

Hili tense over building house near border

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Tension prevails between members of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) and Border Security Force (BSF) of India along Hili border under Hakimpur upazila in Dinajpur over building a concrete house in violation of international border laws.

BGB's Joypurhat-3 Battalion has already protested at the construction, sources said.

Following a written protest from the BGB yesterday, a company commander-level flag meeting was held between officials of the two forces at noon.

Sources said some Indian nationals had secretly begun constructing a residential concrete house 10 yards into the Indian soil near Churipatti in Hakimpur upazila.

According to the existing law, no concrete structures can be built within 150 yards of the zero line.

Shahidul Islam Shahid, camp commander of Hili Check Post, confirmed the incident.

The BGB officials at Hili detected the construction on Saturday night when the building's roof casting work was underway.

Yesterday they sent a strong protest in writing to their Indian counterparts, asking them to stop the construction works and demolish the structure immediately.

Officials from both the sides are said to have visited the site.

Later, Prosanta, company inspector of Bakshiganj camp of Hili Thana, said he would be informing higher officials of the matter.

Israel raids south Gaza after rocket attacks

AFP, Jerusalem

Israeli warplanes yesterday carried out an attack on the south of the Gaza Strip after rockets were fired at Israel, the army announced.

"During the night an Israeli plane hit an arms factory and a smuggling tunnel in the south of the Gaza Strip," the army said in a statement, adding, "This raid is in response to the rockets fired at Israel this weekend."

Student's eye

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The student is still facing problems with her eyesight, reported BBC Bangla Service yesterday.

The Techoria High School authorities confirmed the incident of assault on the schoolgirl, saying they would investigate the matter.

Meanwhile, Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid yesterday directed the director general of the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education to take necessary steps after investigating the incident by today.

The name of the accused teacher is Jardish Ahmed, said a government handout.

The incident happened at a time when the government has banned corporal punishment in schools.

Yusuf Ali, father of the victim, alleged that the teachers kept his daughter in the school corridor for more than two hours after the incident of physical abuse.

"I reached the school two hours after the incident and found that she had been hit in one of her eyes, and was bleeding," said Yusuf, a CNG-run auto-rickshaw driver.

"She was sitting in the corridor and some teachers were pouring water on her head," he said, adding, "I took her to a hospital in the capital where doctors conducted an operation on her eye."

Shahidul Islam, headmaster of the school, said the school had tried its best to attend to the girl after the incident. He, however, did not say anything as to whether any action would be taken against the accused teacher.

Talking to The Daily Star, Shakhawat Hossain, officer-in-charge of South Keraniganj Police Station, said no case had been filed in this connection.

President pardons

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absentia in all the three cases. After being on the run for more than 10 years, he surrendered before a court on April 6 last year.

His father then filed mercy petitions to the president, following which the latter granted Biplob clemency in the Nurul Islam murder case last year, said the source.

The incident drew widespread criticism from different sections, including rights groups, legal experts and the media.

Babor, who was the secretary of Laxmipur Chhatra League, was convicted in 2004, said his brother Saiful Hasan Palash, himself president of Laxmipur Jubo League.

Their mother Nurjahan Begum appealed to the president last year for clemency, Saiful told The Daily Star over the phone.

The constitution empowers the president to grant pardons, reprieves and respites and to remit, suspend or commute any sentence passed by any court, tribunal or other authority.

VICTIMS' FAMILY REACTIONS

"We cannot just accept it. Where will common people go if the president pardons a killer on political considerations?" asked Md Kamal, a nephew of the slain Mohsin. Kamal was also a prosecution witness of the case.

Contacted by The Daily Star, relatives of Kamal expressed their "inability" to comment, saying the accomplices of the killers are already threatening them and giving them a hard time.

THE KILLINGS

On September 18, 2000, advocate Nurul Islam, the then organising secretary of Laxmipur BNP, was abducted and hacked to death by Biplob and his associates.

The Divisional Speedy Trial Tribunal of Chittagong on December 9, 2003, condemned five people, including Biplob, to death for the murder.

BNP activist Kamal was killed at his house in front of his parents by Biplob and his gang in October 2001.

A Speedy Trial Tribunal in Chittagong handed down death sentences on Biplob's two brothers -- Salahuddin Tipu and Abdul Jabbar Lablu. Biplob himself, his father Abu Taher and three others -- Khalek, Babor and Marju -- got life sentences in the case.

The High Court later relieved all but Biplob and Khalek of the charges.

