

Normalcy on Rajshahi borders as BSF takes back extra forces

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

The situation at different borders in Rajshahi is swinging back to normal as the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) started withdrawing additional forces they deployed after sealing off the borders last week.

"The cross-border transshipment has resumed as the BSF yesterday withdrew the Section 144 they imposed in the Indian territory along the 200-kilometre areas along the border with Bangladesh," said a BDR source.

Sources in the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) said the BSF also withdrew all the new camps in their territory set up to keep vigil on the borders.

The battalion commander level flag meeting between the BSF and BDR is likely today at Haripur area in India near the No. 185 pillar of Bangladesh border.

P M Tumoy, captain commandant of the 26 battalion BSF will represent India when lieutenant colonel Quamrul Hasan of 10 battalion BDR is expected to head the Bangladesh team in the meeting.

Four killed in Mymensingh road accident

UNB, Mymensingh

Four vegetable traders were killed and 10 others wounded, seven of them seriously, in a road accident on Dhaka-Mymensingh highway Wednesday night.

The deceased were identified as Bahauddin, 25, Abdus Sobhan, 45, Chanu Mia, 35, and Abdul Gafur, 30. They died on the spot.

The accident occurred when a Dhaka-bound vegetable-laden truck from Mymensingh overturned at Habibarri in Bhaluka upazila at about 11pm, police said.

The seriously injured people were admitted to the Mymensingh Medical College Hospital.

A case was filed in this connection.

Rajuk crosses limit

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the influential Adel family's land was expropriated.

Over the last 10 years, the family has built at least four tall buildings in gross violation of construction rules. Several others are now being built.

Rajuk approval of such tall buildings has surprised town planners, architects, environmentalists, local people and also the WASA, DESA and T&T officials. It is not possible to provide telephone service, electricity and sewerage facilities in these buildings, the officials said. Building height in an area is decided on the basis of availability of civic amenities and findings on environmental impact. It does not depend on whether the plots are freehold or leasehold ones.

Adel Properties Limited has started construction of the 15-storey building primarily for residential purpose and a shopping centre is also planned on the first and second floors.

In January last year, the Ministry of Public Works and Housing decided not to allow any more high-rise buildings in areas where a height restriction as regards more than six-storey buildings is in force.

And in May last year, in a public notice published in different newspapers Rajuk said more than six-storey buildings in Dhanmondi, Gulshan, Banani, Baridhara, Uttara and Khilgaon residential areas is illegal.

High-rise residential buildings have already been constructed in

Eco-awareness

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addressed by Vice-chancellor (VC) of BRAC University Professor Jamilur Reza Chowdhury, the VC of DU Professor SMA Faiz, the VC of BUET Professor Mohammad Ali Murtaza, Professor Nazrul Islam of Emory University (USA).

Addressing the delegates, the president said, Bangladesh is one of the most disaster prone countries because of its geographical location.

"Proper steps to protect the environment from further degradation is to be taken immediately. It is regrettable that over the few decades degradation has occurred in massive scale," said the president.

In the Dhaka city, particularly, pollution has reached alarming levels," the president added.

While salinity is reducing the fertility of lands alarmingly in the southern parts of the country, the country's forests are gradually disappearing and the wetlands in and around the city are also under serious threat, he said.

The president drew the attention of experts and policy makers to find ways to address the arsenic problem.

He said the government has already taken various initiatives. These include ban on polythene shopping bags, ban on two stroke three wheelers from city roads, the

Donation money for admission KU students protest alleged practice by authorities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Students of the Khulna University (KU) yesterday staged a demonstration on campus protesting the alleged practice of realising donation money for admission by authorities, sources said.

The students chanted slogans against the KU vice-chancellor (VC) in front of the Administration Building and later handed a memo to the VC threatening a tough movement unless the alleged practice is discontinued.

Sources said some students alleged that Tk one lakh has been demanded from each of the first three students in the waiting list for admission in any of the 16 disciplines of the university. The donation has been made a precondition for admission for those who are in the waiting list.

Vice-chancellor Prof. Dr. Abdul Kadir Bhuiyan yesterday held a closed-door meeting with all department heads to discuss the matter at length and gave them three days to find ways to resolve the dispute.

