## Rising from the ashes

These correspondents, who visited the farm area on November 1, found many Santals as well as Bangalees busy harvesting crops from Kuamara Beel in the area they were evicted from back in 2016.

This year, Olivia cultivated bitter gourd on 30 decimals of land, pumpkin on 40 decimals of land, and Ropa Aman paddy on 100 decimals in the Sahebganj-Bagda farm area.

Olivia has taken a Tk 20,000 loan from a local cooperative to plant the paddy crop and vegetables.

Olivia's family has harvested the bitter gourd and sold it twice for Tk 10,000, and their pumpkin field looks set to give a good harvest -- she is hopeful of selling the pumpkins for over Tk 13,000. Their one acre of Aman paddy has already ripened and is ready to be harvested.

"It's like a dream comes true. These past months, our family has managed with the help of relief goods from others," Olivia told The Daily Star.

"Now, we have plenty of crops in the field and are earning extra money after taking care of our own needs."

She is hoping to get 50 maunds of rice from her paddy crop which will suffice for the family's needs for a year, and a further 30 maunds which she can sell for cash.

#### A NEW LIFE

Santal women like her are growing their own food and cultivating paddy, meaning they no longer have to venture out of their area to earn a living, Olivia said.

"If we can continue this cultivation, we can be self-reliant and will not suffer from hunger."

However, the fear of being evicted a second time remains for the 1,300 Santal families of the area who have set up shacks and cultivated crops on small parcels of land once again, with the attacks of four years ago fresh in their memories

husband had also pumpkins on 15 decimals of land near their village of Madarpur.

"We had harvested some pumpkins on November 5 that year, but the next day local goons looted all the pumpkins from our field during that eviction," she recalled.

Sabina Hasda, 38, and her daughter Sima Mormu, 14, of Madarpur village were seen harvesting Aman paddy on their one acre of land

Sabina said they have already harvested Aman on 33 decimals of land and got 11 maunds of paddy. They are set to get 37 more maunds of paddy -- which, she said, will provide the family with enough food for a year for their family of six.

"After the eviction, we were in dire straits due to the lack of steady income and hunger," she said.

Budrai Soren, 65, of Joypurpara village, said he cultivated Aman paddy on five bighas of land and got 60

At the current price of Tk 950 per maund of Aman paddy, he is set to get a good price for the 30 maunds he will sell after putting the rest aside for his family's needs over the next six

"If we get our forefather's lands back, we will be free from forced labour and won't need to go to other's homes to seek work," said Kartik Soren, 30, another Joypurpara farmer.

At least 1,200 Santals and Bangalee families have cultivated crops on around 800 acres of land in the farm area this winter -- Aman paddy on around 680 acres and winter vegetables in the remaining 120 acres, according to a local leader.

"We already harvested two percent of the Aman paddy and everyone is hopeful of getting a good harvest, said Philimon Baske, president of the Sahebganj-Bagda Farm Bhumi Uddhar Sangram Committee.

Khaledur Rahman, Gobindaganj Back in 2016, Olivia and her upazila agriculture officer, estimated a

cultivated harvest of 1,872 tonnes of Ropa Aman paddy from the land cultivated by these families.

The farm area is elevated, and thus usually sees drought during the Ropa Aman season, but the continuous rains this year meant the farmers there are getting good harvests now, Khaledur added.

Contacted, UNO of Gobindaganj upazila Ramkrishna Barman said, This area actually belongs to the Rangpur Sugar Mill area legally. We don't know whether they cultivated crops in the area."

The UNO was reluctant to talk about the issue, still a matter of contention between local authorities and the Santal community, and a case over the attack ongoing.

