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Evicted, now threatened

Naogaon indigenous families cry for help as influential land grabbers moving freely

ANWAR ALI, back from Porsha, Naogaon

Orao Arju's teenage daughter Shanibala is still upset by last week's eviction and arson attacks on 74 families, including 56 indigenous families, in Khatipur allegedly by an influential land grabber.

Nightmares haunt Shanibala as she cannot forget Tuesday afternoon when the attackers chased her and threatened to kill her and her parents if they did not leave their own land.

The arsonists and armed attackers are moving scot-free in the area although they are accused in a case, allege the eviction victims.

When asked for her reaction, Shanibala could not help breaking down and went aside. Her mother said Manjurul, Ata, Dhola, Shafikul and Ahsan in their first attack on June 12 chased her daughter while she was going to the Union Parishad for relief.

Condition of another 15-year-old girl among the victim families is no better.

She was beaten up and her dresses were torn apart on June 13 as she protested the attackers looting corrugated iron sheets and household stuff in presence of the police.

Traumatized since the incident, the girl prefers staying in the dark and trembles seeing any stranger, say her mother and villagers. Her mother was also beaten up until they were rescued by some other women.

Many of the families have sent their adult female members elsewhere fearing further attacks. Almost all the victims feel insecure as they allege the police are helping the perpetrators.

A four-member police camp has been set up in the village following complaints of insecurity, said M Mofazzel Hossain, superintendent of police, Naogaon.

He said Sub-inspector Pabitra Kumar Sinha of Porsha police station was transferred following allegations that he shouted at the indigenous people for building houses on "other's" land.

The villagers allege policemen including Sis Pabitra and Enamul intercepted them when they were going to repair their houses.

They add hired men of the alleged grabber Nur Hossain Master attacked the village three months ago and torched some 10 houses.

At Khatipur Sondanga village in Chhaor union, some 90km off the divisional headquarters in Rajshahi, the villagers were seen sitting perplexed and scattered.

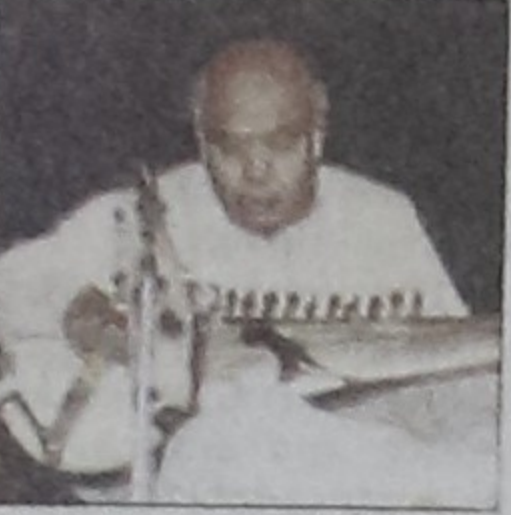
The indigenous people described their plight and the incidents occurred since June 12.

Monisura Soren was cooking rice and pulses she got as relief from the Union Parishad. "We can't live on relief. How can we go for work if tension of being evicted persists?" she asked.

Maina Hasda and Chintamani Murmu of neighbouring indigenous village said they gave shelter to some of the children



An indigenous woman sits on the rubble of her home, which land grabbers torched on June 13. The palm-leave shed on the right is her home now.



Sarod maestro Ali Akbar Khan passes away

PTI, Kolkata

Sarod maestro Ustad Ali Akbar Khan passed away in San Francisco in the US after a prolonged kidney ailment, according to a family friend in Kolkata.

Eighty-eight-year-old Khan died at his music centre at 10 am IST, Rabin Pal, the secretary of sitarist Pandit Ravi Shankar, said.

The Sarod maestro is survived by wife Mary, three sons and a daughter. Pal, a family friend of

Govt goes slow on MRP scheme

Project director yet to be appointed; April 2010 deadline might be missed

M ABUL KALAM AZAD

Bangladesh may fail to implement its machine-readable passport (MRP) and machine-readable visa (MRV) projects within the April 2010 international deadline because of the government's inaction.

Earlier in March, the government 'promptly' decided to implement these projects and approved funds to that end. The government also decided to award the job to the army, but since then no new development took place.

No-one apparently knows when the task will end as both the projects were first conceived over a decade ago.

"The government has so far failed to appoint a project director since the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecne) on March 19 approved a Tk 283 crore fund for the job," comments a home ministry official seeking anonymity.

Sources at the Ministry of Home and the Department of Immigration and Passport say they see no issuance of MRP or MRV in near future, meaning the country is going to be in deep trouble.

Bangladesh must introduce MRP by April next year to comply with the requirements of the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO). Failure in this regard may jeopardise Bangladesh citizens' access to international labour market and all types of visas.

