

## UNO’s signature forged to give 42 people khas land

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

At least 84 decimals of khas land have been registered against the names of 42 people by forging the signature of the Kalapara upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) in Patuakhali.

Humayun Kabir, surveyor at the assistant commissioner’s (land) office in the upazila, allegedly committed the irregularity in exchange for money from the 42. The authorities have issued a show-cause notice to him over the matter.

According to UNO office sources, houses will be built for the landless and homeless people in the upazila on the occasion of the birth centenary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. For this, 2 decimals of khas land and a house would be given to each beneficiary.

The Kalapara UNO office prepared a list of 195 landless people and sent it to the AC (land) office for taking necessary steps to register land through the sub-registrar’s office.

Sources at the AC (land) office said they sent the list to Sub-registrar Rehena Parveen. AC (land) Abu Bakr Siddique directed Surveyor Humayun to complete the process.

But Humayun allegedly added 42 names to the list illegally by forging the UNO’s signature.

The upazila sub-registrar early last month registered two decimals of khas land each against the names of 237 people, including 42 added to the list illegally.

Some officials at the AC (land) office alleged that the surveyor had taken several lakhs of taka from the 42 people.

This correspondent could not reach Humayun for comments as his phone was switched off.

AC (land) Abu Bakr said, “Humayun Kabir has been absent from office for several days. I have issued a show-cause notice to him on Sunday asking him to explain in seven working days why the public land was registered against the names of 42 people illegally.”

Kalapara UNO Abu Hasnat Mohammad Shahidul Haque said the upazila sub-registrar registered khas land without verifying the list of landless people.

“I have issued a show-cause notice to her. The district deputy commissioner has also been informed about the incident.”

Sub-Registrar Rehena said, “I registered the documents of landless and homeless people seeing the signature of the UNO.”

She said she didn’t verify the list in good faith and also didn’t go through every page of the document.

“Steps will be taken to cancel all the related registration documents,” she added.



Standing ankle-deep in flood water, a woman cooks in Kalmati area of Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila. Flood hit the area Monday afternoon after the water level in the Teesta rose due to onrush of water from upstream in West Bengal's Jalpaiguri district.

PHOTO: STAR

# Floods stalk the north

### Many areas inundated again due to onrush of water from upstream

#### STAR REPORT

Vast swathes of the country’s northern region have been inundated again due to an onrush of water from the upstream over the past two days.

This is the third spell of floods the northerners are facing this year. The region was hit with two floods in June, with a week-long gap in between, locals said.

Thousands of people have been suffering as their houses and farmlands have gone under water. Many took shelter on roads, embankments and other high lands.

District administration officials said they have been working to provide relief to the flood-hit people.

The Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre (FFWC) in a bulletin said, “The major rivers in the northern region are seeing a rising trend.

“The rise in water levels of the Brahmaputra-Jamuna and Ganges-Padma may continue for the next 72 hours,” the bulletin, released at 9:00am yesterday, said.

In Kurigram Ulipur upazila, a farm

labourer drowned to death in the waters flowing from the Teesta in Lal Masjid area. He was indentified as Mahbubur Rahman, 55.

Locals said he died due to strong currents in a Teesta tributary while swimming back home from work.

Later, locals recovered the body, said Imtiaz Kabi, officer-in-charge of Ulipur Police Station.

Meanwhile, the homes of around 20,000 families of five upazilas in Lalmonirhat and Kurigram have gone under water.

Mizanur Rahman, executive engineer of the district Water Development Board, said the Teesta was flowing 15cm above the danger level yesterday morning at the Teesta Barrage point in Lalmonirhat’s Hatibandha upazila.

Nazrul Islam, 58, of Lalmonirhat’s Patgram upazila, said, “I planted Aman paddy on around six bighas of land. All of them have gone under water. The crops will all be ruined if the water stays over five days.”

