

# No audit of postal accounts at Dhaka AG office since 1990

Old banking system, lack of audit gave scope for defalcation, probe teams in Rangpur, Gaibandha say

**STAR NATIONAL DESK**

There was no audit of postal savings accounts at the Accountant General's (AG) office in Dhaka since 1990, which made the way for defalcation of crores of taka from depositors' accounts by sections of corrupt postal officials in Rangpur, Lalmonirhat, Kurigram and Gaibandha districts.

"It is natural that a section of employees at the AG office (Postal) in Dhaka were involved in the scam", a member of the probe team told The Daily Star in Rangpur on Thursday.

Age-old banking system and irregular audit allowed the misappropriation, he said.

A system should be introduced at the AG office in Dhaka for day to day check of accounts there and recheck with post offices in districts, said ABM Khorshed Alam, chief of the probe team in Gaibandha.

High officials in the postal department are now thinking to form a probe body to probe the matter at the AG office also, he said.

**Our Rangpur Correspondent reports:**

The high level teams now probing the scam in Lalmonirhat, Rangpur and Kurigram head post offices have detected the deceptive ways used by the corrupt employees to defalcate funds from depositors' accounts.

There was a racket involved in it. "More persons were involved in the scam. We are keeping mum for the

shake of proper investigation," said a probe body member seeking anonymity.

He said huge amounts have been misappropriated but declined to specify. "Investigation will continue. Postal department wants to disclose details after finishing the probe so that probe bodies can work smoothly," Rezaul Islam, Acting Deputy Postmaster General (DPMG) in Rangpur, said.

"The ways (they used) were very deceptive. Had some of the honest employees not informed the authorities of the scam, the department could not have detected those", he said.

As per system, records of all transactions at a postal bank is kept in a ledger

book and a journal sheet separately. It is mandatory for record keepers to maintain ledger book and journal sheet simultaneously for all transactions. Every postal bank in Bangladesh sends copies of the journal sheet to the Accountant General's office (postal) in Dhaka after every fifteen days.

But these were not checked at the AG office.

At districts, the corrupt employees who handled transactions opened accounts in the name of their relatives. They tempered ledger books and showed huge false deposits against those accounts and later withdrew the money.

A Counter Operator, a Ledger Keeper, and an Assistant

Postmaster run all transactions in postal banks.

Misappropriation is not possible without an understanding among the three, sources said.

**Our Gaibandha Correspondent reports:**

The probe team has resumed investigation into the postal scam in Gaibandha after collecting copies of savings documents from the central office as the culprits destroyed copies at their postal savings banks.

The probe team could not make satisfactory progress earlier due to lack of documents. A high level team then collected copies of the missing documents from the record room at the head office, sources in the probe team said.

"Now the probe team will make quick progress in investigation but will still take some time to ascertain the total defalcation", said ABM Khorshed Alam, chief of the probe team here.

The team unearthed defalcation Tk 20 lakh only in three hours' investigation on Tuesday night. The amount may turn out to be crores of taka when the investigation will end, he added.

The sources said one crore taka bank accounts of DPGM Susanta Kumar Mondal has been frozen for his suspected involvement in the scam. Mondal and another DPGM in Rangpur Regional Post Office - Mahbubur Rahman were earlier suspended after the scam came to light.

They said the corrupt employees tempered ledger books and misappropriated money from depositor's accounts through other accounts they opened in the name of their relatives.

"We must detect the whole postal scam within the shortest possible time", said Khorshed Alam.

He also blamed the postal audit department for the scam. "A new system of day-to-day checking of accounts with the head office has been introduced to avoid any such malpractice in future", he added.

Police could not apprehend any of the employees at the Gaibandha Head Post Office accused of involvement in the scam. They are absconding since filing of case.

Meanwhile, a magistrate court here on Thursday placed Ahad Mondol, Post Master of Palashbari post office, on three days' remand for interrogation in connection with embezzlement of funds.

Palashbari police arrested Ahad Mondol following filing of a case against him and Postal Operator Golam Mostafa, by Postal Inspector Abdul Hamid of Gaibandha Post Office.

Golam Mostafa is absconding since detection of defalcation of funds at Gaibandha Post office on April 1.

Defalcation of Tk 69,987 has so far been detected from Palashbari postal saving bank.

## GAS PLANT SHIFTING 2-month agitation announced in B'baria

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria

A two-month agitation programme has been chalked out to stop a government decision to shift the NGL Fractionation Plant of Natural Gas from Ashuganj here to Kailastia, Sylhet.

This was announced jointly by Brahmanbaria Unnayan Forum (BUF) and Action Committee for NGL Fractionation Plant of Natural Gas from a meeting held at Maulobhipar yesterday. BUF President advocate Lutful Hye Satchu presided over the rally.