"The ICAO will determine the fate of Bangladesh if we fail to introduce MRP and MRV within the deadline," Abdur Rob Hawlader, director general (DG) of the Department of Immigration and Passport, told The Daily Star on Monday.

The project will start moving once the PD is

Evicted people must get their homes back

Demands probe team

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A special team formed to investigate the incident of eviction of indigenous families from their homesteads on June 13 at Porsha upazila of Naogaon came up with a seven-point demand after a field level visit to the spot.

The team comprised of 20 journalists and human rights activists demanded that indigenous families be taken back to their own lands.

National Coalition for Indigenous Community organised the field level visit following a series of attacks by hired goons of a BNP adherent on those families including 42 indigenous families leading to their eviction from their own lands.

Turag freed of more structures

Drive on against encroachment by sand traders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority and Dhaka district administration yesterday demolished around 15 tin-shed structures constructed illegally on the river Turag near Gabtali-Amin Bazar bridge in the city.

BIWTA also continued excavation work for the second day in some portions of the river that was filled up with sand by encroachers.

Seven concrete structures however could not be dismantled because of stay order, said an official of BIWTA.

The drive led by magistrate Mohammad Mokbul Hossain began at 10:30am and continued till 5:30pm. Four excavators, one tug-vessel, 42 police personnel and 30 day-labourers were engaged in the eviction drive. BIWTA Senior Deputy Director Golam Kabir and Deputy Director Saiful Islam were also present during the drive.

A total of 70 illegal structures were identified for demolition along the Gabtali and Amin Bazar banks of the river. These are mostly concrete and makeshift structures.

"We have been excavating the portions of the river occupied

OnlinePoll ✓

Do you think the government should provide subsidy greatly for solar panel for residential use in order to reduce pressure on the national power grid?

☐ Yes (88.8%)
☐ No (10.1%)
☐ No Comments (1.1%)

Total votes: 358

TODAY'S POLL

Do you think the protests against construction of Tipaimukh dam are just politics?

Please cast your vote at www.thedailystar.net

Prayer Timing

June 20

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-05	5-40
Zohr	1-45	2-15
Asr	6-00	6-15
Maghrib	7-52	7-55
Esha	9-17	9-45

Source: Islamic Foundation

DU teachers, students join campaign to save rivers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Teachers, students, officials and staff of Dhaka University (DU) yesterday expressed solidarity with the efforts to save rivers and urged all to rise to the occasion to save environment and save Dhaka.

The declaration emerged during an inauguration ceremony of a two-day photo exhibition at DU Teachers and Students Centre (TSC) as a part of The Daily Star and Channel i joint initiative "To the Prime Minister: Save rivers, save Dhaka."

While formally launching the exhibition, DU Vice Chancellor AAMS Arefin Siddique said saving rivers means saving our existence.

The VC said only three percent of the planet's total



Dhaka University Vice-chancellor AAMS Arefin Siddique looks at the stills of river encroachment on display at Save Rivers, Save Dhaka photo exhibition inaugurated yesterday at TSC of Dhaka University.

Muggers stab 2 policemen in Kushtia

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Two policemen including a sub-inspector (SI) were stabbed by muggers at Hauskhali in Daulatpur upazila of Kushtia district on Thursday night.

They are SI Abdul Malek, 36, and constable Mizanur Rahman, 45, of Daulatpur Police Station.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 8

World's hungry cross 1b: FAO

AFP, Rome

The number of hungry in the world has reached a "historic high" of more than one billion people, the UN food agency said yesterday, blaming the global financial crisis for the surge.

The Food and Agriculture

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

SL hammer WI to reach final

AFP, London

Angelo Mathews's astonishing first over treble strike and Tillekaratne Dilshan's 96 not out helped see Sri Lanka into the World Twenty20 final with a 57-run win over the West Indies at the Oval Friday.

Sri Lanka, the only unbeaten side still in the tournament, will face Pakistan - a team they defeated by 19 runs in the Super Eights stage - in Sunday's final at Lord's.

West Indies, chasing 159 to win, were rocked by a sensational first over of the innings from Mathews which saw the unheralded seamer take three wickets for no runs in five balls.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

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Pak militants bomb schools in tribal area

Air strike on Taliban hideouts

AFP, Peshawar/Khar

Militants blew up two boys' schools and a college in Bajaur tribal area in northwest Pakistan, an official said yesterday, as an offensive against the Taliban rumbled on in nearby districts.

"Several locally-made bombs planted inside the school buildings went off late in the night," local government official Adalat Khan told AFP, adding that both schools were "completely demolished."

"They also bombed a boys' degree college in Mamond town," Gul Rehman, a Bajaur education officer, said 44 schools had been bombed or set on fire in the past year in the district troubled by Taliban attacks.

Pakistani fighter jets yesterday bombed Taliban militant hideouts in the northwest tribal belt, officials said, as the death toll from a suspected US missile strike in the area rose to 13.

Up to three unmanned drone aircraft are

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