

MORE ABOUT 3 ACCUSED IN NILPHAMARI SCAM

Tk 2cr postal bonds found in names of wives, wards

EAM ASADUZZAMAN, Nilphamari

The committee probing the postal scam in Nilphamari has detected savings and defence certificates worth about Tk two crore purchased in the names of three accused postal employees, their wives, sons and daughters.

The employees accused of misappropriating depositors' money are Assistant Post Master of Nilphamari Head Post Office Mir Nurul Islam Munna, Ledger Operator Ahamedul Islam Raju and Postal Operator Taslimuddin.

There are numerous savings and defence certificates of various denominations in their names, a member of the probe body told this correspondent seeking anonymity. But he declined to elaborate.

He also said that savings certificates worth about Tk 20 lakh in the name of a former DPMG of Rangpur region, his wife and relatives have also been detected

in Nilphamari Head Post Office. The DPGM is now under suspension.

These were detected after filing of two cases by Torab Ali, Post Master of Nilphamari Head Post Office, with Nilphamari Sadar thana on April 6 and 13 against four postal employees in connection with misappropriation of Tk 3.12 crore from depositors' accounts.

The cases were filed against Mir Nurul Islam Munna, Ahamedul Islam Raju, Taslimuddin and Postal Operator Liaquat Ali. Taslimuddin is absconding and the rest three are in custody.

Meanwhile, the authorities at Nilphamari Head Post Office, on orders from high officials, on Monday suspended payments against three savings certificates worth Tk one lakh 50 thousand, sent from Uttara Bank local branch. The savings certificates were owned by Nuzhat Noor Nuri, daughter of Mir

Nurul Islam Munna.

The three certificates (Sa-Jha-1496004, Sa-Jha 1496005 and Sa-Jha-1496006) each worth Tk 50,000 were deposited with the Uttara Bank as mortgage for a Tk two lakh loan taken by a local influential political leader on December 18, 2000. Nuri was the guarantor of the loan.

When contacted, the bank manager said the loan was sanctioned against postal saving certificates as per law.

This is not the lone case of loan disbursement against savings certificates owned by relatives of the accused postal employees.

It was gathered from probe body members and bank officials that about Tk 20 lakh loans were given to some other influential people against savings certificates owned by relatives of the accused persons. But they declined to name the influential.

Munna and Raju in their confessional statements made under

Section 164 in the court of a First Class Magistrate earlier confessed their involvement in the postal scam. They made the confessions after their 3-day second remand in the second case, taken by Detective Branch of police.

Investigating officer (IO) of the second case, DB Inspector Rezaul Kkarim, told newsmen earlier that Munna and Raju told police that some high officials of the postal department were involved in the scam. The officials would come to Nilphamari twice or thrice a week and took their share of the misappropriated money, the IO quoted them as saying.

A member of the probe body, Ashrafur Alam, told this correspondent that investigation in the savings accounts section is going on and more case could be filed if necessary.

Crematorium, temple grab protested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Satkhira district unit of Hindu Bouddha Khristian Oikkya Parishad, the local Mandir Samitee, Puja Udjapan Parishad and Hindu Bouddhya Kalyan Front jointly held a rally and brought out a procession in Satkhira town yesterday protesting occupation of a century old crematorium and Hindu temple at Jhowdanga in the Sadar upazila.

The rally was held at Satkhira Shahid Abdur Razzak Park with Monoranjan Mukherjee in the chair. It was addressed by, among others, Biswajit Sadhu, Swapan Shil, Subhas Chandra Ghosh, Biswa Nath Ghosh, Dhiru Bannerjee, Madhab Dutta, Gosto Bihari Mondal, Nirmal Kumar Das, Mongal Kumar Pal, advocate Somnath Chatterjee, Pranab Ghosh and Abu Ahmed.

They said a gang of land grabbers led by local political leader occupied the crematorium and a Hindu temple a month back.

Later a procession was brought out from the park, which terminated on the collectorate premises and memoranda handed over DC and SP.

5 extortionists arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Five persons were arrested Tuesday night for demanding Tk 50,000 toll to a shrimp farm owner at Machha Khola village in Satkhira Sadar upazila.

The arrested persons are Kawsar Dhali, Saiful Islam, Rahmat Ali, Azizul Islam and Ruhul Amin.

Police said they rushed to the spot on information from farm owner Abdul Mazed and arrested the culprits from the spot. A case has been filed.

