

TENGRATILA BLOWOUT

Agitation for compensation mounts again as govt mum

Siege of gas field office, rallies, processions to continue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Syhet

Agitation by affected people around Tengratila gas field in Sunamganj is mounting again as neither the government nor the Canadian company settled payment of compensation to them, a year after the second blowout in the gas well that caused extensive damage to the ecology and people's property.

They brought out processions in the area, held rallies and besieged the gas field office for four hours yesterday and two hours on the day before to press their 6-point demand.

They will hold similar demonstrations today and lay a siege to the gas field office for six hours from 6am, leaders of the Parishad said.

During yesterday's siege programme, villagers under the banner of Tengratila Dabi Aday

Sangram Parishad kept the main gate of the gas field complex locked for four hours from 10 am, keeping officials and staff inside.

Field Manager of Canadian company Niko and other staff could not come out of the compound during the siege.

At the rallies on both days, speakers said the local affected people would continue till their just demands are met.

Azimuddin, convener of the Parishad chaired the rallies on both days. The speakers included Shamsul Alam, Union Parishad members Md. Shahjahan and Hossain Ali, Hajrat Ali, Abdul Motaleb, Abdus Salam, Nasir Uddin, Abdur Razzaque, Badsha Miah and Abdus Samad.

They called upon the authorities to accept their 6-point demand or to face tougher agitation.

The demands include pay-

ment of Tk 84 crore in compensation for environmental damage, proper compensation to 611 families and inclusion of more

28 earlier dropped from the list of families affected by the blowouts, employment for locals in the gas field, establishment of a gas based 50 MW power plant near Tengratila, arrangement for supply of safe water to villages and setting up of a health complex in the area.

The affected people around Tengratila gas field did not get compensation a year after the second blowout that took place in the field on the night of June 24 last year.

The first blowout took place on January 27 last year during drilling a well. The blowout sent flames up to 50 feet, creating panic in the area.

After the first blowout, about 600 families were evacuated from

villages adjoining the gas field and asked to stay away for three months. They were paid Tk 6000 per family per month and assured of compensation for damage to their property including croplands, water bodies and gardens.

As the compensation was not settled, they started agitation.

The government is yet to settle the matter, a year after the second blowout, which triggered agitation again.

The government and the Canadian company are virtually silent on payment of compensation.

Even, the authorities are yet to settle realisation of compensation for the burnt out gas as well as the environmental damage, which has been estimated by a high level technical committee formed by the government.



Cultural activists brought out a procession in Chittagong city yesterday marking the 12th death anniversary of Shaheed Janani Jahanara Imam.

Cancel Kendua BNP confce

Party men oppose Khadija's committees

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Netrakona

Hundreds of BNP activists of two upazilas yesterday took to the streets here demanding cancellation of Kendua upazila BNP conference scheduled to be held today.

Juba Dal central committee member Rafiqul Islam Hilali led the procession. Processionists comprising the BNP activists in Atpara and Kendua upazilas paraded the main streets of the town.

Later, a mammoth meeting was held in front of Netrakona Press Club.

Speakers demanded immediate cancellation of the conference saying all the union committees were formed by BNP lawmaker Khadija Amin violating the party constitution. They sought immediate intervention of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and Local Government and Rural Development Minister Mannan Bhuiyan to resolve the crisis. They declared that they would never accept it if the conference is held as per schedule. They also blamed Khadija Amin, MP, for her inefficiency and non-democratic activities. They also said that no development work was done in Atpara and Kendua upazilas during her tenure who was elected from Netrakona-3 constituency.

Ctg city AL council today after 9 years

Party high-ups want Mohiuddin as secretary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong

The much-talked-about triennial council of Chittagong city Awami League will be held today after nine years.

It will begin at the Engineers Institute auditorium at 10 am.

Party Presidium member Sheikh Fazul Karim Selim MP is scheduled to inaugurate the conference. Presidium member Begum Motia Chowdhury will be present as chief guest.

The last conference was held on April 1, 1997 in which MA Mannan and ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury were selected president and general secretary for a third consecutive time.

MA Mannan, former labour and manpower minister, and Mohiuddin Chowdhury, mayor of Chittagong City Corporation, have been holding the two key posts for 21 years.

