

Housing project for indigenous people shelved, at last

ABDUL KAHER, back from Sirajganj

The district administration has finally cancelled a housing project for the indigenous people of village Madhinagar Joripukur in Tarash upazila in the teeth of strong protest.

The indigenous minority comprising 23 families opposed the project fearing eviction and rehabilitation of people from other community.

Their protest climaxed with Chairman of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Regional Council Jyotirindra Bodhipriya Lama alias Shantu Lama, also president of Bangladesh Adibashi (indigenous people) Forum (BAF), and BAF General Secretary Sanjeeb Drong visiting the area and attending a rally on June 27. Eleven-party leader Pankaj Bhattacharya was also with them.

A delegation led by Shantu Lama met the deputy commissioner (DC) and asked him to implement the project with certain changes, as demanded by the indigenous families. But the DC explained his limitations about making the changes and cancelled the project.

The Tk 50 lakh project styled Madhinagar Jorapukur Abason Prokolpa was approved by the Prime Minister's Office and 60 tonnes of wheat out of 186 tonnes were already allocated for land filling. The allocation was based on reports given by Chairman of local union parishad M Wahiduzzaman and Project Implementation Officer M Ali 'without informing the indigenous community', sources said.

The project covering 6.56 acres envisaged some 50 barracks, a community centre, a pond, a mosque, a graveyard and a school.

General Secretary of the Project Implementation Committee Jahurul Islam started the project work on May 28 and allegedly felled about 1,500 trees including fruit

trees and saplings ignoring request of the indigenous families.

Upazila Nirbahi Officer of Tarash M Borhan Uddin Bhuiyan said the felling happened beyond his knowledge and expressed his regrets.

The DC, Ebadat Ali, said the affected will be compensated after proper assessment of the losses and action will be taken against persons responsible.

An affected woman, Anna Baro, 45, said, "I requested the project people and police to save my trees, my source of living. But they paid no heed to this and felled 200 fruit trees and 150 saplings, leaving only two fruit trees. They also covered my paddy field with earth."

The 23 families are now left with only two latrines as the rest were demolished during earth filling and operation of their bio-gas plants was also hampered due to this, other victims said.

President of Sirajganj District Adibashi Forum Rohini Kanto Ekka, 75, said "Our forefathers started living here in 1896. Most probably our chairman (of union parishad) misinformed the government. We think the government cannot go ahead with the project after knowing that we are living here."

An elderly indigenous villager said, "We don't want barracks to live in as we are habituated to living in earthen houses, which is consistent with our culture."

During his visit, Larma said, "The indigenous people are victims of repression and deprivation and they now have to be well organised to realise their rights."

He urged the district administration to ensure the rights of local indigenous people on their land and other things.

The 23 families have 6.56 acres of land with a pond on two acres. The union parishad chairman could not contacted for his comment.

Two garment workers killed in Chittagong

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

One garment factory worker was knifed to death while another was killed in a road accident in the city in the last two days.

Police and witnesses said one Barun Chowdhury, 24, a worker of Pentagon Garments of Amir Market, was attacked by muggers while returning home to Khatungonj at around 11.30pm on Friday.

As the victim tried to resist, the muggers stabbed him. Barun died on the way to hospital.

The victim's father, Lalit Mohan Chowdhury, filed a case with the Kotwali police station in this connection.

Meanwhile, another incident of mugging was attempted at the same place in Khatungonj during early yesterday morning and local people caught one mugger.

The mugger, identified as Shahidur Rahman, 24, was turned over to police after being beaten up by the locals.

In the other incident, a garment factory worker identified as Rina, 24, was run over at Bayezid Bostami road in front of Tea Board office.

A speeding truck knocked her down as she got out of a tempo and ran her over at around 11.30am yesterday.

Miscreants gouge out eyes of 2 in Pirojpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Miscreants gouged out eyes of two persons in Mathbaria upazila of Pirojpur district yesterday.

According to police and hospital sources, a gang of eight abducted Kuddus, 40, and Jainul Hossain, 36, from village Chalitabunia of the upazila at noon and took them to Dhadihbanga Bazaar by a trawler.

