

Dilly-dally in survey of disputed Sylhet borders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Survey on much-talked Dibir Haor border in Jaintapur upazila and Padua-Protappur border, which could not resume as per earlier schedule yesterday, now seems to be delayed for days more due to various reasons.

"Survey officials are waiting for instructions from higher authorities since the Indians are claiming lands inside Bangladesh territory as belonging to them. We hope the survey would resume in days," the Battalion Commander of the 21 Battalion of BDR Lt Col Khairul Quadir told this correspondent yesterday.

Contacted, Additional Deputy Commissioner (Rev) Dr Abul Hasan, who is heading the Bangladesh survey team, said yesterday evening, "The Indian survey team requested us to keep the survey suspended for a few days on account of Christmas and for other reasons."

Admitting the Indians' pressure for accepting their claim for lands inside Bangladesh territory, he said, "We have sought direction from the higher authorities. Both sides on Wednesday discussed different documents after that day's flag meeting between BDR and BSE."

Earlier on December 14 evening, the villagers inside Bangladesh territory chased away about 500 Indian Khasia tribesmen, who had intruded into the Bangladesh territory through the remote Padua-Protappur borders in Gowainghat upazila.

"We had decided to keep the survey suspended till today [Monday] on occasion of holidays like Victory Day and Ashura. Now survey people from Meghalaya have requested us to delay the job for a few more days on occasion of Christmas. We hope we would be able to resume the job after the Christmas. Earlier we were asked to complete the works by December 31, it may now continue till

January 15," Hasan said.

Claiming about 50 acres of Bangladesh lands as belonging to them, Indian Khasia tribesmen had been opposing the survey on Dibir Haor border in Jaintapur upazila.

The Indians also pressed for suspending survey on Sonarhat-Lankhat border, where about 80 acres of Bangladesh lands, in addition to the 100 acres on Protappur-Padua border, had been under the possession of Indians.

Asked about the Indian claims, Dr Hasan said, "We pressed in favour of our documents and on the basis of boundary pillars and asked for documents in support of their claims."

Except the untoward incident on December 14, an uneasy calm has been prevailing on about 20 kilometre border from Sonarhat to Dibir Haor in Gowainghat, Kanaighat and in Jaintapur upazilas since a joint survey began on December 7.



PHOTO: STAR

Maippara Bazar Bonik Samity organises a meeting on the premises of Maippara union parishad in Narail Sadar upazila yesterday demanding arrest and punishment of a few identified drug peddlers who seriously injured Munakka Billah Tikka for his protest against the illegal trade in the area.

'71 MASSACRE AT JHATHIBHANGA VILLAGE

Bring killers to book, demand widows, children of martyrs

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Widows and children of those martyred at Jhathibhanga village under Thakurgaon Sadar upazila in 1971 observed hunger strike at the deputy commissioner office premises yesterday demanding trial of the killers.

On 17 April in 1971, thousands of people from Jagannathpur, Gorea, Shukanpokhori, and Balia unions under Sadar upazila left their home for India to save their lives from the Pakistani occupation army and their local collaborators known as razakars.

As they gathered at Jhathibhanga village in Sadar upazila, Pakistani soldiers, informed by razakars and Al Badrs, rushed to the spot and killed about 3,000 male members and buried them at Jhathibhanga mass grave there.

"On the day, Pakistani occupation army and their local collaborators beheaded many people in the area. All my nearest relatives were killed before my eyes. They also hacked me on the neck and back. As I laid down, the criminals left me presuming dead." Tepan Barman, 60, of Jagannathpur village, who luckily survived the horrific massacre, said at a discussion held during the hunger strike.

The speakers said, even after long 39 years of Liberation War, those 'razakars', who were involved with the killing are still moving freely. Many of them have also become the influential members of the society.

Among others, Thakurgaon Nagorik Committee president Dr Sheikh Farid, advo-

cate Mazedul Islam, district correspondent of Prothom Alo Mozibor Rahman Khan, district correspondent of Karatoa Monsur Ali and others spoke at the discussion.

