

529 languishing in CHT jails without trial

Judge Courts in three hill districts yet to start functioning

MONIRUL ALAM, from Rangamati

Under-trial prisoners are languishing in jails in the three hill districts as judge courts are yet to start functioning even after completion of infrastructure facilities.

There are at least 529 accused held on charge of criminal offences who are now in Rangamati, Khagrachhari and Bandarban district jails.

Trial is being delayed for years as Magistrate courts in district headquarters, and courts of the Divisional Commissioner and the Additional Divisional Commissioner (AC) in Chittagong can not dispose of the cases as they are doing the judicial work in addition to their administrative work, sources said.

Buildings and all other infrastructure facilities were built long ago but the government is yet to appoint judges to begin functioning of the judge courts though a law in this regard was enacted by parliament in 2003.

Till now the government has not come up with a Gazette notification to start functioning of judge courts.

The delay in trial causes sufferings not only to the accused but also to the plaintiff. It involved additional expenditure for the government also because, it itself becomes the plaintiff at times.

In absence of judge courts, the accused who can not afford to engage lawyers do not get assistance from the government's legal aid fund. This is an obstacle to getting justice, some lawyers told this correspondent.

The then Awami League government set up the establishments including Judge Court buildings and residences for Judges in three district headquarters in 1998. In Rangamati, the building built for official residence of the District Judge is now being used as residence of the



The unused Judge Court building at Bandarban.

Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Regional Council Chairman.

The delay in disposal of cases is increasing the number of inmates in the three district jails, which now accommodate people much more than their capacities, sources in Rangamati and Khagrachhari district jails said. They are huddled in jails and are deprived of facilities.

As of Monday (July 25), the number of accused was 196 including five women in Rangamati jail, 192 including four women in Khagrachhari and 141 including 10 women in Bandarban jail, according to sources in the

three district jails.

The convicts were 41 in Rangamati, 36 in Khagrachhari and 33 in Bandarban jails till July 24.

Some of the cases were sent to the court of Divisional Commissioner from Magistrate courts in the three hill districts, but there has been little progress in their trial. The rest are pending with the Magistrate courts.

As per Section 9 of the Prisoners Act 1894, an accused should be produced before court once in every 14 days.

But this is often violated as the jail authorities lack administrative,

legal and logistic support to produce the accused before court within the stipulated time, they said. Moreover the magistrate courts can not issue production warrants.

A high official in Rangamati Jail said, as per rule, they send lists of accused to the Magistrate court regularly, seeking 'production warrant' (court permission to produce an accused). But production warrant is issued for only a handful of them.

"We have nothing to do if the court can not give a schedule", he said.

KCC member hurt in bomb attack dies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A Khulna City Corporation (KCC) ward member who was critically injured in bomb attack at a tea stall near the Eastern Jute Mills gate on Monday succumbed to his injuries early yesterday.

Shahadat Hossain Sarder, 40, also a leader of Bangladesh Jatiya Party (BJP) led by Nazir Rahman died while being rushed to Dhaka for treatment as his condition deteriorated.

A group of four outlaws hurled two bombs at the victim when he was drinking tea at the stall during power outage, according to eyewitnesses. One of the two bombs hit Shahadat from behind. He was immediately taken to nearby Phultala Upazila Health Complex from where he was shifted to Khulna Surgical and Medical Hospital. But doctors advised to take him to Dhaka as his condition worsened.

The attackers ran away chanting slogans in favour of Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP-Janajuddho), eye witnesses said.

Two of Shahadat's close associates were also injured during the attack. They are undergoing treatment at Phultala Upazila Health Complex.

The victim's elder brother, Golam Mostafa Sarder, filed a case with Khanjahan Ali Police Station.

Khulna criminal held in Dhaka

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A 'listed' criminal of Khulna was arrested from Bashabo in Badda Police Station of the capital city on Sunday.

Arrested Baki Billah alias Rana, an armed cadre of the outlawed Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP-Janajuddho) was arrested while planning to execute a killing mission in Dhaka targeting a political leader of Khulna, intelligence agency sources said.