Shibir activist Mohsin was beaten to death on September 5, 2000, near Adarsha High School in Laxmipur.

In a case filed with Laxmipur Police Station, Biplob, Lablu, and Babor were each sentenced to life term in prison.

NHRC CHIEF REACTS
National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) Chairman Mizanur Rahman reacted sharply to the presidential clemencies, saying the nation must come out of this culture.

A convict in a criminal case should in no way be forgiven, he said at a programme at the Cox's Bazar District Administration yesterday.

Realtor fined for cutting hills in Sylhet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

The Department of Environment (DoE) yesterday fined the managing director of a housing company Tk 22 lakh for cutting hills to develop housing projects in Sylhet.

DoE Director Muhammad Munir Chowdhury also asked Khondaker Md Kamruzzaman, managing director of Greenland Housing, to refill the earth within a month and plant timber and fruit trees on it.

On February 23, a team of DoE officials headed by Munir Chowdhury in a drive filed three cases against Greenland Housing. They found that Kamruzzaman owned 2.5 acres of the hillcock.

According to DoE officials, 1.31 crore cubic feet earth had been cut from the hillcock.

DoE informed the district administration and asked them to take measures against the company and stop all its activities.

Criticise

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should criticise without causing hurt."

"Hurling abusive words towards others may at times be lauded by the party members but it is not generally accepted by the people," the Speaker added.

The Speaker referred to a recent speech by AL lawmaker Fazlulunnisa

Bappi when she launched a tirade against the Opposition Leader Khaleda Zia and her two sons, during the thanksgiving motion on the president's speech.

"I was not in the chamber of the House on that day but was watching her speech on television in my office. The way she was speaking, I was appalled," the Speaker said.

He said the remarks she made might prompt BNP to walk out and not return to a parliament where such words were used.

Deputy Speaker Col (red) Shawkat Ali, AL MP Tofail Ahmed, Chief Whip Abdus Shahid and Sheikh Selim, also spoke at the ceremony.

The book titled "Sheikh Selim's 31 years in parliament" is a compilation of speeches of Awami League leader Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim in the House for the last three decades.

Case against

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accused got anticipatory bail from the High Court, they did not get any bail from the trial court as they did not appear before it despite being summoned repeatedly.

The following day Selim and others appeared before the court and got bail in the case.

Earlier on August 17, 2009, the home ministry recommended withdrawing the case and asked the PP to take the next course of action.

According to the prosecution, a group of AL leaders and activists clashed with the police during a procession in the city's Chawkbazar area on March 23, 2004. The demonstrators threw brickbats at the police and prevented them from discharging their duties.

Following the incident, Khorshed Alam, sub-inspector of Lalbagh Police Station, filed a case against Selim and the others.

The four-party alliance government filed over 137 cases against the accused between 2001 and 2006, sources said.

City road

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Nadim said they were returning home after attending their classes in the college.

Mahbubur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Tejgaon Police Station, said police seized the bus of Choice Paribahan from the spot. But, its driver and helper managed to flee.

In another incident, Shyamoly Chakrabarti was killed when a bus hit a rickshaw carrying her from behind at about 6:30 pm at Dayaganj.

She was immediately rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital where doctors declared her dead.

Bithi Chakrabarti, daughter of Shyamoly, said she and her mother were returning to their house at Shaheb Lane in Gendaria on the rickshaw.

Bithi received minor injury in the accident.

Dhaka keen on hydro

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Bangladesh was keen on getting power from the gas-based Palatana power project in neighbouring Tripura state, for which Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, during her visit to Agartala earlier this year, had even expressed her government's interest to buy a stake.

But sources said the deals for sale of power from Palatana project had been firmed up even before Bangladesh made the offer.

Senior officials from Bangladesh and India will sit here today in a meeting of the Joint Working Group (JWG) on power sector cooperation, to do the groundwork for tomorrow's JSC meeting headed by power secretaries of the two countries.

Both sides will also review the progress in implementation of the deals inked between the two countries on power sector at the JWG meeting, said the foreign ministry official, who is already in New Delhi in connection with the meeting.

The two meetings are follow-up actions by the two sides in the light of the Joint Communiqué issued after Hasina's visit to New Delhi in January, 2010, in which concrete bilateral cooperation in power sector was an important component.

This is the first time the two countries have moved in to diversify their cooperation in power sector.

So far, Bangladesh and India have signed a number of deals including import of 250 megawatt power by Bangladesh and setting up

of a 1,320-MW coal-fired joint-venture power plant in Khulna.