Party insiders said the sentiment of mid-level leaders, activists and supporters is in favour of a 'much-needed' change to pave the way for young generation to

come up for leadership, keeping in mind future of the party.

Some sources claimed that Mannan may quit the party's top post voluntarily and Mohiuddin Chowdhury would replace him, paving way for joint secretary Kazi Inamul Haq Danu to become the new general secretary.

Others however said the desired change may not take place because.

"The section wants Mannan to continue in his present position for another term," said one source.

Mannan, in last few months, held several meetings with the party rank and file in 41 wards and talked about future leadership in the party.

In those meetings, local leaders in more than 30 wards reportedly expressed their support for Mannan, sources said.

Meanwhile, some sources claimed that party high-ups were in favour of Mohiuddin Chowdhury as the next president and that he should be selected, not elected through direct vote of the councillors.

Birsreshtha Matur's memory recalled

SUMON S UDDIN, back from Narsingdi

Speakers at a discussion held at Raipura in Narsingdi recalled the bravery of Shaheed Flight Lieutenant Matur Rahman, Bir Sreshtha, during the Liberation War of Bangladesh in 1971.

Organised by Hasnabad Public Library (HPL) marking repatriation of the remains of the national hero from Pakistan, the discussion was presided by Md Morad.

Discussions lauded the government initiative in bringing back the hero's remains in Bangladesh. They urged the people to help build a better Bangladesh.

Freedom fighters and members of the civil society participated in the discussion held on Sunday.

KUSHTIA AUG 17 BLASTS Khulna STT defers charge framing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Charge framing against 11 JMB men including its three top leaders in two bomb attack cases in Kushtia was adjourned yesterday by Judge Abdus Samad of Khulna Special Trial Tribunal (STT).

Only three out of 11 chargesheeted accused were produced before the court. They are Habibur Rahman, Shamsul Alam and Akbar Ali.

Four accused are absconding. They are Mashur Rahman, Nizamul Haq, Siddiqur Rahman and Lutfur Rahman.

Four others are in different jails. They are JMB Chief Shaikh Abdur Rahman, second-in-command Siddiqul Islam alias Bangla Bhai, JMB 'operations commander' Ataur Rahman Sani and Rakib Hasan.

The two cases were recorded with Kushtia Sadar thana and Islami University thana in connection with bomb blasts on August 17 last year.

The cases were sent to Khulna STT on June 8.

Judge Abdus Samad directed police to produce all the accused except absconding ones today for charge framing.

7 Bangladeshis returned by BSF

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) yesterday handed over the seven Bangladeshis nationals including two women to BDR after a flag meeting held at Thotapara border point on Sunday night.

BSF had abducted them from Challishpara border point in Daulatpur of Kushtia Sunday morning.

According to sources in 9 Rifles battalion, a BSF team from Charbhadra camp of Murshibabad district entered into Bangladesh territory through border pillar no-154 and kidnapped the Bangladeshis at gunpoint when they were working at a peanut field at about 8:00am.

The abducted persons are Anwar Hossain, 25, Mahiuddin, 34, Tengur, 40, Liton, 22, Rabea, 36, Hlima Khatun, 30 and Rafiqul Islam.

All are residents of Ramkrishnapur village in the upazila.

BDR had earlier sent a letter to BSF protesting the incident and asked for handover of the Bangladeshis.



The Prothom Alo Anti-drug Movement brought out a procession in Cox's Bazar yesterday marking the International Day Against Drug Abuse.

Unite to eradicate man made problem

Anti-drug campaign in districts marking International Day Against Drug Abuse

STAR NATIONAL DESK

The International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking was observed in districts yesterday through various programmes to create awareness about the vice.

The programmes, joined by officials, professionals, elite in district towns and cross-sections of people, included colourful rallies, discussion meetings, cultural functions and street corner meetings.

Drug abuse is a man made problem, which can be eradicated if concerted efforts are made jointly by the government and the people, speakers said at a discussion meeting in Satkhira, our correspondent reported.

Drug peddlers continue their illegal trade under the nose of a section of law enforcers and officials, they said at the meeting held at Satkhira Stadium.