According to police, Rana was severely injured after he sustained six bullet injuries during an encounter between police and his accomplices. He is now undergoing treatment in the prison cell of Shurawardy Hospital in Dhaka. His condition is critical, KMP officials said.

Rana was wanted in two murder cases and five criminal cases, police said.



A temporary bridge made with bamboo at Boheratoli on the Shibganj-Bijoypur road as the portion of road has been washed away by floodwaters from the Someswari river in Durgapur upazila in Netrakona district.

Someswary remains an woe to Durgapur

Thousands displaced by erosion every year: Birishiri Tribal Cultural Academy, 125-year-old church and two schools threatened

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Netrakona

The five kilometre Shibganj-Bijoypur pucca road, linking bordering villages with Durgapur upazila, has become unusable due to erosion at many points by the Someswary river. The erosion has increased after recession of flood water.

After devouring about 3000 acres of land and over 1500 homesteads in six villages, erosion is now threatening the Birishiri Tribal Cultural Academy, a non-government Primary Training Institute (PTI), a 125-year-old Baptist Church and two schools in the area.

The homesteads have been devoured in Shibganj, Dakumara, Kullagora, Khamarkhali, Boraiundh and Birishiri villages in Durgapur upazila in Netrakona district.

During a recent visit to the area this correspondent saw erosion has

displaced over 6000 people in the villages. They have left homes and moved to temporary shelters.

About 20,00 people in the bordering villages are now suffering as the five kilometre road link has been snapped at several points.

Talking to this correspondent, local people said they urged to the authorities several times to build a Sumeswary river protection dam from Shibganj to Bijoypur, but no initiative has been taken by any quarters so far.

Bibha Sangma, 60, former director of Birishiri Tribal Cultural Academy regretted that though Durgapur upazila is rich in mineral resources like china clay and coal, neither the authorities nor the people's representatives have taken any step to improve the communication system.

Subandu Sarker Pintu, Chairman of Durgapur Poursava, said the area with large habitations

of indigenous people is neglected by the government. The local people appealed to the authorities and even staged demonstrations for improvement of communication system, but to no effect.

MA Karim Abbasi, lawmaker from the constituency could not be contacted for comment despite repeated attempts.

Mohammad Alauddin, Executive Engineer of Netrakona Water Development Board (WDB) said they have prepared a project to protect Durgapur town but have none to protect the area from recurring floods and erosion by the Sumeswary. Floods occur mainly due to onrush of water from across the border and the river's behaviour is almost unpredictable. It would be difficult to stop the flood and erosion as the river turns furious when waters roll down the Garo hills across the border, he said.

Corruption by BNP men eroding party image

Lawmaker Nadim tells Rajshahi rallies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT,

Rajshahi

BNP lawmaker Nadim Mustafa yesterday alleged that many of his party men are engaged in corruption, damaging the party's image.

They became richer after BNP assumed power, he said.

Nadim, now in loggerheads with a few local BNP lawmakers, promised to quit politics if anyone can prove that he is involved in any corruption.

He was addressing a series of public meetings at Puthia and Durgapur upazilas, his parliamentary constituency.

"I will quit politics it anybody

can prove any irregularity or bring any charge that I took bribe for any facility in my area".

"I saw many BNP leaders living from hand to mouth before 2001. They have now built luxurious building, run costly vehicles and lead the life of a king," said Mustafa.

He however admitted that his actions and activities might have angered some party men. "They are opposing me because I denied them illegal facilities. They are irritated at my denial, my development work, which they could not do."

"I earned a huge amount of money from my business as a contractor since 1984. Since I

became MP in 1996, I promised to keep away from corruption," he said.

Mentionably, four local BNP leaders expelled from the party at a press conference recently alleged that Nadim Mustafa was engaged in corruption and took several lakh Taka from people by promising them jobs of teachers in schools and colleges.

Rajshahi City Corporation Mayor Mizanur Rahman Minur MP and Deputy Minister for Land Ruhul Kuddus Talukhdar Dulu were backing the expelled BNP leaders for establishing supremacy in Nadim's area, party insiders told this correspondent.



Workers P party President Rashed Khan Menon addressing a public meeting on Tala Circuit House premises yesterday.