Another flood-hit villager Abed Ali, 65, of Kurigram’s Rajarhat upazila, said, “The

flood waters gushed into my home this [yesterday] morning. Me and my family have now taken shelter on a nearby road.”

In Dinajpur, several villages in Lazmitari union of Gangachara Upazila have also been flooded.

Around 1,000 families in Sankardah and Bagerhat villages have been stranded in the flood.

WDB officials said the Teesta’s water was flowing 17cm above the danger level there.

Abdullah Al Hadi, chairman of Laxmitari, said the Teesta started rising on Monday night, inundating a large portion the area.

In Nilphamari, some 30,000 people of 15 shoal areas in Dimla and Jaldhaka upazilas have been affected by the flood.

“The new flood hit our village early yesterday. Around 100 families, including mine, rushed out of home and took shelter on a road,” said Mottaleb Mollah, 65, a resident of Pashchim Kharibari area in Dimla upazila.

(Our correspondents from Lalmonirhat, Dinajpur and Nilphamari contributed to the report.)

## Niko graft case against Khaleda adjourned till September 29

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday adjourned till September 29 the hearing in the Niko graft case against BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and eight others.

Judge Sheikh Hafizur Rahman of Dhaka Special Judge’s Court-9 passed the order after a petition was filed on Khaleda’s behalf, seeking adjournment of the hearing, her lawyer Masud Ahmed Talukder told The Daily Star.

Khaleda, out on bail following an executive order from the government, is taking treatment at her Gulshan residence.

The ACC filed the case in December 2007 accusing Khaleda and several others of abusing power to award a gas exploration and extraction deal to Canadian company Niko, during her second term as prime minister.

## 9 jailed centring Bhola clash, no arrest yet over death of BNP activist

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barishal

A Bhola court sent nine people to jail yesterday for obstructing police duties on Sunday and Monday, police said.

However, no one was arrested in connection with the death of Swechchhasebak Dal leader Abdur Rahim, said Md Enayet Hossain, officer-in-charge of Bhola Sadar Police Station.

Police filed a murder case with the station in this connection on Monday.

On Sunday, Rahim was killed and at least 60 people were injured in clashes between BNP activists and police during a BNP procession in Bhola town. Police filed two cases accusing over 600 people.

Meanwhile, district BNP has postponed their pre-announced programmes for fear of arrest, said Golam Nabi Alamgir, president of BNP’s Bhola district committee.

“Police have filed false cases against us ... we are discussing with our lawyers and preparing a case.”

## Man held for killing father, woman arrested for murdering husband

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Police yesterday arrested a 30-year-old man for killing his father in Tangail, while Rab arrested a 34-year-old woman for killing her husband in the same district.

Police arrested Rashed Miah in Kalihati upazila for stabbing his father, Asgar Ali, 65, to death.

According to police, he killed his father early yesterday and went to the local mosque, asking the imam to announce the death.

Mollah Azizur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Kalihati Police Station, said locals handed Rashed over to police.

In the other murder incident, Hridoy Banu had been on the run since the body of her husband, Abu Saeed Sentu, 40, was found in their home in Tangail town on July 27.

Sentu’s first wife Nahida Khanom filed a murder case accusing Hridoy with Tangail Sadar Police Station.

Rab yesterday arrested her from her father’s house in Habiganj’s Bahubol, where she had fled to after the incident, Rab Commander Major Mohammad Anisuzzaman said.

## More from Bangladesh

FROM PAGE 1

the gratitude of the international community to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for providing shelter to the Rohingyas and offering continued humanitarian assistance to them.

Addressing the NPT Conference at the UNGA Hall, Foreign Minister Momen urged the international community to unite against the perpetual holding of nuclear weapons by a handful of nations in total disregard for the safety and security of humanity.

He reiterated Bangladesh’s support to the effective implementation of the NPT through its three pillars – nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

He emphasised the need for non-discriminatory implementation of Article IV of the Treaty, which recognises the inalienable rights of all countries to develop, research, produce, and use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, including power generation, healthcare, and agriculture.