Philimon Baske told The Daily Star they urged the government to return the Santal families' ancestral land so that they can earn a livelihood with dignity among their own people and be able to afford to educate their

#### 'CONTENTIOUS LAND'

In 1962, the then government had acquired 1842.30 acres of land from these families' forefathers to cultivate sugarcane for the Rangpur Sugar Mill

under certain conditions over its use. When the mill authorities later violated these conditions, the Santals and Bangalees who had traditionally farmed these lands, returned in mid-

However, police, administration, and mill authorities launched an eviction drive on November 6, 2016 with the police opening fire on the Santals, leaving three dead and several others seriously

Houses of Santal families were oted and burnt in the aftermath. Every year, protests are carried

out on the day, calling for justice, rehabilitation and compensation for

# Acquitted, yet can't walk free

imprisonment to 160 others for their roles and involvement in the carnage. The court handed down rigorous

imprisonment to 256 people, mostly BDR soldiers. It acquitted 278 others but the government later appealed against the acquittal of 69.

The High Court started hearing the death reference and appeals from the convicts in January 2015 and pronounced the verdict on November

The HC confirmed death penalty of 139 and upheld life sentences of 185 and three to 10 years' imprisonment

of 256. It acquitted 200 accused and Rashid

Three years went by, but neither the defence nor the state could file appeals with the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court challenging the HC verdict as they were yet to get the certified copy of the judgment from the office concerned of the court.

As a result, 456 accused -- including 200 acquitted -- remain stuck in jail.

Their families, in the meantime, have been struggling to make ends meet amid financial difficulties as many of them used to be the lone bread earners.

"Our family was almost ruined after my father's arrest. Me, my younger brother and our mother started providing private tuition, but the earnings are hardly enough to run our family. Even, we now cannot pay the fees of the lawyers for moving the cases, said Shakil, who recently completed master's and is seeking a job.

#### REQUIRED YEARS TO COMPLETE TRIAL'

Aminul Islam, a defence lawver for some 400 accused, said the trial proceedings of the explosive case are now moving very slowly and it is still uncertain whether the 456 accused

would be released anytime soon, although no explosive substances were recovered from them.

There are 1,260 witnesses in the case filed under the act, but the court has so far recorded statements from around 150 witnesses, he told The Daily Star.

"At least 10 more years will be required for recording statements from all the witnesses and finishing the trial proceedings," said Aminul.

The defence counsel said the financial conditions of most of the families are bad and they cannot afford to pay the fees to the lawyers. Now only two lawyers including him are appearing for them in court without any fees.

Aminul added 57 out of 200 accused who got acquittal from the HC in the BDR killing case moved a petition before the trial court first on September 7 and then on October 8, seeking bail in the case filed under the explosives act.

bail as a bail petition of a particular accused is pending with the HC.

The lower court of Judge Imrul Kayes refused to give the certified copies of the orders -- for this they cannot move bail petitions before the HC, he added.

Public Prosecutor Mosharraf Kajol said the trial Hossain proceedings of the explosive case was delayed for around six months due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

"The lower court concerned is now holding the trial proceedings of the case for two days a month," he told The Daily Star.

He hoped that the proceedings will be finished by this year. LENGTHY PROCEDURE

The HC on January 8 released the 29,059-page full text of its verdict in

the carnage case.

Nine months have gone by, but neither the defence nor the state are yet to get the certified copy of the judgment from the office concerned of the court. As a result, they could not file appeals.

An official requesting anonymity said the appeal section of the HC is now comparing the composed copy with the original one in order to prepare the certified copy.

He, however, could not specifically say when the certified copies will be

Defence counsel Aminul Islam said the convicted accused will collectively move appeals before the Appellate Division challenging the HC verdict on them. Therefore, they will need at least three certified copies of the HC verdict for filing the appeals.

Contacted, Attorney General AM Amin Uddin told this newspaper that the government will appeal to the Appellate Division against parts of the But the court refused to grant them HC verdict that acquitted the accused, and seek due punishment for them. WHAT COULD BE DONE?

Criminal law expert Khurshid Alam Khan said the defence lawyers could have sought advance short order for the accused who got acquittal from the HC when the verdict was pronounced in 2017.

If they had got an advance short order from the HC, they might have been released from jail, he said.

Khurshid, also the editor of Days Law Reports (DLR), added that the defence lawyers now can move petition before the HC seeking necessary directives on the lower court concerned for providing them with relevant documents so that they can move bail petitions before the HC for the accused who have been cleared of the original BDR carnage case.