Govt will be forced to accept caretaker reforms: Menon

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sathkhira

Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon yesterday said the BNP-Jamaat government will be forced to accept the opposition demand for electoral and caretaker government reform.

"If the government does not respond positively to our proposals, we will launch a movement and force it to accept those", he said while addressing a public meeting at Tala.

Tala upazila Workers Party organised the meeting held on the Circuit House premises.

With Arun Kumar Das in the chair, it was addressed by, among others, party's central leaders Anisur Rahman Mallik, Azizur Rahman and Afsar Ali Siddique, Mustafa Lutfullah, Jalalpur Union

Parishad Chairman Prof. Rafiqul Islam, Khalishkhalil UP Chairman Prof. Sabir Hossain, Khalinagar UP Chairman Pranab Ghosh Bablu and Sharifullah Kaisar Suman.

The reform proposals are not aimed at dislodging any particular party from power. The objective is to give democracy an institutional shape, Menon said.

He said unity of pro-liberation forces and formation of a 14-party alliance is now needed to save the people and country from anti-liberation forces and government 'misrule'.

The WP leader alleged that the government has unleashed 'state sponsored terrorism' through Rab, Chitah and Cobra, which are killing terrorists created by ruling parties without nabbing their godfathers.

"Killing in crossfire in the name of

containing crime is violation of human rights", he said.

Expressing concern over increasing activities of religious extremists, he said several groups are now active in the country under the shelter of the government.

Anisur Rahman Mallik said, the BNP led four party alliance government has no rights to stay in power as it failed to do any good to the toiling masses. Other speakers called upon the people to unite to topple the 'anti-people' government for betterment of the people.

Prices of essentials are spiraling but they government did not take any effective step to contain this, they said.

After the meeting, a procession was brought at the upazila headquarters.

3 cops face villagers' wrath for excesses

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Three policemen including a sub-inspector (SI) of Debiganj Police Station in Panchagarh district were briefly held by villagers for ransacking a house and assaulting three inmates at Khaturia Dorjipara village of Sonaroy union in Domar upazila on Monday.

SI Mostaq and constables Azirul and Nuruzzaman entered the village allegedly without informing the concerned police authorities. Later, Domar police with the help of Sonarai Union Parishad (UP) chairman and members rescued the three.

SI Mostaq told newsmen he along with two constables were besieged by people when they went there to arrest Entaj Ali, a domestic help of Mozammel Haq of Natun Bandar area in Debiganj. He said they went there following a complaint lodged by Mozammel's son Mukta that Entaj had fled away from his master's house with money, gold ornaments and other valuables. Mozammel's other son Manik accompanied the policemen during the raid, Mostaq said.

However, local people alleged the policemen led by Manik raided Entaj's house on Monday. They assaulted his mother Rezia Khatun, 60, and sister-in-law Sufia Begum, 21. Being angry at them, they confined the policemen and informed it to Sonarai UP chairman and Domar police who rescued them, they said.

Asked by newsmen, Entaj said he had been working in Mozammel's house for about four years. He came home to see his ailing mother a few days ago. Because of his delay to return to his employer's house, they had lodged the false case against him, he said.

During a visit to Entaj's house on Monday, Sufia Begum and Rezia Khatun showed newsmen their clothes torn allegedly by police and the injuries they sustained by police assault. Entaj's bamboo-made house was also damaged.

Domar Police Station officer-in-charge (OC) Abdus Samad told this correspondent yesterday that the SI who committed the offence 'was new in the service'.

Sonarai UP chairman Babu Chowdhury also blamed the policemen for their excesses.

Smuggled Buddha statues seized

BSS, Cox's Bazar

Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) jawans, in a recent raid, seized 10 statues of Lord Buddha and smuggled goods worth about Tk 25 lakh.

BDR sources said a squad of 23 Rifles Battalion based in Teknaf conducted the raid in Jhimongkhali area in the Naaf and confiscated the statues and goods from a mechanised boat.

The goods smuggle from Myanmar include 10 statues made of copper and brass, furniture, foreign medicine, cloths and other things.

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