The foreign minister called for increased investment and international cooperation in the research of nuclear technology and exploring the potentials of its peaceful use for the benefit of humankind.

Mentioning the expenditure of \$82.4 billion in 2021 for the upkeep of nuclear weapons amid the pandemic, he urged the states to stop senseless investments in destructive nuclear weapons and instead redirect these resources to promote health, address climate change, achieve the SDGs, and promote peace and stability.

Bangladesh acceded to the NPT on September 27, 1979, and was among the first few countries to ratify the Treaty on Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) in 2019.

Momen also held bilateral meetings with Slovenia’s Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Tanja Fajon; Hungary’s Minister of Foreign Affairs Peter Szijarto, and Argentina’s Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Santiago Cafiero.

## Trade with neighbours to soar come 2029 Meant for gas exploration

FROM PAGE 1

provide \$1.03 billion, with the rest coming in from the governments of Bangladesh and Nepal. Of the \$1.03 billion that the multilateral lender is allocating to the phase 1 of the programme, Bangladesh will get \$753.45 million and Nepal \$275 million. Both the loans have been sanctioned by the WB board in June.

The \$753.45 million given to Bangladesh will go towards projects to be implemented by the Bangladesh Land Port Authority, the National Board of Revenue and the Road and Highways Department for completion by 2029.

One of the components involves upgrading the 43-kilometre two-lane Sylhet-Charkai-Sheola road to a climate-resilient four-lane road, connecting the Sheola land port with the Dhaka-Sylhet Highway and in so doing, cutting down the travel time by 30 percent.

The programme will support digital systems, infrastructure and more streamlined processes at Benapole, Bhomra, and Burimari land ports, the three largest land ports in Bangladesh handling approximately 80 percent of land-based trade.

There is little communication (electronic or otherwise) between the customs and the Bangladesh Land Port Authority on what goods are present at any given time at the land ports.

Arriving goods for import are normally discharged from trucks and unless they are perishable, are stored in warehouses under the jurisdiction of the BLPA before customs clearance begins.

This has created a system of “border men” that collect documents from truck drivers on the Indian side of the border before arrival, and “proxy” customs and freight (C&F) agents standing in line to ensure that the slot is kept while the C&F agents interact with the NBR or other government agencies elsewhere.

Such human facilitation highlights the need for improved processes,

which the project will address.

The project will support the development and improvement of IT-enabled services for trade, to reduce touch points and human interaction, enhance transparency and reduce congestion and truck idling, resulting in faster border clearance time and greater cargo throughput.

Electronic tracking of truck entry and exit, electronic queuing and smart parking would be installed.

It will also support the modernisation of the Chattogram customs house, which handles 90 percent of all import/export declarations in Bangladesh and services more than 45,700 unique traders per year.

The rapidly growing trade volumes have overburdened the Custom House, Chattogram, which was initially constructed in 1920.

Subsequently, the project will entail constructing a state-of-the-art green-building certified, resilient Custom House Chattogram with enhanced capacity to process rapidly growing trade volumes with required infrastructure, collaborative laboratory and other facilities including facilities for women.

It will also support the country’s implementation of the World Trade Organisation’s Trade Facilitation Agreement and Customs Modernisation Strategic Action Plan and preparation for the Motor Vehicles Agreement (MVA) implementation.

The MVA was signed on June 15, 2015 by the transport ministers of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal. The agreement will permit the member states to ply their vehicles in each other’s territory for transportation of cargo and passengers, including third country transport and personal vehicles.

But due to the lack of necessary infrastructure, MVA is yet to take off.

Bangladesh’s export competitiveness will increase and importers will be helped, too, Rahman said.

“Both the consumers and producers

would be benefited.”

The WB programme will not only lead to trade facilitation but will also help in drawing in investment from abroad.

“The government has dedicated special economic zones for Indian and Chinese investors but those are not attracting the expected investment. It is because the border-crossing infrastructure and logistics facilitation are missing. If I have to pay 1.5 times more to send the products to Nepal, why should I come here? So it is a very important project.”