The gang beat up the two and gouged their eyes out. Locals said the incident was a sequel to rivalry between the miscreants and the victims over the last Union Parishad election.

On information, police rushed to the spot, rescued the two and sent them to Mathbaria health complex. Sources said the victims were shifted to the Barisal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital as their condition deteriorated.

No case was filed till filing of this report at 6pm yesterday.

Secretariat

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Six cameras installed at the six gates of Bangladesh Secretariat and will start tentative operation from today. It is expected that surveillance through cameras will start fully within the next 10 days.

Sources said the Home Ministry has also asked officials responsible for issuing passes to issue visitor's passes on a limited scale to preempt any untoward incident.

They said the Home Ministry, while monitoring those issuing too many gate passes, has requested all ministers to ask their officials to restrict the issuance of visitor passes.

Officials said that all staff of the Bangladesh Secretariat have been instructed to keep their identity cards up-to-date and displayed on their pockets, particularly during entry at the Secretariat.

They said police have been asked to move about in the secretariat, interrogate anyone who looks suspicious and check gate passes of visitors.

Ratna murder

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at 12:55pm in the crowded court room with beefed up security.

The judge in the highlights of the verdict termed the crime a gruesome one.

The judge also said society and courts expect a halt to the recurrence of such crimes.

"Reviewing the confessional statements of the accused, I found it logical to award the capital punishment to the mastermind of the incident Rubel and slaughterer Yunus," Shahed Noor Uddin said.

Hearing the judgement Rubel fainted while two other convicts Yunus and Ibrahim broke into tears.

The tribunal announced the verdict after examining 19 out of the 39 prosecution witnesses.

Special Public Prosecutor (PP) Abdul Latif Talukder moved for the state while Advocate Shahid defended Rubel and Yunus, Advocate Shahjahan Hawlader moved for Ibrahim and state defence lawyer Emadul Haq Lal for absconding Zakir.

"Criminals will think twice before committing such crimes even against the poor like us," said Javed Sheikh, brother-in-law of Ratna's father, after hearing the judgement. "Despite being poor we've ultimately got justice," he added.

Javed, a cook in the MP hostel, said the poor parents of Ratna, now living at Alifdanga in Faridpur district, could not come to Dhaka to hear the judgement as they were unable to bear the travel costs.



PHOTO: STAR

Myanmar nationals in Dhaka demonstrate at Muktangan yesterday demanding release of Aung San Suu Kyi ahead of their Foreign Minister U Win Aung's visit.

Bogra ammo haul AL has no faith in police probe, wants judicial inquiry

UNB, Dhaka

The Awami (AL) League yesterday demanded judicial and parliamentary inquiry into the Bogra ammunition and explosive haul, saying it has lost confidence in police investigation after the prime minister pointed her accusing finger at the main opposition.

"The statements of the prime minister and home minister are a clear violation of the country's existing laws and interference in the normal course of investigation. After such statements from the head of the government and the home minister, police cannot conduct proper inquiry," said Deputy Leader of the Opposition Abdul Hamid Advocate.

Hamid, who earlier led an AL parliamentary team including some retired military officers to the places where the ammunition and explosives were found, was making his observations on the matter at a press conference here yesterday.

He demanded a judicial as well as an all-party parliamentary inquiry into the biggest ever haul of ammunition and explosives.

Other members of the AL parliamentary team were Opposition Whip Col (Retd) Farook Khan MP and Motahar Hossain MP. Ex-military officers who accompanied the team as experts are former army chief General (Retd) Mustafizur Rahman and Col (Retd) Saqlain Hossain, an expert on arms, ammunition and explosives.

Hamid termed the haul as a serious matter and asked the government not to show 'childish attitude' by blaming the opposition. Such attitude, he said, would help the main culprits to go scot-free.

"It would have been disastrous if the ammunition was brought for use inside the country. If it was in transit through Bangladesh to another country, that would be another serious matter because in that case the other country would not consider it a mere smuggling but rather think that Bangladesh government is involved in it," he said.

Hamid said the AL parliamentary

team had visited Bogra on July 3-4 to help the government and the administration in finding out the culprits, but the deputy commissioner and superintendent of police did not meet the team members although they waited for hours for the officials.