#### Entire England put under lockdown December 2 and mandate a return to areas and people largely confined to

shutdown as daily death tolls hit their worst levels since May and with warnings that hospitals could soon be overwhelmed.

It prompted crowds across the nation to queue outside soon-to-close shops, book a last-minute haircut or head to the pub for a final pint, as business owners fretted over the impact of the lockdown on their bottom line.

"We will be paying this off for years," said Joe Curran, landlord of The Queen's Head pub in central London. "This lockdown will cost us thousands

on top of the thousands so far." The new restrictions run until working from home where possible, along with the closure of all nonessential shops and services. Schools will stay open.

Britain is among the world's hardest-hit countries with just over a million virus cases and nearly 48,000 deaths.

England's lockdown follows similar measures in the other nations of the United Kingdom -- Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland -- as well as France and Germany.

Parts of Italy will join that list from Friday, with shops selling nonessential goods to be shut in hard-hit

their homes except for work, health and emergency reasons.

Authorities have also announced a nationwide curfew between 10:00 pm and 5:00 am.

"We don't have alternatives," Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte said during a televised press conference on Wednesday night.

Russian President Vladimir Putin recently said he had no plans for a lockdown but that resolve may be tested after the country set two new records Wednesday -- for daily infections, at nearly 20,000, and daily death toll, at nearly 400.

# Police yet to track down key suspect

from Burimari village in the same upazila. The two are Abu Naeem and Abdul Gani.

With them, a total of 23 people, including 11 teenagers, have so far been arrested over the murder.

Patgram OC Sumon Kumar Mohanta said they were looking for Abul Hossain. He said they were probing how the teenagers got involved in the murder.

Meanwhile, a Lalmonirhat court yesterday placed four other arrestees on three-day remand each after the Detective Brach of police produced them before it seeking five-day

remand for each.

Anwar Hossain, Rabiul Islam, and Mehedi Hasan.

Jewel, 50, from Shalban Mistripara area of Rangpur city, was beaten up and burnt to death by a mob in Burimari village on October 29 over the rumour.

Abul Hossain, who allegedly first spread the rumour, owns a decorator store at Burimari Bazar. He was active in Awami League politics 10 years ago. Later, he became involved in the politics of Jamaat-e-Islami, said villagers.

The 44-year-old went into hiding after the murder incident. His cellphone is switched off now.

Police said probes by the National Among the four are Jobed Ali, Human Rights Commission, the

khadem of Burimari Jame Mosque, Lalmonirhat district administration, intelligence agencies and investigating officers found that Abul spread the rumour.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Abul's wife Jharna Begum yesterday said her husband parted ways with the AL about 10 years ago. "I don't know where my husband is

now. He has many relatives in India. We could not contact him since the murder incident. Claiming her husband to be a

pious man, Jharna said she was not sure whether her husband was guilty of committing the murder. Of the 23 people arrested so far,

nine are now on remand and the rest behind bars.

### Afghan violence soars despite peace talks: watchdog

Violent attacks in Afghanistan surged by 50 percent over recent months even as the Kabul government and the Taliban launched unprecedented peace talks in September, a US watchdog warned yesterday.

Despite brief lulls during two temporary ceasefires over the summer, fighting has raged across the country as the Taliban launched devastating attacks on provincial capitals and security installations, with fears the violence may jeopardise negotiations.

Attacks against Afghan forces and civilians were 50 percent higher in the three months to the end of September when compared to the previous quarter, the US Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) said.

### 7 Ctg cops

FROM PAGE 12

Dampara divisional police lines hospital after collecting samples from the policemen," he added.

CMP sources said information on such police personnel are being collected through their own intelligence and based on their suspicious behaviours. Suspects are later asked to give their samples at the hospital.

The hospital authorities collect urine and saliva from them and store these for dope tests, said the sources.

The test reports were later sent to the assistant commissioner (AC) (force) office of CMP from where the reports, if positive, were forwarded to high officials for the next course of

Contacted, Amena additional commissioner (admin and finance) of CMP, told this paper that seven policemen of CMP have so far tested positive.