Under the programme, a grand rally will be held here under the auspices of BUF on May 15.

Yesterday's meeting was addressed, among others, by BUF Secretary Shahria Md Firoj, advocate Tafsirul Islam, Major (Retd) Jahirul Haque Khan Beer Pratik, District JSD President advocate Akter Hossain Sayed, Awami League leader Kamruzzaman Ansary, Zila Sammilito Sangkriti Jote Convenor Abdun Noor, Convenor of the Committee to resist shifting of NGL Fractionation Plant Md Isa Khan, its member secretary Principal Shahjahan Alam Sajju and ex-Union Parishad (UP) Chairman Abdul Khaleque Babul.

# A ray of hope for PSTU

Regent Board holds first meeting in 3 years, takes decisions on problems

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

The Regent Board of Patuakhali Science and Technology University (PSTU), the highest policy-making body for the institute, held its first meeting here on Thursday since setting up of the university in February 2002.

With its PSTU Vice-chancellor Prof Dr Wahid-uz-Zaman in the chair, the meeting held at its conference room discussed all the problems faced by the university and adopted a number of important decisions for its development, meeting sources said. The VC is also the Chairman of the Board.

Twelve out of 14 members attended the meeting. Three of the members were selected by Chancellor of the university President Iajuddin Ahmed.

The university was established

on 72 acres of land on the campus of former Patuakhali Agriculture College at Dumki Upazila headquarter, about 15 kilometre from Patuakhali town.

The meeting finalised guidelines for the university's Academic Council and service rules, appointment and promotion of teachers and employees.

The meeting decided that PHD course will be opened in the university, an official said.

The Board also noted that lack of teachers and other facilities is hampering academic activities and approved recruitment of teachers. For about 1200 students, there are only 47 teachers now against 100 posts.

Initially, the university started with only the Agriculture Faculty. The authorities later opened three new departments -- Computer Science, BBA-MBA and Veterinary

Science. This was approved by the Board.

The Board also approved a proposal to open another faculty with Marine Fisheries and Inland Fisheries departments. This is under process in the ministry concerned, the meeting was told, according to the sources. The faculty will be set up at Kakata sea beach.

The meeting also discusses accommodation crisis for students, shortage of vehicles and classrooms, the sources added. Of the students, 646 stay at Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Hall and Chand Sultana Hall. The rest stay outside the campus.

They said the Project Profile (PP) of the university, submitted to the Education Ministry in January 2003, is yet to be approved by the ECNEC (Executive Committee of the National Economic Council).



A front view of Patuakhali Science and Technology University

PHOTO: STAR

## Rapist gets life in Pirojpur

UNB, Pirojpur

A court here on Wednesday sentenced a man to life imprisonment for violating a girl after abduction.

According to the prosecution, the convict, Khairuzzaman, abducted the 15-year-old girl while she was going to her maternal uncle's house on July 3, 2004. Later, the culprit took the girl to a hotel and raped her.

The victim's father filed a case with the police.

After examining records and witnesses, District and Sessions Judge Mia Mohammad Sharif Hossain found Khairuzzaman guilty and pronounced the verdict.

## Noapara poura commissioner arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A ward commissioner of Noapara Pourasabha in Abhoynagar, Jessore was arrested along with a sex worker from the house of another sex worker at Miredange here on Tuesday evening.

Khulna Metropolitan Police (KMP) arrested Faruque Hossain and Runa Khatoon, 24, during a drive launched by the Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB) to snap unauthorised electricity connections, according to police.

Both of the arrested persons were sent to court on Wednesday.

A case was recorded with Khanjahan Ali Police Station naming Nazrin owner of the house and a close relative of Ershad Shikder, a former notorious criminal. Nazrin managed to escape arrest.

## Workshop for jute farmers held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Speakers at a workshop at Gobindaganj on Thursday stressed on the need for adoption of a scientific approach to cultivate high yielding variety (HYV) of jute and preservation of quality seed for its better production.

The day-long workshop on production of HYV jute and seeds organised for jute farmers was held at Gobindaganj Upazila Parishad Auditorium.

The Assistant Director of Jute Directorate, Aminul Islam and the Regional Coordinator of Rangpur region Solaiman Ali were present as resource persons.

Gobindaganj Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Abu Bakker Siddique, Chief Scientific Officer Moksedeul Alam, Chief Inspector of Jute Abdus Sobhan and Upazila Jute Development Officer Majedul Islam addressed the workshop.

As many as 50 peasants of Harirampur, Nakai, Taluk Kanupur, Darbasta and Fulbari unions and Gobindaganj upazila attended the workshop.

## Indigenous festival begins

RU CORRESPONDENT

A two day Indigenous Poem and Cultural Festival, 2005 began at the district council auditorium yesterday.

The National Adivasi Parishad organised the festival.

The programme includes traditional dances and recitation of poems written in their language.