He said those who have been implicated in the incident are poor people who could not even afford two square meals a day. "How could they get involved in dealing with 2.5 tons of ammunition and explosives worth Tk 20 crore," he said.

Hamid said only Pintu -- the person near whose house the ammunition and explosives were recovered -- is involved with Awami League. But the others including Jabbar, Joyanal, Razzag, Abedin, Firoz and Rais are members of either BNP or Jamaat-e-Islami or the Jatiya Party (JP).

"But while the identity of Pintu was widely publicised to give the impression that the Awami League was involved in the case, identities of the rest were not properly disclosed by the government. People understand the government's design ... it will only help the real culprits to go scot-free," he added.

Presenting a list of purchases Pintu made from a local grocery shop, Hamid asked if it was believable that a person buying sugar of Tk 2.5 and coconut oil of Tk 3.5 with a maximum allowable credit of Tk 25 could be involved in such a high stake crime.

"Pintu is involved with union-level Awami League while others with BNP, Jamaat and JP. These people can't make such a big deal. I would say a big and influential quarter is involved in the case, working from behind the scene. A judicial inquiry would find them out," he said.

Hamid said while some ammunition and explosives were recovered from a bush in the backyard of Pintu's house, a large quantity was found inside the house of Jabbar, who is involved with the BNP. And Jabbar's wife told local police that her husband was involved with the politics of the ruling party, he added.

Ex-army chief

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tory producing bullets similar to those recovered in Bogra, he added.

The recovered bullets are of 7.62x39 size, he said, adding that India produces the 7.62x51 size. "Bangladesh also produces bullets like the recovered ones, but I don't believe those were smuggled out from the local factory," Mustafizur Rahman said.

"If it is suspected that the bullets were made at the Bangladesh Ordnance Factory, the government should come up with a clarification," said the former army chief.

As police now use Chinese rifles, Mustafizur Rahman said, it should also be investigated whether they can independently import their ammunition.

He said the government should find out whether the ammunition and explosives were brought for subversive acts in the country, as many extremist groups have been active since independence.

"There are anti-liberation elements. There are extremist groups in many areas. The bullets used to kill two policemen (in Rupsha, Khulna) and the bullets recovered (in Bogra) should be examined to find out whether

those are similar," he said.

Mustafizur asked how the ammunition and explosives, believed to have been loaded on a truck in Habiganj, could travel 500 kilometres and reach a Bogra point, which is connected by road, railway and waterways with the 21 troubled districts in the southern region.

He also pointed out, without committing himself to any particular position, that West Bengal's Dinajpur district is adjacent to the place from where the munitions were recovered and Nepal and Assam are within 150-200 kilometres.

He demanded a technical inquiry comprising experts from BUET, the ordnance factory, army and police.

Col (ret'd) Saqlain told the press conference that the technical experts would be able to find out where the ammunition and explosives were manufactured.

He said both the ammunition and explosives were packed in an unconventional way. "The absence of the manufacturer's name on the bullets does indicate that they were made to be used in unconventional wars," added Saqlain.

Myanmar nationals protest against Aung's Dhaka visit

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Some 70-80 Myanmar people demonstrated in front of the Jatiya Press Club yesterday against Myanmar Foreign Minister U Win Aung's three-day visit to Bangladesh.

The protesters, under the banner of 'Arakan League for Democracy', called upon the government to cut normal relations with Myanmar until democracy was restored there.

Aung was scheduled to arrive in Dhaka last night.

The agitators said they fled their homeland in the face of political persecution and took refuge in Bangladesh.

They demanded release of Myanmar opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi and chanted slogans against the military junta.

One of the organisers of the demonstration said: "A democratic government in Bangladesh should not maintain any relation with such a brutal and dictatorial regime."

He said the objective of the foreign minister's visit was to hide human rights violations in Myanmar.

As part its 'look east diplomacy', Bangladesh recently stepped up efforts to add a zest to its ties with Myanmar.

Terming the demonstration Myanmar's internal affair, Foreign Secretary Shamsheer Mobin Chowdhury declined to comment.

Blast in Iraq

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the town around 100 kilometres (62 miles) west of Baghdad.

