

Grabbers feast on relief, rehab dept lands in Nilphamari

EAM ASADUZZAMAN,
Nilphamari

A considerable portion of 3,602 acres of land owned by government's relief and rehabilitation department in four upazilas of the district has gone into the hands of illegal occupiers due to lack of proper monitoring.

The then Pakistan government purchased the lands (through requisition) during 1947-1952 for sheltering people who migrated from India in the face of communal riots there.

Of the lands, 3,031.83 acres are in Dimla upazila, 543.10 acres in Sadar upazila, 22.50 acres in Jaldhaka upazila, and 4.41 acres in Saidpur upazila, said sources of the department concerned.

"A good number of Indian refugees were sheltered in small portions of those lands but most of it remained unutilised till independence of Bangladesh," said Aftabuddin Ahmed, upazila chairman of Dimla.

"After 1971, a section of unscrupulous people gradually encroached upon those lands and started handing over the 'possession' to others in exchange of money. For this, buyers and sellers usually make unregistered deeds on government stamps, which have no legal value," he informed.

A number of people in collusion with a section of dishonest land officials even made false land ownership documents and sold those lands through registration in local upazila land registry offices.



PHOTO: STAR

Dwellings of this colony at Naton Bazar in Nilphamari district, built for sheltering the refugees coming from India during the Pakistan period, are now mostly under illegal occupation. A large portion of 3,602 acres of lands acquired for the purpose in the district during 1947-1952 also faces similar fate as the government's relief and rehabilitation department, responsible for maintenance of the properties, has practically very little control over it.

During the last land survey, some people allegedly got large areas of the government lands recorded as private property through bribing a section of land officials but no action was taken although several written allegations were submitted to the higher authorities in this regard.

Project implementation officers (PIO) of the upazilas concerned are responsible for looking after the lands under the government's relief department.

But they remain busy

mostly in implementing different government projects and due to manpower shortage, they have very little capacity to do anything about the lands, sources said.

Several attempts by the district administration to recover the occupied lands saw little results due to various reasons while a section of local political leaders back the illegal occupiers.

Authorities during the last caretaker government in 2007-2008 took a few drastic steps to recover the

encroached lands but the initiative discontinued later.

According to the present market value, the price of the 3,602 acres of government land would be at least Tk 500 crore, land department sources said.

Sadar upazila vice chairman Shahid Mahmud suggested that the government fix up the value of those lands and realise it from the occupiers to hand it over to them through deeds.

District Relief and Rehabilitation Officer (DRRO) Abdul Mottalib

Mollah told this correspondent that a seven-member committee has been formed with the ADC (Revenue) as president and the DRRO as member secretary to recover the occupied lands.

As per direction of the ministry concerned, the committee, which is obliged to hold a meeting every month, is collecting all the particulars of every plot of land belonging to the relief department and recording them in registers to take further course of action, he added.

One to die, 6 get life for murder

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Mymensingh

A court here yesterday sentenced a man to death and six others to life term imprisonment in the sensational 'Sumon Murder Case' in the town.

Prime accused Saidul Islam was awarded capital punishment while Shamim, Abdul Bari Badal, Shahidul Islam Apu, Shahadat, Halim and Jhoton were sentenced for life.

Of the convicts, Shahadat, Halim and Jhoton were tried in absentia.

Aged between 25 and 35, all of them hailed from different areas of Mymensingh town.

According to the case story, a gang led by Saidul Islam, stabbed Tariqul Huda Sumon indiscriminately at a slum near Boro Pirer Mazar in the town at around 9pm on May 6 in 2006.

Sumon, a businessman and son of Abdul Bari of Gobinda Ganguly Road in the town, died on the spot.

Abducted man rescued

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Chapainawabganj

A Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) team early yesterday rescued an abducted man from Rahihati Bazar area in Shibganj upazila of the district.

The victim was identified as, Abdur Razzak, 52, son of Zafar Uddin of Kansat under the upazila.

Rab sources said, Razzak was kidnapped by an unidentified gang from Kansat Bazar area at around 3:00pm on Saturday. Later, the kidnappers demanded Tk 2 lakh as ransom from his family.

On secret information, Rab members raided area and rescued Razzak at around 1:10am.

SNIPPETS

Housewife killed for dowry

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sirajganj

A housewife was killed allegedly by her husband for dowry at Rainapara village in Belkuchi upazila on Saturday night. The victim is Jahanara Khatun, 25, daughter of Jamal Uddin of the village. Quamrul Islam, sub-inspector of Belkuchi police station, said her husband Matzul Islam used to torture her for dowry. Matzul strangled his wife at night following an altercation over the issue and went into hiding after the incident, said the SI.