HABIGANJ BLAST CASE

Hearing on charge sheet now takes place May 9

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Hearing on acceptance of charge sheet in the Explosives Act case for the January 27 Baiderbazar carnage in Habiganj will now be held on May 9.

Former finance minister and front ranking Awami League (AL) leader SAMS Kibria and four others were killed in the bomb blasts.

Sessions Judge Md Azizul Islam, who is also Judge of the Special Tribunal-I, Habiganj, on Tuesday deferred the date on a petition filed by complainant of the case advocate MA Majid Khan, organising secretary of district AL.

The defence lawyer did not raise any objection during the prayer.

Eight of the accused were produced before the court when the prayer was made. They are Shahid Zia Smriti Gobeshona Parishad central committee chief and former vice-president of Habiganj district BNP (now expelled) AKM Abdul Quaiyum, Gobeshona Parishad's

Habiganj district general secretary Shahed Ali, its Lashkarpur union president Jainal Abedin Momin, Lashkarpur union BNP President Jamir Ali, BNP activists Jainal Abedin Jalal, Tajul Islam and Ayat Ali and Assistant Office Secretary of district JCD Selim Ahmed.

Two other accused -- Muhibur Rahman and Kajol Miah--are absconding.

Tajul Islam, Jainal Abedin Momin



SAMS Kibria

and Jamir Ali were seen crying in the courtroom.

The court also fixed May 9 for hearing of bail prayers of Abdul Quaiyum, Jamir Ali, Momin, Tajul Islam and Shahed Ali.

Two cases were filed in connection with the January 27 incident, one for the murders and the other under the Explosives Act.

Investigation Officer of the Explosive Act case, Habiganj Kotwali thana OC Inspector M Shafiuzzaman, submitted charge sheet against the 10 persons on April 20.

The Habiganj Sadar-I Cognisance Court accepted the charge sheet in the murder case but that in the Explosive Act case was sent to the Special Tribunal for hearing.

Gabkhan Channel dredging begins

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal.

Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) has started dredging of

the 18-kilometre Gabkhan Channel at a cost of Tk 16 crore to facilitate double way safe navigation through it.

Known as Suez Canal of Bangladesh, the channel was dug by the British rulers about 200 years back to link the Sugandha river in Jhalakati

with the Sandhaya river in Projpur for easy river communication between the southwestern parts of the then Bengal with rest of it.

But with passing of time, the double way channel lost its width due to emergence of shoals and silt deposit, making it a single way route, making movement of large ships difficult.

Vessels now have to wait for hours to cross the channel.

Movement was totally stopped after a cargo vessel -- CV Trisha-1, hit by an oil tanker, sank in the channel with about 1000 tonnes of cement on March 10.

Due to closure of the channel, BIWTA incurred a loss of about Tk 5 lakh per day.

The river route was re-opened on March 20 for one-way navigation after widening it at the accident point by dredging.

However the sunken vessel is yet to be salvaged, making the channel risky for navigation.

The vessel can not be salvaged with BIWTA's equipment, its Deputy Director said earlier.



PHOTO: STAR

INNOVATION BY EVILS...Smuggled phensidyl hidden inside watermelons seized near Bibirbazar border in Comilla.

Most clinics in Barisal city operate illegally

Only 8 out of 39 have licence

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Only eight out of 39 diagnostic centres and pathological laboratories in the city have licenses, according to sources at the Civil Surgeon's office.

Another 15 have applied for registration but are doing brisk business.

But most of the centres and laboratories, having licence or not, are ill equipped. They do not have modern operation theatre, full time doctors, nurses and ambulances.

Test results obtained from different centres often vary widely, putting patients in bewildering situa-

tions.

Good sanitation and proper disposal clinical waste are unthinkable in most of the clinics, mainly manned by doctors working at government hospitals.

The clinics have brokers to collect patients. People coming from villages and remote areas allured there with promises of good treatment at lesser costs. The brokers get commission for this.

Acknowledging this chaotic health care system, Barisal Civil Surgeon Dr Abdul Malek said, there is a committee comprising representatives of the CS, DC and BCC for issuing license for opening

clinics and diagnostic centres.

Burt no body cares for that. They take a trade license from the City Corporation and start the business illegally, he said.

Dr. Aziz Rahim, president of Barisal unit of Bangladesh medical Association (BMA) said loopholes in laws are responsible for mushroom growth of illegally operating clinics and diagnostic centres.

When contacted, Inspector Jahangir Molla of BCC's Health Department said it is the responsibility of the government's health department to monitor the clinics and diagnostic centres.

