

# Indian enclaves in 2 dists 'safe havens' for criminals

## Large scale hemp cultivation in enclaves in Dinajpur, Panchagarh

KANKAN KARMAKER, Dinajpur

Most of the 12 Indian enclaves in Thakurgaon and Panchagarh districts are safe havens for criminals.

After committing crimes in Bangladesh, they take shelter in the enclaves because Indian authorities seldom take any interest in the people there, sources in Bangladesh administrations and BDR said.

Bangladesh police and BDR need Indian authorities' permission to enter the enclaves, they said.

Taking this advantage, these enclaves have become transit points for smuggling of drugs, arms and other goods. Hemp is now replacing crops and vegetables in many areas as this is much more profitable and has ready markets in Bangladesh, they said.

Even Bangladeshis take shelter in the enclaves after committing crimes.

The enclaves are Putimari, Daibata, Sharbari, Nataktopa, Garati, Singimari, Nazirgoaj,

Balapara, Gaihata, Ghagraghata, Kotbazini and Shal, covering about 11,232 acres of land with a total population of 16,205. Most of the smaller enclaves are several kilometres inside Bangladesh.

According to enclave people, hemp is cultivated on large scale in about 10 of the enclaves in the two districts.

Sources in Thakurgaon Department of Agriculture Extension (AED) also said there are about 1,120 hectares of cultivable land in Thakurgaon enclaves and 1,942 in Panchagarh enclaves.

Hemp cultivation started in the enclaves about four years back. It has doubled within the short period, the AED sources said.

Organised smugglers' syndicates both in Bangladesh and India provide the enclave people with inputs like seed and fertiliser for hemp cultivation and buy back the product at good prices.

Sources in Panchagarh AED said the lands are losing fertility due to continuous cultivation of

hemp.

During a recent visit to Putimari, Daibata, Sharbari, Nataktopa, Garati and Singimari, local people said farmers who used to cultivate jute, rice and vegetables earlier now grow hemp. Some are however trying maize, a new crop in the area.

It was gathered that hemp is being cultivated on at least 2,180 acres of land in these enclaves.

As huge quantities of firewood are needed to dry hemp, producers procure the firewood mostly by stealing trees from Bangladesh territories under cover of darkness, they claimed. Greens are disappearing around the enclaves.

Another reason of large scale hemp cultivation is that Indian authorities do not care to supply them seed, fertiliser and insecticide for vegetable cultivation, they said. Besides, there are problems in marketing vegetables grown in the enclaves.

"We prefer hemp cultivation because the profit is assured,

unlike in case of vegetables", a resident at Putimari said.

When contacted a police official in Panchagarh said they know what goes on in Indian enclaves. "But we can not enter there to track down criminals or destroy hemp fields", he said seeking anonymity. The crimes include robbery, extortion and theft.

An official of 15 Rifle Battalion said they informed BSF that criminals hide in the enclaves and that hemp is being cultivated in large scale there. Only BSF can nab the criminals, he added.

But the enclave people have also allegations. They are deprived of all facilities including healthcare, education and water supply, which are supposed to be provided by the Indian government.

There is virtually no administration in the enclaves.

The enclave people often move freely inside Bangladesh and avail all facilities to earn their livelihood, people in Bangladesh territories near the enclaves said.

## Meherpur Krishak League leader dies from bomb injury

OUR CORRESPONDENT, KUSHLIA

Meherpur Krishak League leader Waesh Ali, injured in a bomb attack at Mujibnagar on May 20, died at Dhaka Orthopaedic Hospital early yesterday.

Critically injured Waesh was taken to Kushlia General Hospital and later taken to Dhaka.

The incident sparked widespread protest across the country. Awami League (AL) chief Sheikh Hasina blamed the government for the attack.

Police failed to nab any of the attackers. People caught one of the alleged criminals, Kausar, 38, and gouged out one of his eyes on the spot.

When contacted, Meherpur Police Superintendent (SP) Awlad Hossain said he expects to get clues from the arrested person who is under treatment.

## Bombs found at Khulna school

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, KHULNA

Police on Monday recovered four hand bombs and a revolver bullet from a class room at Mukteshwari Government Primary School in Phultala upazila in the district.

The bombs and bullet were found on the floor of a class room when morning shift students came school when it reopened after summer vacation.

The school authorities filed a general diary with Phultala police.

In another incident, Khulna thana police recovered two bombs from in front of the house of one Daud Ali in Jinnahpara on the same day.

# Token hunger strike in Rajshahi for gas

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, RAJSHAHI

A three-hour token hunger strike was observed at Shaheb Bazar in the city demanding announcement of allocation in the upcoming national budget for gas supply to the city.

At a rally during the strike, speakers threatened of tougher agitation if budgetary allocation is not announced by June 9.

Rajshahi Rakha Sangram Parishad organised the programmes.

Its convener Zamat Khan chaired the rally, also addressed by, among others, lawyer Md Yahia, engineer Tajul Islam, Prof Chowdhury Sarwar Jahan, column-

nist Prashanta Saha, sports personality Moinul Islam, journalists Hasan Millat, Mustafizur Rahman Khan and Saidur Rahman and Debashish Pramanik.