Eye witness Dhani Barman said, as it was not safe for people to live in the villages, they decided to cross the border for refuge in India. When they reached Jhathibhanga village, the sun was setting down. They decided to stay for the night there and start next morning.

But the 'razakars' of the area came to know the matter and immediately informed the Pakistani army.

A contingent of the Pakistani occupation army rushed to the area and encircled the hapless innocent people.

Later the collaborators asked the male members of the minority community to stand in queues.

The Pak occupation army then opened fire while the collaborators chopped the others to death.

About 3,000 people were killed on that day, said Dhani.

The females, now widows, who were the eye witnesses of the carnage include Tulo Rani, Dukhuni, Ananata Bala, Sadamoti and Bharati. They recalled similar horrific stories about the killings at Jathibhanga.

The widows demanded immediate arrest, trial and exemplary punishment to the killers of their husbands.

After the discussion the families of the victims placed a memorandum to DC Muhammad Shahiduzzaman in this regard.

Gang-raped schoolgirl dies, two arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chapainawabganj

A teenage girl, who was gang-raped allegedly by two other teenagers on Sunday, died at Doripaka village under Gomostapur upazila in the district.

Victim Nuresha Khatun, 15, was daughter of Bairul Islam of Begunbari village. She was a student of class nine at Bangabari Girls High School.

Police arrested Nuresha's two 'friends' in this connection. They were identified as Mahub, 15, son of Abdul Wahab of Oajgora village and Azim, 15, son of Abdul Wahab Kutu of Doripaka village under Bangabari union of Gomostapur upazila.

Police and Azhar Ali Mondol, chairman of Bangabari union parishad said, the incident took place when Nuresha came out of home to go to her private tutor on Sunday afternoon.

On the way, she met Mahub who took her to Azim's house at Oajgora village.

There Mahub, Azim, Al Amin and two to three others gang-raped her injuring her seriously.

Locals rescued Nuresha and took her to Gomostapur health complex where the on-duty doctor declared her dead at around 8:00 pm.

The local people also detained Mahub and Azim and confined them to Bangabari union council office.

Later, Bangabari union parishad chairman handed them over to the police yesterday morning. Al-Amin, however, fled the scene.

Mahub and Azim are the students of class nine at Bangabari School and College.

Police recovered the body and sent it to Chapainawabganj Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Jahangir Hossain, officer-in-charge (OC) of Gomostapur police station said, there were injury marks in different parts on her body. But he could not ascertain how she was killed.

Victim's mother Nasima Begum filed a murder case with Gomostapur police station yesterday afternoon.

Remove CS, demands Ctg BMA

A CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong

Leaders of Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA), Chittagong unit, at a press conference yesterday demanded immediate removal of the Civil Surgeon of Chittagong for his alleged link with Doctors Association of Bangladesh (DAB), which is loyal to opposition BNP.

The press conference was jointly organised by Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA), Chittagong unit, at a press conference yesterday demanded immediate removal of the Civil Surgeon of Chittagong for his alleged link with Doctors Association of Bangladesh (DAB), which is loyal to opposition BNP.

The speakers also demanded establishment of Chittagong Medical University and 'Banga Mata' Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Medical College immediately.

BMA, Chittagong unit president Dr Sheikh Shafiqul Azam, in a written statement said Dr Abu Tayab is creating obstacles to establishing 'Banga Mata' Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Medical College through bureaucratic tangles.

MUTINY IN NAOGAON, DINAJPUR

Charges framed against 48 BDR personnel

NATIONAL DESK

Mutiny charges were yesterday framed against 25 BDR personnel of 43 Rifles Battalion in Naogaon and 23 personnel of 40 Rifles Battalion at Phulbari in Dinajpur.

The special court-12, set up at 43 Rifles Battalion headquarters in Naogaon town framed mutiny charges against 25 rebels, according to our correspondent.