"Their termination process is underway," she said, adding that the dope tests would continue.

## Bangabandhu

and further strengthened." SAMAD TALKS WITH WINZER

Official talks between the German Republic and the Democratic People's Republic of Bangladesh open today in Berlin. They cover current international problems and questions pertaining to the further development of bilateral relations in all spheres. The GDR delegation is headed by Foreign Minister Otto Winzer while Foreign Minister Abdus Samad leads the delegation of Bangladesh.

BANGLĂDESH ADMITTED COLOMBO PLAN Bangladesh today is unanimously

admitted to the Colombo Plan by

the Consultative Committee of the Organisation, which is currently meeting in New Delhi. South Vietnam, which had been objecting Bangladesh's membership since the preparatory stages of the 22nd Colombo Plan Consultative Committee meeting, raised its voice of dissent at today's ministerial level meeting also but finally withdrew its objection after 12 countries supported Bangladesh.

SOURCES: November 7, 1972 issues of Bangladesh Observer, Dainik Bangla and Dainik Ittefaq.

# UP member, mosque imam

employment in Saudi Arabia and send her to the Gulf country. After the offer, the woman prepared her passport.

With passport in hand, the woman went to Khanjanpur in Joypurhat municipality area on Wednesday afternoon to meet Kuddus, who took her to a nearby house and raped her.

Kuddus fled when the victim cried out for help, and locals took her to a hospital. Rab members handed Kuddus over

to the Joypurhat Sadar Police Station after the mother of the victim filed a case accusing him. In Rangpur, police arrested Atiqul

Islam, 30, an Imam of a mosque at Jhakuapara village in Taraganj upazila, for raping a 10-year-old hearing-

impaired girl on Wednesday. A district court sent him to jail yesterday.

He is a resident of the upazila's Jummapara village.

Ismail Hossain, officer-in-charge of Taraganj Police Station, said police arrested the Imam on Wednesday night from his home after the victim's father filed a case in this regard.

Police, quoting family members of the victim, said the girl went to the Imam for lessons on Wednesday morning. However, the Imam raped her in a nearby room, they said.

After her parents learnt of the incident, the father filed a case on

Wednesday evening.

Police sent the victim to hospital for medical tests.

## 4 Bangladeshis killed

were undergoing treatment, he said, adding that several others received primary treatment.

Ohidul said the accident occurred around 7:30am local time near Port Louis when the bus carrying the Bangladeshis, who were picked up from their dormitories, was heading towards their workplaces.

The driver, a Mauritian also injured in the incident, lost control over the steering and hit a roadside bus bay, he told this newspaper over the phone.

The bodies were kept in a mortuary under the responsibility of a local

funeral service, he said, adding that the high commission was trying to send the bodies home on the next available cargo flight and that regular cargo flights from Mauritius remained

suspended at present. Ohidul said local police was investigating the incident.

According to the expatriates' welfare ministry, the victims worked as construction workers under a company in Mauritius.

In a condolence Expatriates' Welfare Minister Imran Ahmad expressed deep sorrow at the

# 'Can't accept useless people'

"I cannot accept useless people in our country," Than Htay told AFP of the stateless Rohingya.

The USDP is the main opposition group standing against Suu Kyi's ruling National League for Democracy (NLD) party in this week's polls, Myanmar's second after emerging from outright military rule in 2011. Than Htay told a campaign rally

he was free of "Muslim or Chinese" blood, while his deputy slurred an NLD Muslim candidate, according to local news site Myanmar Now. USDP supporters even created a

parody of an NLD anthem, claiming

Suu Kyi's party had welcomed "Bengali Muslims as if they were gods". Stripped of citizenship and rights over decades, the Rohingya are widely referred to in Myanmar by the pejorative term "Bengali", implying

they are illegal immigrants. The uncompromising campaign rhetoric shows that anti-Muslim rhetoric in mainly Buddhist Myanmar remains "fair game", Yangon-based analyst Khin Zaw Win told AFP.