One witness, Fares Mostafa, had earlier told AFP from the town hospital that attackers had thrown explosives at the base at around 11:00 am local times.

SC Bar body

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of consultation with the chief justice for judges' appointment.

The Bar threatened the government with launching a country-wide programme teaming up with the Bar Council to protect the judiciary from politicisation.

"Such politicisation negates the concept of independence and separation of the judiciary contrary to the constitution," it added.

It urged the government to appoint all the 15 judges who have not been confirmed so far as Supreme Court judges.

Among others, M Amir-Ul-Islam, Subrata Chowdhury, Abdul Baset Majumder, Md Ozair Farooq, Sudhansu Sekhar Halder, Shaikat Ali Khan, Mahbubey Alam, M Rahmat Ali, MP, and Abdul Matin Khasru addressed the meeting.

Yesterday's boycott greatly hampered functions of both the Appellate and High Court divisions.

More ammo

FROM PAGE 1

ity. Police-BDR joint drives are on to find more bullets and ammunition in Jograpara, Nayapara and Sardarpara in Kahlui upazila of the district.

Meanwhile, arrested Rawshan Ara of Jograpara village, in her statement to a magistrate admitted that her husband Abdul Jabbar and local Awami League leader Afkaur Rahman Pintu were involved in the bullets and explosives smuggling incident, said UNB from Bogra quoting police sources.

UNB from Habiganj adds: Two more people were arrested from Teliapara in Madhabpur upazila yesterday in connection with the massive haul of ammunition and explosives in Bogra.

Police said they arrested Shankar Pal Chowdhury, 28, son of Dharendra Pal Chowdhury, and Deepak Roy, son of Monindra Roy, during a raid at Teliapara at about 3:00pm.

The arrested were later taken on a 5-day remand for interrogation.

Criminal

FROM PAGE 1

Hospital where doctors confirmed his death.

Police recovered 12 spent shells from the spot.

Relatives received his body in the afternoon on completion of autopsy and buried him at the Azimpur Graveyard.

Eskey and his two brothers were about to go to court to attend the hearing of a murder case. The three brothers are accused in the case.

His family members have no clue to the killing. They said Eskey looked after family business -- a confectionery, a hardware shop and a computer store at Juman Mansion. Four years ago, he played in the first division football for Muslim Institute.

Locals said Eskey came in touch with top criminals of the city before he could complete primary school education. Later, he raised his own gang and unleashed a reign of terror in the area.

He had teamed up with Sujon, another criminal. But they split over sharing of tolls and one day, Sujon went to Eskey's residence and shot him in the leg in an attempted murder in 1999. A few days later, Sujon was gunned down at Moham-madpur.

Eskey is an accused in the murder of Shibli Sadig on June 6, 2000. Also he has two cases pending against him for extortion.

Eskey left behind his wife Popi Akhtar.

Request for troops to Iraq under scrutiny, Morshed tells JS

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan yesterday informed the Jatiya Sangsad that a request for sending Bangladeshi troops to Iraq is under consideration.

"Any country may request another country... But since the matter is very complex, the government will take a decision after knowing the overall situation in Iraq," he told BNP member Moazzem Hossain Alal.

The foreign minister avoided giving direct replies to queries from G M Qader of Jatiya Party and Shamsul Alam Pramanik of BNP regarding the possibility of Bangladesh's participation in the post-war reconstruction in Iraq and details about the looting at Bangladesh mission in Baghdad during the war.

He told Pramanik that some goods at the Bangladesh mission in Baghdad were looted during the war as it happened to missions of

many other countries. An officer from Bangladesh was sent to Baghdad for investigating the matter and the government is waiting for a detailed report.

In reply to a written question from Shamsur Rahman Sharif (AL), Khan said the government has not received any report of death or injury of any Bangladeshi in Iraq during the war.

In reply to Gazi Mohammad Shajahan of BNP, the foreign minister said the government had decided to send relief worth \$ 20 lakh for the Iraqis during the war.

Answering a question from Jamaat member Golam Sarwar Pawar, the foreign minister said there had been 40 Bangladeshi in Iraq on the eve of the war. But most of them had either returned home or left for neighbouring countries. Three or four Bangladeshis, who have been in Iraq for 25 to 30 years and got Iraqi citizenship, are living in that country.