Kulaura border tense,BSF bid to erect barbed wire foiled

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Tension mounted in Sharifpur border in Kulaura upazila as BSF made a fresh bid Tuesday morning to raise barbed wire fence on the no man's land near pillar No 1862 adjacent to Sharifpur immigration check post.

BDR immediately resisted the move.

A scheduled flag meeting there on the day was not held and construction of the Monu river embankment on Bangladesh side was postponed due to lack of security.

BDR sources at Sharifpur border outpost (BOP) said that at an earlier flag meeting held on April 28, BSF had agreed not to raise any barbed wire on the no man's land. But after five days of the meeting, BSF started the work.

BSF has increased its strength on the border, the sources said.

If the situation deteriorates further they will ask local people to shift to safer places, they said.

Tk 100 cr timber seized in three hill districts

OUR CORESPONDENT, Bandarban

Timber worth 100 crore taka was seized from three hill districts of Bandarban, Rangamati and Khagrachhari last week, according to official sources.

About 11 lakh cubic feet (cft) of timber was illegally stored during a period from April 20 for carrying to other parts of the country.

Over 8 lakh cubic feet of timber was seized from Rangamati, one lakh 42,000 cubic feet from Bandarban and 1.5 lakh cubic feet of timber was seized from Khagrachhari.

Meanwhile, confessing their faults, more than 1,000 timber traders applied for release of seized timber under Compounding Offence Report (COR) on payment of Tk 50 as fine for each cubic feet (cft) of timber including the auction price as fixed by the government, according to sources in the Forest Department.

Official sources told this correspondent, the government will fetch revenue amounting to over 33 crore taka by releasing the timber under COR system.

Tobacco elbows out vegetables

MONIRUL ISLAM MONU,

Bandarban

Vegetable cultivation has decreased alarmingly because farmers in the district find tobacco cultivation more profitable.

Tobacco is being cultivated on a large scale in Lama and Ali Kadam upazila, Zamchhari, Baghmara, Reicha, Sualock in Bandarban Sadar, Sainggya, Betchora, Nachalongpara. Kanajupara and Hanshamapara of Roangchhari.

According to sources in the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE), Bandarban,

tobacco cultivation started here initially on only 1,860 acres of land in 1995-96 fiscal. Within a span of seven years, its cultivation doubled spreading over 4,965 acres.

Farmers got interested in tobacco cultivation due to various reasons. The reasons are, farmers get fair price of produced tobacco instantly, they face no problem in its marketing and easy availability of fertiliser from multinational tobacco companies during tobacco cultivation season, according to the Deputy Director of the Department Agricultural Extension (DAE), Bandarban, Shahidullah Sarker.

He revealed the lands are losing fertility rapidly due to repeated tobacco cultivation on the same land.

Elderly people alleged that because of negligence of duty of DAE block supervisors, the tobacco companies are encouraging and backing farmers to cultivate tobacco on their lands. Block supervisors seldom visit farmers. Grabbing the opportunity, multinational companies are patronising farmers to increase its cultivation, elderly people said further.

However, according to multinational companies, tobacco is being

cultivated on not more than 4,000 acres of land under their supervision. Lama and Ali Kadam are on top of the list where tobacco is cultivated on more than 2500 acres of land.

Tobacco cultivation extended very fast on 1,000 acres in Naikhongchhari and over 500 acres of land in Ruma, Thanchi, Bandarban Sadar and Roangchhari upazila.

Because of repeated tobacco cultivation, vegetables are not grown on the lands, according to elderly people.

During a visit to Zamchhari and Baghmara, this correspondent found that sugarcane is cultivated on personal initiative on a certain land while wheat is being cultivated under supervision of a local NGO on another land, whereas tobacco is cultivated on a vast tract land in the entire area.

Forest resources in the area are also threatened due to tobacco cultivation. According to statistics of tobacco companies, about 2,500 metric tons of firewood are required to dry tobacco grown on 7,000 acres of land in Bandarban. In the process, resources of Sangu and Matamuhury reserve forests are being dwindled. Green valleys and forest areas are rapidly changing into deserts.

A local farmer, Thoamg Mong said to this correspondent, because of inability of the government departments to supply seed, fertiliser and insecticide during vegetable cultivation season and alleged misbehaviour of government employees, farmers have turned themselves towards tobacco companies.

'We prefer ready cash from tobacco to be deprived of fair price of vegetable and other crops,' he added.



PHOTO: STAR

Tobacco has replaced vegetables on a field at Zamchhari village in Bandarban Sadar Upazila.

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