A spokesman for the VC said a vested interest group was conspiring to create anarchy to vitiate the academic atmosphere of the university.

Sylhet Jubo League leader held, remanded

UNB, Sylhet

Police arrested a leader of Awami League's youth wing Jubo League from his residence in Tilagarh area of Kotwali thana Wednesday.

Police raided the house of Azadur Rahman Azad, joint convenor of district unit of Jubo league, and arrested him.

Azad was produced before a court yesterday which granted two-day remand for him. Police said Azad is an accused in a case.

PDB trouble

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the PDB cautioned.

Already, TPE has been challenged by the 'manufacturers' of the equipment. While TPE claimed that Russian builders - LMZ and TKZ - built the power plant equipment, executives of the companies, who earlier visited the PDB, clearly said they did not supply any machinery to TPE for the project.

To make such a contract effective, the contractor needs to pay ten per cent of the total project cost in 45 days of signing; the finance ministry needs to issue a letter of guarantee to the contractor so that the contractor submits its bank guarantee to the PDB.

The PDB signed the US\$17.7 million contract bypassing the Economic Relations Division (ERD) for renovation of the 30-year-old Ghorashal power units 1 and 2 under supplier's credit scheme.

Following signing of the contract, the ERD objected to it, which resulted in an inter-ministerial investigation. Also, the contract remained suspended for some time.

Later, corruption charges were levelled against the project during the caretaker government rule.

But the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) revived the project after coming to power.

China trip

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had represented Bangladesh in the meeting, said.

In January, China became a signatory to the agreement for preferential trade arrangement, signed in 1975 between Bangladesh, India, Laos, South Korea and Sri Lanka.

China should not have any problem providing the facilities as Bangladesh and Laos are the only least developed countries under the agreement's purview, the official said.

Beijing has already hinted that it will not hesitate to allow similar facilities to Laos, the other LDC signatory to the agreement.

According to sources, Bangladesh also sent the list to the signatories to the Bangkok Agreement in August, as there was a scheduled meeting in September.

The meeting was eventually deferred to next February.

Bangladesh would also provide some duty reduction to the signatory-countries.

"But it would not be on a reciprocal basis. As an LDC, Bangladesh is supposed to get some advantage over the developing nations," the commerce ministry source said.

The trade between Bangladesh and China is heavily in the latter's favour.

In 2000-01, Bangladesh exported goods worth \$19 million to China while importing goods worth \$642 million.

Machinery and textile items dominate Bangladesh import from China while the country exports raw jute, jute goods, leather goods, frozen food and readymade garments.



Prime Minister Khaleda Zia talks to Chinese Ambassador to Bangladesh Hu Qianwen at her office in the city yesterday. Khaleda is scheduled to leave for Beijing on December 23 on five-day tour.

Blix sees nothing new

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to acquire them.

But it remains unclear whether Washington will declare Iraq in "material breach" of the resolution - language that could ultimately lead to war.

Britain yesterday said Iraqi leader President Saddam Hussein was not in material breach "so far," but that his arms declaration had big gaps.

"It looks as though they have not put in the complete full and accurate disclosure that they are required to," Foreign Secretary Jack Straw said.

But Straw said British troops would not be going to war "tomorrow" and Britain's "absolute clear preference" was for any military action to carry a second UN resolution.

US officials also insisted on Wednesday that any resolution would not be an immediate case for war.

"This has never been a case of planes revving their engines and the bombing starts tomorrow. That's not what this is about. This is about Iraq respecting the resolution, about Iraq disarming," said an official who requested anonymity.

Syria yesterday said it would boycott Security Council talks on the

Iraqi declaration in protest at receiving an excised copy of the text.

Syria, the only Arab member of the 15-member Council, said it wanted the complete version given to the five permanent Council members, who include the United States and Britain. It has returned its censored 3,500-page copy.

The UN resolution adopted last month gave Baghdad one last chance to disarm or face "serious consequences."

It required Iraq to declare all its nuclear, chemical, biological and ballistic weapons programs and related materials.

Baghdad has repeatedly denies it has any banned weapons.

The inspectors, now in the fourth week of their mission, examined at least four sites in and around Baghdad yesterday.