"There is no danger for political parties to speak out against either the Rohingya or Muslims in general," he

Just four percent of Myanmar's 55-million population are Muslim. political representation and are often discriminated against in schools of when applying for ID cards or jobs.

The brutal ejection of the Rohingya in 2017 was seen very differently inside the country, where the government maintains the military was simply rooting out Rohingya insurgents and

did not force the community to flee. "They left happily," Than Htay told

AFP in an interview late August at the USDP's opulent headquarters in the

capital, Naypyidaw. "If they'd been running from the military, they wouldn't have prepared their bags as if going on a picnic. Suu Kyi's NLD party -- born out of

the pro-democracy movement under

the former junta -- is widely expected to be returned to office in Sunday's polls. The nation only emerged from outright military rule a decade ago and the armed forces still wield enormous

power, retaining control of a quarter

of parliamentary seats and three key

ministries. Stacked with former army officers, the USDP is now trying to downplay its links to the military in a country still

deeply suspicious of the institution. Than Htay, who attained the rank of Major General before retiring, insisted: "I'm a civilian now," although conceded army chief Min Aung Hlaing

was an old childhood friend. The USDP ruled Myanmar after a hugely flawed election in 2010, boycotted by the NLD and other parties. In 2015, the party won 28 percent of the popular vote, although the country's electoral system meant this translated as only eight percent of

Than Htav underlined to AFP what They have no mainstream he saw as the NLD government's economic failures during its five-year term -- a drop in GDP, more debt and an increase in living costs.

But the USDP has "failed to rebrand itself", concluded watchdog International Crisis Group.

Analyst Khin Zaw Win warned a "tacit" alliance between the military and NLD could even make the USDP

redundant.



# TENDER NOTICE

NOTICE INVITING TENDER FOR SUPPLY, INSTALLATION OF INTERIOR AND FITOUT WORK FOR 3RD & 4TH FLOOR OF BGMEA COMPLEX AT HOUSE # 7/7A, BLOCK-H1, SECTOR -17, AVENUE-06, UTTARA, DHAKA.

Installation of interior and fitout work for 3rd & 4th floor of BGMEA Complex at House no-7/7A, Sector-17, Block-H1, Avenue-06, Uttara, Dhaka.

Sealed tenders are hereby invited from reputed suppliers (Local Agents/Sole distributor) for supply,

The Tenderers must have following qualification criteria for eligibility to purchase the Tender Docu-

- ments:a) The Tenderer must have minimum 5 (five) years of overall experience in the same field. b) The Tenderer shall produce the proven documents of executed works during last 3 (three) years out of which at least one certificate of successfully completion shall be of
  - Tk.2,00,00,000/-(Taka Two crore) in a single work order at the time of schedule purchase. c) The Tenderer must have up to date Trade License, Income Tax clearance certificate, VAT Regis-
- d) The Tenderer shall have the legal capacity to enter into the contract. 2. The Tenderers must visit the site before submission of tender with their own expense. 3. The intending Tenderer shall submit their offer in sealed envelope as per instructions of the tender documents. The prescribed tender schedule with Bill of Quantities (BOQ) shall be available in Accounts Section of BGMEA at Tk.5,000/= (Taka Five thousand) only in cash (non-refund-

tration certificate as per prevailing Govt. rules and regulations.

able) during office hours from 07.11.2020 to 16.11.2020.

shall be treated as non-responsive tender.

Tenders shall be received on 24.11.2020 up to 12:00 noon in the tender box kept in the reception area of BGMEA Complex (3rd floor), House# 7/7A, Block-H-1, Sector-17, Uttara, Dhaka-1230 and shall be opened on the same day at BGMEA PR office, Gulshan (Rangs FC square, Level-6, Plot# 6/A, Road # 32, Gulshan avenue, Dhaka-1212) at 4:30 p.m. in presence of tenderers, if any. The Tenderer must submit 1% earnest money of the total tendered amount in favor of "BGMEA"

BGMEA Authority reserves the right to accept or reject any or all of the tenders without assigning any reason (s) whatsoever.

in the form of Pay Order from any schedule commercial Bank. Without earnest money the offer

Secretary, BGMEA