Prosecutor Lt Col Fazlul Haque, also the commanding officer of the battalion, read out the allegations against the rebels. He appealed to the court to frame charges against all the 25 BDR men as they took part in mutiny at the battalion headquarters on February 26 last year.

These accused looted arms from armory and fired blank shots. They also revolted against their officers, the prosecutor said.

Six of the 25 jawans confessed to their involvement while the rest claimed innocence. The special court headed by Rajshahi Sector Commander Col Eha Azam Khan then framed charges against the accused. Two other members of the court are Lt Col Khalid Hossain and Lt Commander (BN) Touhidul Islam.

The accused are Subeder Major Khalid Hossain, Nayek Sheikh Farid, Lance Nayek Akram Hossain, sepoy Masum Billah, Motiar Rahman, Biplob Hossain, Rezaul Karim, Ariful Islam, Romiuzzaman, Nur Mohammad, Khandaker Mamun Hossain, Jamal Hossain, Shahinur Alam, Moshtaque Ali, Kohinur Islam, Zaved Younus, Iqbal Hossain, Munsiri Nazmul Haque, Moshirur Rahman, Mehedi Hasan, Alim Al Fuad, Fayez Ahmed, Shahidul Islam, Nayek Subeder Sheikh Atiar

Ali and Nayek Hedayet Ali. The court also recorded statements of two prosecution witnesses in the mutiny case.

Assistant Attorney General Shasanko Shekhar Sarkar and public prosecutor advocate Manjur Alam were present.

Our Dinajpur correspondent reported that the special court-13 framed charges against 23 mutineers of Phulbari 40 Battalion.

Five of the accused - Havilder Md Wares, Subeder Major Azizul Islam, sepoy Md Nasrul Karim, Md Borhan Uddin and Lance Nayek Khandaker Mehrul Sultan - confessed to their involvement in the mutiny while the rest claimed innocence.

Prosecutor Lt Col Amirul Islam Shikder, also the commanding officer of the battalion, appealed to the court to frame charges against the 23 accused.

The court headed by Col

Saleh Ahmad, sector commander of Dinajpur Sector, framed charges against the accused and adjourned the proceedings until 10:00am today. Two other members of the court are Lt Col Mahaful Alam and Major Didar Al Latif.

Our Rangamati correspondent adds: The special court-15, set up at Rangamati sector headquarters, yesterday recorded deposition of five out of 20 prosecution witnesses in the case for mutiny at 18 Rifles Battalion on February 26 last year.

All the 23 accused in the case were produced in the court headed by Chittagong Sector Commander Col Zahedur Rahman. Two other members of the court are Lt Col Md Abdun Nur and Maj Golam Mostafa-al-Mamun.

After recording statements of the witnesses, the court adjourned trial proceedings until 10:00am today.

Chaos by brick kiln owners disrupts environ workshop

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Environment officials at a workshop in Rajshahi yesterday urged the brick kiln owners to get prepared for compulsorily introducing the new environment-friendly technology within two years as per the government's circular issued in last September.

The Department of Environment (DOE) organised the workshop styled 'Introduction of environment-friendly and modern brick kilns' at Rajshahi Zila Parishad auditorium where over 100 traders from 16 districts of Rajshahi division attended.

However, about 50 brick kiln owners and their supporters led by Sadrul Islam, general secretary of Rajshahi Brick Kiln Traders Association, left the workshop venue at around 1:00pm protesting what they said 'authorities' arbitrary decision to frequently change technologies for burning bricks.

Due to the chaotic situation, the workshop got postponed while Rajshahi Mayor AHM Khairuzzaman Liton, who was scheduled to attend

the programme as chief guest, did not turn up.

"Around 8000 brick kilns of the country can save at least 16 lakh tonnes of fuel coal worth around Tk 1120 crore annually through using modern brick kiln technologies that will minimise air pollution and help the traders to produce quality bricks. The government decided to introduce the new system considering all the issues," DoE Additional Director General Abdus Sobhan told this correspondent at the workshop venue.