These included al-Hareth company north of Baghdad, owned by the Military Industrialisation Commission, Iraqi officials said.

Another team swooped on Tareq Public Company, a pesticide plant west of Baghdad, said to be linked with Iraq's past poison gas program.

Details were not immediately available on the other two sites.

After Blix's presentation, Secretary of State Colin Powell plans to deliver the administration's reaction in Washington.

But even if Washington does declare Iraq in "material breach" of the resolution, its allies would consider such a pronouncement meaningless at this time.

The resolution says a "material breach" requires other serious violations, such as failure to comply with weapons inspections, in addition to any lies or gaps in the declaration.

US and British officials say Iraq has not accounted for chemical and biological agents the previous weapons inspectors asked about when they left in 1998.

These include 550 mustard-gas shells, 150 aerial bombs that could be filled with chemical or biological agents, 200 tons of complex growth media that could be used to nourish biological weapons and 200 tons of chemicals for the nerve agent VX.

Envoy in Kolkata

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reports in newspapers of Bangladesh. Also, the present government is not ready to take us as a friend."

Quashing his statement, Haider said, "The stories in the media were fictitious. In fact, on the other hand, I should be permitted to say that since Khaleda Zia came to power, it has been the Indian government which has been quite anti-Bangladesh. We have no idea who started this. But it is destroying the cordial relationship that we have with India and especially with the people of West Bengal."

In fact, Haider completely dispelled all the theories of intrusion and cross-border terrorism that had been raised at the discussion.

Trinamool Congress MLA Saugata Roy and his counterpart in CPIM, Mohammed Selim, however, had different viewpoints. They felt that peace and cordial relationship between the two countries depended on economic cooperation.

Selim said, "Criminals will take advantage of every situation. But the crux of the matter is that if both the countries utilise their natural resources in an economic fashion, then allegations and counter allegations would stop." Selim lamented that till date Bangladesh did not cooperate with India in developing

surface transport routes from West Bengal to Tripura and Arunachal Pradesh. "It's not that I am blaming the present government. They have been in power for just one year. But in the past also we have seen that governments there were not ready to cooperate with India on the surface transport issue. This is really unfortunate."

However, after the seminar, one thing became very clear. It would be better for politicians from both sides of the border if they sit across the table with their problems. But they rarely do so and jump for the media at the drop of a hat.

Tinni murder

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Mufidul Islam for burial.

The CID took over the case on November 23 and exhumed the body from the Jurain graveyard on November 25 for a second autopsy.

Police arrested Tinni's housemaids Shefali and Bina and interrogated 17 others, including filmstar Manna, actors Tamalika Karmakar, Mir Sabir, Shahriar Najim Joy and Kazi Naser, Tinni's father Syed Mahbulul Karim and father-in-law Mahmudul Haq, Ovi's brother-in-law Aminul Islam and friend Swapan Gazi, scriptwriter Ejaj Munna and producer Ejaj Khan Swapan.

Anti-mosquito drive

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the anti-mosquito drive and a cash-constrained DCC then bought the "ineffective" insecticide from local market at a price of about Tk 250 per litre. The usual price of it is around Tk 400 per litre. Another official said.

A field worker in the city's Karwan Bazar area said no mosquito breeding ground in the city was sprayed with insecticide in the last one year. When they received the adulticide and the larvaecide recently, it was too late.

The DCC could not even pay for cleaning the ditches and ponds with water hyacinth and therefore the larvaecide programme failed. Now the adulticide programme using methalione has put the field workers to shame before the city dwellers, said a sprayman.

The stock of melathione is also inadequate at most of the DCC zonal offices. Procurement of additional stock involves various bureaucratic procedures and floating of tender and this would take time.

As a related development, sale of different kinds of mosquito repellents has sharply risen in the city and its suburbs.

Meanwhile, the Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka yesterday held a meeting at the Nagar Bhaban to 'chalk out' a plan to control mosquitoes. He called upon all concerned to strengthen the mosquito control

Ex-AL lawmaker Latif Mirza sent to jail

UNB, Sirajganj

Former Awami League lawmaker Abdul Latif Mirza was sent to jail yesterday as magistrate's court here rejected his bail petition.