They called for creating awareness at all levels about the dangerous affects of drug use, which is increasing in Bangladesh, particularly among youths.

The discussion was organised by Nabodit Mahila Sangha, an anti-drug organisation floated recently by women to fight drug abuse and drug trade. Its president Mamotaz Khan was in the chair.

Satkhira Deputy commissioner Md. Ilias was the chief guest while Police Superintendent Fazur Rahman, Sadar thana Officer-in-charge Md. Shahjahan and district sports association general secretary Shahidul Islam were special guests.

It was addressed by, among others, municipality commission-

ers Shafiqudowla Sagar and Anis Khan Chowdhury Bakul, Afroza Banu Mira, Anwar Shahadat, Shahnaz Parvin, Farida Akhtar Banu and Nasrin Khan Lipi.

Describing drug abuse and drug trade a regional problem, the DC said a group of women in Polashpole in Satkhira town recently set an example by compelling a drug peddler to leave the area. This should inspire others and be an eye-opener for law enforcers and officials, they added.

The women took to streets and compel a drug peddler Adar Ali to leave the area, the DC said and called upon males to build up a movement against drug peddlers and to create awareness among people about bad effects of drug use.

Other speakers alleged that drug peddlers are doing their business with the help of a section of law enforcers.

At the meeting, the SP declared amid cheers that stern action would be taken if any member of law enforcing agencies is found helping or sheltering drug peddlers.

He urged the people to identify and nab drug peddlers and 'corrupt' policemen.

The women speakers said they formed the organisation to fight drug peddlers and free the society from drug use.

They vowed to continue the fight against drug peddling and use.

Our B'baria Correspondent reports: The district administration, in cooperation with anti-drug organisations, clubs, educational institu-

tions and socio-cultural bodies, organised a two-day programme to fight drug use in society.

The programmes included a motorcycle rally in the town, street corner rallies, a colourful procession, discussion meetings and cultural functions.

The colourful procession brought out in the town on Sunday was led by the Deputy Commissioner. Later in the day, youths and policemen jointly brought out a motorcycle rally in the town, which drew attention of all.

A discussion meeting to create awareness about drug use was held at the municipal community centre with Additional District Magistrate (ADM) Banamali Bhaumik in the chair. Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Saidur Rahman was the chief guest. It was addressed by, intellectuals, journalists, cultural activists and leaders of anti-drug organisations.

Our Khagrachhari Correspondent reports: Drug use is increasing among adolescents, particularly from poor families living in slums who are also use as carriers, speakers said at a discussion meeting here yesterday.

Teenagers living in bus and railway stations and launch terminals are most vulnerable as they are used by drug traders, they said.

Drug trading is conducted from certain pockets in urban areas, which are known to law enforcers, they said. They can easily root out the dens.

The speakers also urged the authorities concerned to include topics on effects of drugs in text books.

The meeting chaired by Additional Deputy Commissioner Nurul Amin was organised jointly by the district administration and Drug Control Department. The speakers included Deputy Commissioner Humam Kabir, Police Superintendent Nawsher Ali.

Earlier, a colourful procession was brought out in the town. Teachers, students, officials and cross-sections of people joined the rally, led by ADC Nurul Amin.

Our Staff Correspondent reports from Khulna:

Over 2000 students at a discussion meeting here yesterday said 'no' to drugs and pledged to fight drug peddling.

The meeting for high school students was held at Khulna Divisional Museum auditorium marking the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking.

It was organised jointly by Change Makers, a local human rights and civic education organisation and the UN Information Center (UNIC), Dhaka.

Former lawmaker Enayet Ali was the chief guest while UNIC officials Kazi Ali Reza and Momtaj begum and Change Makers' president Tanbirul Islam Siddiqui spoke at the meeting.

Our Cox's Bazar Correspondent reports: The Protom Alo Bondoshova organised a colourful rally in the tourist town with a slogan: No to Drugs.

The rally drew hundreds of people including teachers, students and NGO officials who raised slogans against drug use and peddling.

Cries for road repair ignored for long Burimari-Paglapir road virtually unuseable

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Trucks carrying exported goods were stranded along the vulnerable Burimari-Paglapir road connecting Burimari Land Port following heavy shower for two hours yesterday.