A final deal on the Khulna plant was signed in Dhaka last month between Bangladesh's state-owned Power Development Board and India's state-owned National Thermal Power Corporation.

But on the issue of power import, there has not been much progress and the Delhi meetings will try to settle the issues of tariff at which electricity will be exported to Bangladesh, and the power plant from which India will supply electricity.

Officials from Bangladesh finance ministry and commerce ministry will be in the Bangladesh delegation for tomorrow's JSC meeting.

Indian experts

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at the barrage site that the repair of gate no 16 would be completed in the next few days, while gate no 13 would take some more time.

The visit by Jha and his team came in the wake of Mamata's raising the issue at a meeting with Manmohan in New Delhi on February 23 and demanding a high-level probe into the breakdown of the sluice gates.

The very next day, the Indian central government ordered an investigation.

Jha will look into the reasons behind the collapse of gates 13 and 16 and suggest corrective measures. He is set to submit his report within the next 15 days to the Indian Water Resources Ministry.

Until the gates are put in place, a member of the CWC will remain at the barrage site on the river Ganges.

The probe will also ascertain whether the collapse could have been anticipated. It is learnt that Jha will also probe whether the collapse was an accident or done "intentionally".

The barrage has 108 gates.

Mamata on February 23 said that in June last year, the West Bengal state government had noticed the leakage from the sluice gates but no move had been taken for the last eight months to plug it.

She said that under the 1996 Indo-Bangladesh agreement on the sharing of the Ganges water, Bangladesh will get 33 per-

cent water and rest will be for India. "But we found that because of the leakage, Bangladesh is getting 88 percent of water and as a result West Bengal's rivers, including the Bhagirathi, are suffering from lack of water."

Besides drying up the rivers, Mamata said it was affecting power plants and water supply in the state. "Thermal power plant is being closed down due to the water crisis."

She had also warned there would be severe water and power crises in the state.

"A disaster is waiting to happen because of the crisis. Many ships are not being able to move from the ports. It is scandalous. I demand a high-level inquiry into it," Mamata added.

Tribunal asks media

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tribunal proceedings were "not proper", the tribunal asked journalists to be "careful and cautious" to prevent misreporting.

The three-member tribunal came up with the suggestions after defence counsels of Jamaat-e-Islami leader Delwar Hossain Sayedee brought a contempt petition on Feb 23 citing two news reports of the Bangla daily Janakantha.

Defence counsel Tajul Islam had claimed that the headlines of the reports were grossly misleading.

The two reports-- published on February 2 and 21--were about witness testimonies in the case against Sayedee, who is facing charges of crimes against humanity at the tribunal.

The tribunal on that day decided to put the matter on hold since the reporter concerned was not present at the court.

Yesterday, Justice Md Nizamul Huq, the tribunal chairman, passed an order saying that the first report of the newspaper was "contemptuous" and the second was "unwarranted".

"The tribunal is dealing with serious cases which the whole world is watching," said Justice Nizamul Huq, adding that the media should cooperate with the tribunal and be careful about its coverage.

Meanwhile, defence counsels of BNP lawmaker Salauddin Quader Chowdhury yesterday finished their arguments on a discharge petition they had begun placing on Thursday.

Ahsanul Huq Hena, a defence counsel for Salauddin Quader, then began submitting a bail petition for the lawmaker from Chittagong, who is

facing charges of crimes against humanity committed during the Liberation War.

The counsel argued that his client is an elected lawmaker, who has been missing from his constituency for a long time.

He said the lawmaker's absence has halted all development activities and new projects in the constituency; and the people are being punished.

Hena also argued that Salauddin Quader had no motive for the crimes he has been charged with as he was not a member of any auxiliary forces during the Liberation War of 1971.

The counsel is scheduled to resume his arguments today.

Salauddin Quader Chowdhury is among two BNP and six Jamaat leaders facing charges of crimes against humanity at the tribunal.

Shortest man

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centimetres (21.5 inches) tall, measurements confirmed, 5.3cm shorter than Filipino Junrey Balawing, the previous holder of the "world's shortest man" title.

"It feels very good -- I'm very happy," Dangi told reporters. "I will work on promoting my country all over the world."

Dangi, who weighs 12 kilogrammes (26.5 pounds), was brought to the attention of the world only three weeks ago after Nepali researchers looking into the history of the Dangi people were introduced to him.

He has also been declared the shortest human adult ever recorded, taking the accolade from India's Gul Mohammed, who was measured at 57cm before he died in 1997 aged 40.