Unauthorised structures built by land grabbers on the bank of the Mogra in Netrakona town has squeezed the river.

PHOTO: STAR

# Save Mogra river from grabbers

JAHANGIR ALAM, Netrakona

The Mogra river flowing through Netrakona town becomes narrow because of unabated encroachment by illegal land grabbers.

Land grabbers already grabbed a major portion of the river and built unauthorised structures at different points on both sides of the river.

The town is surrounded by the river from three sides. Once the length of the river was four kilometre and its breadth 500 feet. At present, its breadth has become 200 feet due to illegal land grabbing. Its flowing capacity also decreased to a great extent. The

river divides the town into two parts. Once the riverbed could carry enough water. But due to accumulation of silt, its normal depth has decreased. Now innumerable shoals have emerged in the riverbed.

According to Netrakona Pourasabha authorities, 1,000 illegal pucca establishments were constructed on both sides of the river in last 10 years. Most of the establishments are situated in Nagra, Katli, ChutaBazar, Mukterpara and Satpai areas of the town. During the period, the district administration played the role of a silent spectator.

Now the administration woke up from slumber and took steps to evict a few small illegal structures, but its owners are allegedly reconstructing those defying official rule.

When contacted with Netrakona Pourasabha Chairman Nazrul Islam Khan, he told this correspondent he is well-aware about it, but he is helpless because the district administration controls the rivers. "We are ready to assist the district administration if they want it," he said.

In reply to a question, he said that unauthorised structures should be evicted to regain the beauty of the pourasabha.

An owner of an illegal structure informed that the district administration knew about selling of illegal plots by deeds but the administration overlooked the matter, he added.

A conscious citizen of the town told that the district administration has the power to evict the illegal structures if it desires. But the district administration ignores it because these are owned by influential persons of the town.

Despite several attempts, this correspondent failed to establish contact with the Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Netrakona for his comments.

## Self-employment from canal water

LGED special projects in Moulvibazar

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

The Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) has undertaken a special programme to create self-employment opportunities by harnessing canal waters here.

Under the programme titled, 'Small Water Resources Development Sector Project', the LGED will create job opportunities through cooperatives by pursuing agricultural activities, pisciculture and cattle rearing.

The LGED selected the canals like Langu chhera and Saikhali in Kamalganj upazila, Bagherkior and Boular beel in Sadar upazila, Udnachhera in Rajnagar upazila and Bangur Chhera and Boro Chhera in Srimangal upazila for the purpose. The canals are flowing through paddy fields. The Bangladesh Water Development

Board (BWDB) did not take any project to utilise water of the canals previously.

Under the project, different types of crops will be cultivated in dry season while the flow of canal water will be controlled properly.

Seven projects have been taken up at a cost of Tk 3 crore 39 lakh 52,000. Implementation of a few projects have already been started. Under the project, embankments will be constructed along the banks of the canals and regulators and sluice gates will also be installed.

Each project will be implemented on partnership with local people.

According to the LGED officials, the project area will be selected where irrigation facilities on more or less 1,000 hectares of land are available.

The maintenance cost will be met from donation of the beneficiaries deposited in banks.

## Build young leadership at grassroots level

Tarek Rahman tells Saidpur BNP council

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Tarek Rahman has stressed the need for building young leadership at grassroots level for development of the country.

He said only BNP can make the country self-reliant by implementing its 19-point programme initiated by the party's founder and former president Ziaur Rahman. But young leadership is needed at every village for that, he told a council of Saidpur BNP, held at Saidpur Pilot High School ground on Thursday.

Party leaders and activists from Rangpur, Lalmonirhat, Bogra, Panchagarh, Dinajpur and Thkurgaon also joined the council in large numbers.

The small town wore a festive look centring the council. From the morning on Thursday the enthusiastic

He said there are many problems in the country and the BNP government is solving those one after another. This government should be allowed another term to continue the development process, he said.

Presided over by Convenor of Saidpur BNP Amzad Hossain Sarkar MP, the council was addressed by, among others, former MP Engineer Shahrin Islam Tuhin, Rajshahi City Corporation Mayor Mizanur Rahman Minu, Deputy Minister for Food and Disaster Management Asadul Habib Dulu, Z M Siraj MP from Bogra, Akhtaruzzaman MP from Dinajpur, Nilphamari BNP Secretary Anisul Arefin Chowdhury and Gaibandha BNP Secretary Hamidur Haque Chhina.

Tarek cautioned the people about what he said a "conspiracy" by an opposition political party.

"That party, being rejected by the people, has now resorted to conspiracy and destructive politics to regain power".

At the council, Takek Rahman announced the names of seven key members of the new executive committee of Syedpur BNP, headed by Principal Abdul Gafur as President and Amzad Hossain Sarkar MP as general secretary.

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