterday.

Postal officials said the liquidity crisis will be over in a day or two when funds will be reimbursement by the central authorities.

They said depositors' accounts will remain intact and they have nothing to worry.

Mighty in monsoon, dry in summer



PHOTO: STAR

It is hard to believe how furious this small dying river can be during monsoon. The silted Chotto Jamuna along Noagaon town turns into playgrounds for children at many places during the summer. But it becomes turbulent when waters roll down from across the border, washing away homesteads and damaging crops on both sides at will.

ATTACK ON PRESS CLUB PROTESTED

Rajshahi journos demand security

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Journalists in Rajshahi city yesterday held separate meetings protesting the attack on the Metropolitan Press Club (MPC) during Pohela Boishak celebrations in which a senior reporter was injured.

Members of MPC, Rajshahi Press Club, City Press Club and Rajshahi Union of Journalists held meetings at their offices and condemning the terrorists' attack and demanding their arrest.

Later leaders of the journalists' bodies together met with Rajshahi Metropolitan Police Commissioner Nayeem Ahmed and demanded security of journalists.

They complained to the Police Commissioner that police were not arresting the attackers who are usually seen around Boalia police station.

They also told the high police official that the venue of attack is not more than 30 yards from the police station and the attack was in pres-

ence of the local elite.

The Police Commissioner assured the newsmen of proper probe into the incident.

MPC President Dayem Uddin, vice-presidents Quazi Gyas Shafiqul Islam, joint secretaries Anwar Ali, Zabid Apu, Rajshahi Photo Journalists' Association leader Azharuddin, City Press Club leader SM Saju were present during the meeting.

In separate statements, they also termed the incident a threat to the entire journalist community and demanded punishment of the attackers to check recurrence of such incidents.

They said attack of journalists increased in recent days, which has also tarnished the country's image abroad.

Journalists do not belong to any political party or group. They serve the nation and the people but are attacked when any report goes against the interest of any vested group, they said.

11 pushed in by BSF thru' C'nawabganj point

Bid to erect barbed-wire fence foiled

BDNEWS, C'nawabganj

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) on Friday pushed in 11 Bangladeshi speaking people through Charaldanga border of Gomostapur upazila in Chapainawabganj district.

Earlier, BSF had taken them from Jagannathpur camp in India.

Rahanpur Union Parishad (UP) chairman Ansar Ali told that the people who were pushed-in people were captured by villagers at Kazi. They handed over them to BDR personnel of Charaldanga Border Outpost (BOP). BDR have taken them back to the border to push them back.

BSS reports from Rangpur: Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) foiled an illegal bid of BSF to erect barbed-wire fence within 70-yard from the zero line along Dinajpur border on Friday, according to BDR sources.

BSF troops of Kutubpur camp under 200 BSF Battalion hurriedly brought materials at 8 in the morning to erect illegal barbed-wire fence

in between the boundary pillars of 304/3S and 304/4S, opposite Jalpaitoli outpost of BDR under Fulbari 15 Rifles Battalion in Chirirbandar upazila in Dinajpur.

BSF troops quickly erected the barbed-wire fence with trees within 70 yards from the zero line.

BDR strongly protested and asked BSF to attend a flag meeting to avoid further escalation of the situation along the borders.

Later, a company commander-level spot flag meeting started on the zero-line from 11 am on the day where BDR asked BSF to abandon the bid to erect fence.

Initially BSF did not agree to do so. But BDR clarified its position that no illegal fencing within 150 yards from the zero line would be allowed and BDR will be forced to resist such illegal works.

Under stiff opposition from BDR, BSF withdrew all materials within an hour along the border.

New Haripur well now produces 10 mmcfd gas

IQBAL SIDDIQUEE, Sylhet

About 10 mmcfd gas is being supplied to the National Grid from well No. 7 of Haripur Gas Field in Sylhet since the trial extraction began two weeks back, officials said yesterday.

The production will be raised to 20 mmcfd after its formal inauguration soon, they said.

Work to convert the country's first oil well into gas well (well No. 7) in Haripur structure of Sylhet Gas Field Company Limited (SGFL) was completed by Bapex exploration wing of Petrobangla, at a cost of Tk 13 crore.

The well was drilled in 1986 with financial assistance from Asian Development Bank (ADB). Though the target was to drill up to 2100 metres, three gas zones and an oil zone were found between 2009-

2033 metres. It was converted into an oil well though the initial target was to extract gas. It was the country's first oil well, which produced 5.6 lakh barrels of crude from December 1987 to July 1994.

But, the production was stopped in July 1994 due to drastic fall in pressure. Since then it was sealed.

After several changes in schedule, SGFL on December 15 last year started work to convert it into a gas well.

The well is located about 19 kilometres off Sylhet city. According to a seismic survey done in 1971, gas reserve in Haripur structure is 683.85 billion CFT and total recoverable gas reserve is 444.5 billion CFT.

The present recoverable gas reserve in the structure is 275 billion CFT, the officials added.