"I'm continually amazed that this record keeps getting broken," Guinness World Records editor-in-chief Craig Glenday said in a statement after the adjudication in the Nepali capital Kathmandu.

"Just when you think it's impossible for the record to get any smaller, Mr. Dangi comes along and astonishes us all.

"What I find equally remarkable is his age -- if he really is 72, he is by far the oldest person to be awarded the shortest-man record in Guinness World Record's 57-year history."

Dangi told AFP in his first interview with Western media earlier this month that recognition at the end of his life would be some compensation for years of hardship.

The pensioner, who was orphaned at 12, says relatives used to display him at freak shows to make money for themselves and that he has never experienced romance or found his soulmate.

"Until now, Chandra's stature has been a burden; he is acutely aware of the difficulties of fitting into an average-sized world and is disappointed at having missed out on the chance to find a wife," Guinness World Records said yesterday.

"He is hopeful, though, that his new title will see a change in his fortunes."

The cause of Dangi's stunted growth remains a mystery as he has never seen a doctor, Guinness said, although many holders of the "world's shortest man" crown have suffered from primordial dwarfism.

"It is hoped that the exposure he receives as a result of his new record will lead to medical advice and support," the statement read.

Dangi earns a sparse living weaving jute headbands and has only ever left his village in poverty-stricken Dang district, 350 kilometres (220 miles) from Kathmandu, a handful of times.

Guinness quoted Dangi, who visited Kathmandu for the first time to be measured, as saying he was too old for marriage but would still like to travel.

"I want to visit foreign countries and meet people from around the world," he said.

Another Nepali, Khagendra Thapa Magar, claimed the title in 2010 after being measured at 67 cm.

Magar's stint as the world's shortest man saw him travel to more than a dozen countries and make television appearances in Europe and the United States.

He was also the official face of Nepal's tourism campaign, which featured him as the smallest man in a country that is home to the world's highest peak, Mount Everest.

Shahara happy

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Shahara said all the Indian leaders she had met in the last three days assured her that India was taking steps to completely stop incidents of border firing and killing.

Terminating her visit to India and her interaction with the Indian leadership, including Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, successful, Shahara said she had given the Indian leaders the impression of how the people of Bangladesh and the government of Sheikh Hasina would be inconvenienced if the stalemate on the proposed agreement on the sharing of Teesta river water was not resolved soon.

She said all Indian leaders "have conveyed to me that they are mindful of the difficulties Bangladesh faces and assured us that they are trying to resolve the Teesta issue".

Asked if the Indian leaders had given any time frame for evolving a consensus and solving the Teesta issue, she replied in the negative.

"How can I as Bangladesh home minister press India for a time frame for solving the issue?" she said.

Shahara said the Indian leaders also said steps would be taken to make the issuance of visas for Bangladeshis easier.

She said she had also asked the Indian government to hand over to Bangladesh Capt Abdul Mazed and Risaldar Moshlehuddin Khan, the two killers of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman thought to be hiding in West Bengal.

She said both the Indian prime minister and the finance minister have "given me their word" that the Indira-Mujib agreement on land boundary and exchange of enclaves will be placed in the Indian parliament for ratification during its upcoming budget session scheduled for March 9.

The Bangladesh parliament has already ratified it.

Shahara also said Bangladesh was working on finalising the draft extradition treaty between India and Bangladesh.

Raise voice

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"No one will be able to protect the war criminals as it is the electoral pledge of the Awami League to try those who had committed crimes against humanity during 1971," said Azad quoting the prime minister.

Hasina asked the SCF leaders to be vigilant against any conspiracy to hinder the trial, he added.

Prime Minister's Energy Adviser Tawfiq-e-Elah Chowdhury and State Minister for Liberation War Affairs Capt (ret'd) AB Tajul Islam were present.

Young

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Industry & Services and Politics.

The final segment, out on the 29th of February, is titled "Today's Alchemists" and covers achievers in the fields of Social Activism, Entrepreneurship, Science & Technology and Sports.

We hope you enjoy the profiles of these 200-odd people that have been covered in the supplement. At the same time we encourage our readers to get in touch with us to bring us more stories of young people who we may have missed.

This supplement is part of the The Daily Star's broader initiative to use the inspirational stories of young people as a conduit to drive the country forward and build a better Bangladesh.

We hope our readers will agree that in spite of all the impediments our YOUTH are driving the country forward and we must do everything to assist them in every way possible. We at The Daily Star pledge to do so.

We hope you enjoy reading about our YOUNG achievers.

---Mahfuz Anam
Editor-publisher