Hasina

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day afternoon to condole the death of former AL lawmaker Mamtaz Uddin.

Presided over by the upazila AL president Yunus Ali, the meeting was also addressed among others by AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil MP and AL front liners Motia Chowdhury and Abu Sayeed.

She said the government now is trying to blame the Awami League for the Bogra incident and questioned, "Is it believable that a union level poor Awami League leader was involved in such a million dollar business?"

The government and its police mention the names of AL leaders, but remain silent about the Jamaat-e-Islami and BNP leaders from whose houses munitions were recovered, she said. "It has become a habit of this government to blame the AL after every incident."

Hasina alleged that the government was not only suppressing the truth about the ammunition but also obstructing the press and the electronic media from making objective reports on the matter. Hasina blamed the BNP-Jamaat government for patronising criminals and rewarding killers.

AL leader Mamtaz was murdered by the same criminals who were released from jail and cases on the recommendation of a state minister, she said.

"The government which reinstated the killers of the father of the nation to public service has no the right to stay in power", she said calling upon all to unite to oust the 'corrupt' government.

Dhaka outskirts

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officer of Kazipur upazila, about 20,000 houses in Kazipur are now under water and many people have moved to safety.

The authorities have closed down all the schools in five flood-hit upazila.

Our Barisal correspondent said floodwater has caused breaches in the Bhola town protection embankment, threatening the district headquarters.

The Water Development Board has already started building a new embankment to save the town.

Board sources said breaches have appeared on a 600-metre stretch of the old embankment at Tulatuli. People of the area have already left for other places.

SQ Chy

FROM PAGE 1

"By writing this, the newspaper has infringed the rights of the leader of the opposition. As a result, this has also violated the rights of parliament."

Responding to SQ Chowdhury's pleas, Deputy Speaker Akhtar Hamid Siddiqui forwarded the notice to the committee for scrutiny and its report.

Female workers

FROM PAGE 12

ers. Monthly salary of a worker must be above 400 Saudi riyals with free food and accommodation facilities.

Several lakh female workers, mainly from the Philippines, Sri Lanka, India and Indonesia, are working in the Middle Eastern countries.

But the demand for Bangladeshi female workers in household job has always been high because of social and religious factors. Employers of those countries prefer Muslim domestic helps.

On several occasions, ambassadors of some Middle Eastern countries in Bangladesh requested government officials to allow female workers to work in their countries.

Robbers loot 32 shops, houses

UNB, Brahmanbaria,

Armed robbers stormed into a bazaar in between Nabiganj and Bancharampur upazilas and looted cash and valuables worth over Tk 50 lakh on Friday night.

Sources said a gang of about 70, who came in boats, encircled Jibanganj Bazaar at the dead of night, tied up its night guards and looted cash and valuables from 32 shops.

In another incident, a gang of robbers attacked Champaknagar village in Sadar upazila and looted more than Tk one lakh from several houses the same night, injuring two villagers with bullets.

The injured - Etim Ali, 32, and Ezaz Miah, 42, -- were admitted to Sadar Hospital in critical condition.

Trader shot dead

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area. Police said the arms and ammunition used to kill Liton are similar to those recovered.

In another incident, robbers looted cash, gold ornaments and valuables worth Tk 1.7 lakh from a house at Adabar in Mohammadpur yesterday.

A three-member gang entered 918, Baitul Aman Housing Society residence of Habibur Rahman by cutting the grill of a ground floor room at about 3:30am.

They held the family members hostage at dagger point and took the keys of almshouses, and left the house with the booty.

Habibur Rahman filed a case with the Mohammadpur Police Station.

Police could not arrest anybody or recover the looted money and goods till filing of this report at 8:00pm last night.

ETV men

FROM PAGE 12

ETV employees with an appeal to the prime minister to issue licence to the network of Habibur Rahman by cutting the grill of a ground floor room at about 3:30am.

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Major shake-ups

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their tenure and also those appointed by the BNP government will not be given extension of service. To start with, major shake-ups will take place at the missions in India, Italy, Thailand, Spain, Germany, Nepal and Uzbekistan.