First Class Magistrate Fariduddin Ahmed permitted police to interrogate Mirza at the jail gate rejecting their appeal to take him on a seven-day remand.

The army-led joint forces arrested Mirza from his Masumpur house in the town early Tuesday and recovered a foreign-made pistol and four bullets from the residence. He was handed over to police Wednesday afternoon.

Police filed a case under the Arms Act against the Awami League leader and produced him before the court yesterday, seeking permission to take him on remand.

BNP cadres sever tendons of AL leader in Rajshahi

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Armed BNP cadres severed tendons of an Awami League leader at village Samarpura in Brammapur union of Durgapur upazila in the early hours of yesterday.

Abdul Majid, Durgapur upazila AL president and chairman of Joy Nagar Union Parishad (UP), was admitted to the Rajshahi Medical College Hospital in a critical condition.

A group of 30 BNP cadres led by Ismail, Babul and Enamul, attacked the house of Majid's cousin at the village at around 2:30 am.

They dragged Majid out of the house and cut tendons of his hands and legs.

They also beat Majid's wife Rokshana Begum and his brother Golam Mostafa. However, they were given first aid at a local hospital.

A source in the local BNP alleged that some BNP activists in the area were tortured by Majid during AL rule.

No case was filed in connection with the incident till filing of this report at 7:00 pm yesterday.

DUTA

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the university vice-chancellor before arresting any teacher under Section 54 of the CrPC.

Although yesterday's programme was planned out unanimously at a DUTA meeting on December 15, the White Panel teachers backed by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party and the Jamaat-Islami did not take part in it.

Order on Enam's presence for bail petition hearing Dec 23

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka yesterday fixed December 23 for order on a petition seeking presence of Reuters stringer Enamul Haque Chowdhury during hearing of his bail prayer.

In the petition, defence lawyers M Sajwar Hossain and Kalyan Kumar Saha said Enamul Haque was forced by Detective Branch (DB) police to give confessional statement earlier. Moreover, they did not get chance to move a bail petition for him, they said.

In the petition filed yesterday, the defence lawyers also said that Enamul was not given chance to meet his lawyers, wife, elder brother.

Enamul was produced before the CMM's court by DB police on Tuesday where his confessional statement was recorded.

The lawyers also filed another petition to allow Enamul's wife to meet him twice a week at the jail gate.

The prosecution side opposed the petitions and stated that the court earlier granted a petition so that nobody can meet Enamul.

After hearing both the sides, Magistrate Mamun-Al-Rashid fixed the date.

Earlier, Enamul Haque was shown arrested in the Mymensingh bomb blasts case as per a submission of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) to the CMM's Court.

A Reuters report on the Mymensingh bomb blasts on December 7 created a controversy. The Reuters story filed by Enamul quoted Home Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury as saying, "The bomb attacks could be the act of Al-Qaeda or any other terrorist group." The minister on the next day claimed that he did not talk to Reuters. But the news agency stood by its story. The minister issued a rejoinder.

The events took a sharp turn when Reuters withdrew its story and began an internal investigation to find out how the story was filed.

Enamul, a senior reporter of BSS, was arrested on December 12 under Section 54 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC).

Grindlays swindled of Tk 41 lakh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An accounts officer of the Standard Chartered Grindlays Bank at Motijheel in the city allegedly swindled Tk 41 lakh out of the bank yesterday.

Sources said Mainul Islam Reza went to the bank as usual in the morning but he was missing in the afternoon. He did not return till the evening and bank papers on his desk were lying scattered.

On information from the manager of the bank, the officer-in-charge of Motijheel Police Station went there. He was told that a businessman deposited Tk 51 lakh but only Tk 10 lakh was found on Mainul's desk.

A police team rushed to the account officer's residence at South Kamlapur and found it under lock and key.

Agargaon traders decry violation of HC order

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Businessmen of the city's Agargaon market said the government has demolished more than one hundred shops defying High Court order.

In a statement yesterday, General Secretary of Agargaon Bazar Banik Samabaya Samity Mizanur Rahman said, "The government has illegally demolished the shops on December 11 defying a High Court-issued status quo on 4.5 acres of land which is still in validation."