The hunger strike began at 9 am. The strikers broke their fast by taking mango juice offered by literateur and Language Movement veteran Sahed Uddin Ahmed.

Speakers at the rally hoped that the five ruling party lawmakers including a minister from Rajshahi district would take a firm stand in parliament so that steps are announced for supply gas in the city by 2006.

If the lawmakers can not ensure this, people will declare

them 'unwanted' in the city and take to streets to force the government meet their demands, they said.

They blamed weakness of local politicians for backwardness of the city compared to other cities. Politicians broke promises made to people many times. People will not tolerate any more politics with their fate, they said.

They also demanded T&T mobile phones for Rajshahi subscribers and three trains on Dhaka-Rajshahi route.

They also demanded speedy trial of the murders of Mili and Porosh and government steps for improvement in the law and order situation.



A partial view of participants at the token hunger strike at Shaheb Bazar in Rajshahi yesterday demanding gas supply to the divisional city.

PHOTO: STAR

# 'We'll support steps to help the disabled'

## Australian HC says in Manikganj



PHOTO: STAR

Australian High Commissioner in Bangladesh Lorraine Barker (L) speaking at inauguration of a nursery for the disabled at Manikganj yesterday.

OUR CORRESPONDENT, MANIKGANJ

Australian High Commissioner in Bangladesh Lorraine Barker yesterday said her government will support any initiative that will benefit the disabled people in Bangladesh.

The Australian government's Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) is comprehensive and addresses disability issues at all levels, she said.

In Bangladesh, however, the dynamics of disability is quite different as misconceptions about disability are often associated with lack of education.

Disabled people are often considered a burden and even deserted by communities, and at times by their families.

She was addressing a function marking inauguration of a nursery at Dautia in Manikganj, raised to help the disabled.

It was built by the Manikganj

Disabled People's Organisation for Development (MDPOD) in cooperation with the Bangladesh Protibandhi Kalyan Samity (BPKS) with funds provided by the Direct Aid Programme of Australian government.

The High Commissioner said BPKS has completed nearly 20 years of service to disabled people including women and children in Bangladesh.

Since its inception, various BPKS initiatives changed lives of more than 40,000 disabled people in Bangladesh.

"I feel extremely pleased to be a part of BPKS's programme that coincides with the objectives that we intend to achieve through our programme", she said.

MDPOD Chairman Syeda Akhter Daizy presided over the function, addressed by, among others, BPKS' founder and Executive Director Abdus Sattar Dulal and Agriculture Extension Departments Deputy Director MA Baten.

# Corruption charge against Rangpur pourea chairman

OUR CORRESPONDENT, RANGPUR

Ten ward of commissioners at a press conference here yesterday brought allegations of corruption and nepotism against Rangpur Municipality Chairman of Abdur Rouf Manik.

Idris Ali, panel chairman of the municipality, read out a written statement at the press conference, held at the District Council auditorium. He made as many as 10 allegations against the municipal chairman.

He said the chairman terminated 170 employees of the municipality and re-appointed some of them without approval of the municipal council.

Ward Commissioner Idris Ali alleged that the chairman selected contractors for repairing different roads without discussion with the council.

He also alleged that as per local government regulation, a municipal chairman is supposed raise agenda of any development project or programme at council meeting for approval, but he selected projects himself and invited contractors, ignoring the council.

The municipality with Tk 10 crore government funds is now repairing different roads in the town.

Idris Ali said, "The way the tender committee selected contractors were wrong and inappropriate."

He also claimed that the municipality is spending Tk 1.5 crore more than the estimate, which could be saved if work orders were not issued at 'inflated' rates.

When asked by this correspondent later, Municipal Chairman Abdur Rouf Manik denied all allegations brought against him.

He said approval of the council is not needed when a tender committee is formed beforehand as per the government guidelines.

He said, "Being convener, I issued work orders to qualified contractors after approval by the tender committee comprising the executive engineers of Roads and Highway Department, Public Works Department, Local Government and Engineering Department and Rangpur Municipality."

He said, "What I did was right as per terms and conditions of BMDF (Bangladesh Municipal Development Fund)."

# UPDF rally vows to 'protect' indigenous people's rights

OUR CORRESPONDENT, RANGMATI

The United Peoples Democratic Front (UPDF), a forum of indigenous people opposed to the CHT peace accord, held a 'grand rally' in Khagrachhari town yesterday with a vow to realise its demands.

The demands include what it called an end to rehabilitation of Bangladeshis by evicting indigenous people and alleged grabbing by vested quarters, protection of their land rights, withdrawal army from the CHT

(Chittagong Hill Tracts) and release of their 14 leaders and activists.

The rally held at Swanirvor Bazar was presided over by UPDF central leader Animesh Chakma.

Talking to The Daily Star after the rally, Animesh alleged that several hundreds activists and supporters of UPDF from Panchhari, Lakhmichhari, Manikchhari, Kutukchhari, Guimara and Dighinala could not attend the rally because PCJSS men created obstructions on their way.

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