## UN experts slam Israel’s ‘harassment’ in West Bank

AFP, Geneva

UN experts yesterday slammed Israel’s “harassment” of human rights defenders and humanitarian workers in the occupied West Bank’s Masafer Yatta villages, where Israel has a military zone.

The special rapporteurs insisted such harassment must stop, and said residents continue to be threatened by the risk of forcible transfer, including mass forced evictions and arbitrary displacement.

“Israeli authorities’ hubris is proving without limits. They are even harassing human rights defenders and humanitarian workers seeking to support and protect people facing grave human rights violations in Masafer Yatta,” the four experts said in a joint statement.

“This is a direct assault on the core of human rights and international humanitarian law... this also confirms that impunity over abuse of power fosters power to abuse.”

The case of Masafer Yatta – or Firing Zone 918 – an agricultural area near Hebron, has been one of Israel’s longest running legal battles.

FROM PAGE 1

According to media reports, Petrobangla got the Finance Division’s approval on July 6 to spend Tk 2,000 crore as a “temporary loan from the GDF” to import liquefied Natural Gas (LNG).

But energy experts said the GDF was initiated only for gas exploration, not for gas import. And as per the GDF regulations, Petrobangla was legally bound to take the BERC’s permission to spend from the fund.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, energy expert Prof M Shamsul Alam said, “This [the spending] is illegal.”

Petrobangla had earlier taken such loans from energy security funds but never paid back, he said.

According to the GDF regulations, money from the fund can only be spent on gas exploration, production, development and distribution of gas.

Contacted, a Petrobangla official said that though the fund was not meant for gas import, they needed it due to an emergency.

“We applied to the GDF management committee, led by the energy secretary, which approved it upon the Finance Division’s permission,” said the official seeking anonymity.

This correspondent could not reach any official of the Finance Division for comment on the issue yesterday.

Earlier on June 27, the BERC asked Petrobangla to return to the GDF Tk 3,000 crore that the latter deposited with the state exchequer last year, showing it as surplus money.

The BERC also told Petrobangla to pay back Tk 9,227 crore that the national oil company took from the Energy Security Fund to import LNG between July 2018 and June 2021.

Asked about it, the BERC chairman passed the question to BERC Deputy Director (Tariff) Kamruzzaman who said there was no update as of now.

“We will ask them [Petrobangla] about it soon,” he said.

The GDF was created through

a BERC order in July 2009, and a portion of the tariff paid by the consumers has been kept for the fund since 2019.

### LPG PRICES SLASHED

The BERC has cut the prices of LPG, sold by private companies, by Tk 2.9 per kg.

According to the new rate, the price of a 12-kg cylinder of LPG, including VAT, is now Tk 1,219, down from Tk 1,254.

The price of LPG sold by state-owned LP Gas Limited remains unchanged. The price of a 12.5kg cylinder of LPG is still Tk 591.

Besides, the price of “autogas” used as fuel for vehicles has also been reduced to Tk 56.85 per litre, down from Tk 58.46.

## UK PM hopeful Truss on back foot as poll lead shrinks

AFP, London

British Conservative Liz Truss’s leadership campaign faced its first serious peril yesterday as she was forced into a policy U-turn and came under fierce fire in Scotland, against the backdrop of a shrinking poll lead.

The foreign secretary was accused of insulting the government in Edinburgh after she alleged First Minister Nicola Sturgeon was an “attention seeker” for agitating for Scottish independence, and recommended to “ignore her”.

The provocative remarks, delivered at a Tory member hustings in southwest England late Monday, were denounced by the Scottish National Party (SNP), which is pressing for a second referendum on independence.

John Swinney, Sturgeon’s deputy as first minister of Scotland, called the remarks “obnoxious” and contrasted the roughly 200,000 Tory members with the 2.4 million votes the SNP won in elections last year.