The Housing and Public Works Department had issued legal approval to 581 shopkeepers between 1975 and 1998 to run their shops in the market under plot No E-6 under Sher-e-Banglanagar, he said.

"When the Housing and Public Works Department allotted 82.5 decimal of land to LEGED on the north side of the market in 2000, the shopkeepers filed a writ petition with the High Court. It then issued the status quo on 4.5 acre of land," he said.

As the government went through with the demolition suddenly during the Eid vacation, all the goods were looted resulting in a loss of nearly one crore taka, he claimed.

AI demands

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with the First Magistrate's Court, Dhaka, challenging the army account that one of the victims, Abul Hossain Litu, had died after he jumped off the top floor of his two-storey poultry firm.

Litu's wife, Mehna Hossain Anjana, has alleged that the farmhouse does not have two stories and that her husband died from torture after the army personnel had tied his hands and legs, blindfolded him, tied him to a tree and beat him severely.

The Amnesty statement also urged the government "to ensure that investigators gather all relevant information including testimonies from eyewitnesses; witnesses are protected against any threats or acts of retaliation; the findings of the investigation are made public and all those found responsible for the deaths are brought to justice."

It said press reports on October 31 that committees headed by senior army officers have been formed to investigate the deaths were contradicted by reports on November 13 quoting Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Moudud Ahmed.

He told journalists there would be no separate investigation into any of

these deaths but, as with any other deaths, a magistrate would probe the cases. However, no one has so far been brought to justice and no determined action appears to have been taken to stop torture, it said.

Referring to the arrest of Shahriar Kabir, Muntasir Mamun, Saleem Samad and Pricilla Raj, Amnesty urged the government to cease "detention of critics and political opponents under the Special Powers Act (SPA)" and withdraw "all SPA detention orders" "Allegations of torture made by the detainees should be investigated by an independent, impartial and competent authority and perpetrators brought to justice," it said.

Joint forces

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people, including a former MP and eight listed criminals, in different parts of the country in 24 hours ending at 6.00am yesterday.

They also seized four firearms, five other weapons, two explosives and six bullets during the period, the press release added.

The Dhaka Metropolitan Police in a press release said they arrested 196 people including 25 wanted criminals during a special drive in the city.

1,700 lawmen

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persistent traffic jam and pollution.

Rickshaws would be allowed to cross the Mirpur Road at three different places. But since the authorities did not get the Speaker's permission, they are yet to build one rickshaw by-lane through the road between Asad Gate and Manik Mia Avenue on the southern side of the Jatiya Sangsad.

"We shall keep the police force deployed for ten days before assessing the situation again," said DC Traffic (South) Abu Musa Mohammad Fakhru Islam Khan.

Musa said that his department would also ensure that road users follow the electronic road signals without effort or intervention by traffic policemen.

The leaders of the Rickshaw-pullers Association said that they rejected the idea of banning rickshaws on Mirpur Road but they did not announce any program to resist the move. Shukur Ahmed, President of the association, said they would like to hear the decision of the rickshaw owners association.

Ali Akbar, President of Bangladesh Rickshaw and Rickshaw Owners Federation said the authorities assured them that they would build rickshaw by-lanes along Mirpur Road from Darus-Salam to Sahmoly within two to three months.

"We have agreed to cooperate with the authorities but also told them that we failed to offer anything to the rickshawpullers and if any untoward incident happens we should not be held responsible," Ali Akbar told this correspondent.

Yesterday, at several points on the Mirpur Road, traffic department employees were seen announcing the ban through loud speakers and distributing leaflets.

Rickshawpuller Rahom Ali (50) said they fought against the same decision earlier. At that time a large number rickshawpullers resided in Agargaon slums but the authorities evicted them. So they got dispersed and cannot organise any protest now, he said.

Earlier, the authorities took several attempts to ban rickshaws on the road but failed due to resistance by rickshawpullers.

Siddique from Mymensingh, earns his living by pulling rickshaws on Mirpur road. He said that all rickshawpullers felt helpless before such a decision.

"Car owners complain about rickshaws on roads, totally ignoring that rickshaws also face the same problem due to presence of motorised vehicles. All government initiatives go against the poor," Siddique said.