Potholes and ditches were developed at many points of the 88-kilometre road linking the Dhaka-Dinajpur highway. Some loaded trucks narrowly escaped accidents during rain.

The people of Jaldhaka under the banner of 'Jaldhaka Shartho Sangrakhon Committee', a citizens' committee, are agitating for the last one and a half months for immediate repair of the road. As part of their agitation programme, they held meetings and brought out processions, staged token hunger strike, created road barricade and laid siege to the offices of Nilphamari Deputy Commissioner's (DC) and Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) chief engineer at Rangpur. They called hartal on June 12, but the programme was withdrawn later considering the prevailing political situation.

Earlier, committee convener Shamsuzzaman Shamou who is also convener of Greater Rangpur Importers and Exporters Association, threatened indefinite hartal demanding repair of the vital road.

Everyday, at least 250 trucks loaded with 25 tons of goods ply

along the road. Although Burimari port is situated at Patgram in Lalmonirhat, the road which leads to port runs through six upazilas in three districts. But a major part of it runs through Jaldhaka which is in bad shape.

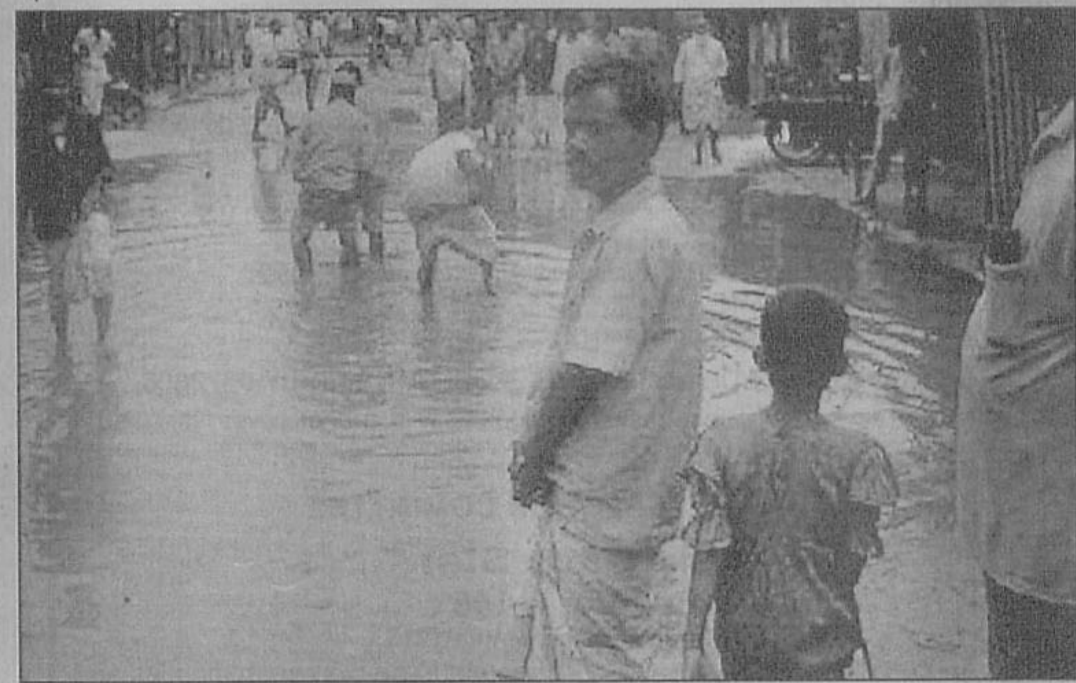
The Roads and Highways Department (RHD) controls 30-kilometre portion of the road. The

rest 58-kilometre portion was built by BWDB in mid-80s. Now both the offices expressed inability to repair the road due to lack of fund.

While contacted, local Jamaat lawmaker Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury said the entire portion of the road was handed over to the RHD in December. Later, a 38-crore proposal was submitted to the

Planning Commission for approval but to no effect, he said.

However, the lawmaker expressed optimism saying he along with three lawmakers in the area would meet the finance minister for approval of the proposal by both the Planning Commission and ECNEC.



Part of the Burimari-Paglapir at Jaldhaka market after a light shower.