Subol Bose Moni, additional DC of Rajshahi, said many kiln traders have been denied licences because their kilns were not established following rules. Nazmul Hoque, Rajshahi divisional director of DOE, presided over the workshop.

At the beginning of the programme at 11:00am, the brick kiln owners from Rajshahi district expressed their grievances when they noticed that none among the district's businessmen were invited at the stage, witnesses said.

"Even a businessman from Natore was invited as a special guest. But there was none

among Rajshahi businessmen at the stage, although the programme was being held in this district," said Sadrul Islam.

"We set up 120-foot chimney system spending Tk 12 to Tk 18 lakh when the government introduced it in 2002. Now the new technology for setting up Zig Zag Kiln, Hybrid Hoffman Kiln or Vertical Shaft Kiln will cost us fresh investment of similar amounts that many small businessmen cannot afford. It needs minimum ten years more to switch over to the new technology," said Shafikul Alam Bhota, president of Chapainawabganj Brick Kiln Traders Association.

The provision prohibiting setting up of a brick kiln within three kilometres of residential areas and arable lands can hardly be followed as such areas are rare in the country, said several kiln owners.

Urging review of the brick kiln laws that are unrealistic, they demanded immediate issuance of licences for brick kilns in Rajshahi.

In Rajshahi division, there are 838 brick kilns that have licences and 74 kilns are without certificates from the DoE.

Probe report on Surma boat tragedy tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

The enquiry committee on Saturday night's boat capsizing in the Surma in Jamalganj upazila of Sunamganj district will submit its report to the deputy commissioner tomorrow.

Jamalganj Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Mohammad Abul Hashem, who is leading a five-member probe body, told this correspondent yesterday that they would complete their job today and submit the report tomorrow.

The committee, formed on Sunday, was asked to submit its report within three days.

He said the committee members visited the place of occurrence and interviewed the survivors and local people.

The incident in which at least 37 people were killed, occurred as none of the passenger or cargo boat had lights. There was dense and most of the passengers, travelling on the lower deck, were asleep and the windows of the boat were shut, the UNO quoting the survivors said.

The authorities declared the rescue operation finished at 2:00pm on Sunday as no other body was found within one kilometre area.



PHOTO: STAR

Police intercept as BNP activists try to bring out a procession at Chowranghi intersection in Panchagarh town yesterday protesting arrest and alleged torture on Salauddin Quader Chowdhury and other BNP leaders.

BNP PROCESSION IN PANCHAGARH

12 hurt as police swing into action, 9 arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Police charged batons on BNP procession at Chowranghi intersection in front of their party office in Panchagarh town yesterday.

Twelve people were injured while police picked up nine BNP men during the incident.

Witnesses and party sources said about 100 local leaders and activists brought out a procession from their party office protesting arrest and repression on Salauddin Quader Chowdhury and other BNP leaders at about 11:30am.

Police intercepted the procession near the party office and asked them to return to their compound.

As the BNP men tried to continue the procession, police charged batons on them leaving 12 people injured. Police also hurled several tear gas shells to disperse the procession.

During the chase and counter chase between police and BNP men, shops and business establishments pulled their shutters down while vehicular movements came to a halt for an hour.

Later police arrested injured organising secretary of district unit BNP Jahirul Islam, convener of district unit Chhatra Dal Mohammad Nuruzzaman, general secretary of district unit of JASAS Yunus Sheikh, Jubo Dal leaders Shohel Rana and muni-

pality leaders of Chhatra Dal Harun, Md Nazrul Islam, Shabul and Dablu from Panchagarh Sadar Hospital while taking treatment there.

When contacted, former lawmaker and president of district unit BNP Mozahar Hossain told this correspondent that police attacked the BNP activists without any provocation. He protested such 'undemocratic attitude' of the government and demanded immediate release of the arrested leaders and activists of the party.

Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) Shahabuddin said that police only did everything in their defence as the BNP men attacked them.