Fugitive accused arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chapainawabganj

Members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) arrested two fugitive accused of a case in Kansat Bazar area under Shibganj upazila early yesterday. The arrestees are Kamal Uddin, 32, son of Nawsher Ali and Firoj Kabir, 21, son of Tokdir Islam of Nayalavanga village in the upazila. Police said on secret information, a team of Rab-5 raided the area at about 12:30am and arrested the duo. They were produced before a court that sent them to jail, said Jahangir Hossain, sub-inspector of Shibganj police station.

RMG workers demonstrate

A CORRESPONDENT, Narayanganj

Workers of an export-oriented garment factory yesterday blocked Narayanganj-Adamji-Demra road at Siddhirganj in Sadar upazila demanding arrears and transport facilities. Quoting witnesses, Quamrul Alam Molla, officer in-charge of Siddhirganj police station said workers of Reck Work Ltd at Godnail Chowdhurybari Bhuiyapara went on work abstention in the morning in favour of their demands. They blocked the road and burnt tyres at about 11:00am, halting traffic for about an hour. The agitators left the road following an assurance by police and ward councillor of Narayanganj City Corporation Ruhul Amin Molla of settling the matter with the factory authorities.

Man murdered

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A man was killed allegedly by his father-in-law at Dhanikhola Jayerpur village in Trishal upazila yesterday. The victim, Badruzzaman, 35, son of Abdur Razzak Sarker of Dhanikhola Bawaliapara village, is a farmer. Police said Badruzzaman visited the house of his father-in-law Shahidullah on Saturday night. Shahidullah hit his son-in-law with a wooden stick, leaving him critically injured following an altercation over a trivial matter. He was rushed to Mymensingh Medical College and Hospital (MMCH) where he died at about 5:00am. Badruzzaman might have been murdered due to a family feud, said Abdul Mannan Musnshi, sub-inspector of Trishal police station.

Roadblock for power

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

Locals put up barricade on Khilpara-Chandragonj road in Chatkhal upazil yesterday for about four hours, demanding smooth power supply in the area. The villagers of Khilpara and Chandragonj blocked the road from 9am to 1pm, creating huge traffic jam. There was no power supply for the last 20 days, said the angry mob. On information, police rushed to the spot and cleared the road. Contacted, Gopal Chandra Shib, residential engineer of REB, said they were not getting power supply from the national grid as per the local requirement.

Wall collapse kills woman

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole, Jessore

A housewife was killed when a wall of her house collapsed on her at Debdaspur village in Monirampur upazila on Saturday. The deceased was identified as Sakhina Begum, 30, wife of Haider Ali of the village. Haider said a portion of the wall of a room suddenly fell on Sakhina in the early morning. Critically injured, she was rushed to Jessore Medical College Hospital, where she succumbed to her injuries at night.

Robbers held with arms

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narail

Police arrested three alleged robbers along with lethal weapons while they were preparing to commit a robbery at Sujalpur village in Sadar upazila of Jessore early Saturday. The arrestees are Jewel, 25, son of Abul Kalam of Kholadanga village, Golam, 26, son of Mokbul Ahmed of Sujolpur village and Shafiqul Islam Babu, 27, son of Meher Ali of Raghunathpur village of the upazila. OC Abdul Jalil of Kotwali Model PS said, on secret information, they raided the area at about 5am and arrested them after a hot chase. Police recovered a bomb, two Chinese axes, three billhooks and one knife from their possession.

13 rescued in Benapole

UNB, Benapole, Jessore

Members of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) rescued 13 people, including six women and three children, from Puthkali border here while being trafficked to India yesterday. The victims hailed from Dhaka, Barisal and Narayanganj districts. BGB-26 Battalion Puthkali Company Commander Humayun Kabir said, on secret information, they raided Balir Math area of Puthkali border and rescued them in the early morning. However, no one was arrested as the human traffickers fled the scene sensing the presence of the border guards. The rescued people were handed over to Benapole port PS. The victims said the traffickers took money from them to send them to India promising good jobs there.



PHOTO: STAR

Students of Hajee Danesh Science and Technology University (HSTU) bring out a procession on the campus yesterday to mourn the death of Fahim Mahfuz Bipul, a final year student of veterinary department. The processionists also demanded immediate arrest and punishment of Bipul's killers.

Haji Danesh University

Classes stopped to avoid Bipul murder backlash

Mrinal, others yet to be arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Dinajpur

The authorities of Hajee Danesh Science and Technology University (HSTU) yesterday suspended all academic activities of the university for five days to avert any further untoward incident following the murder of a student near the campus on Saturday.

The decision came from a meeting of the academic council held at midnight on Saturday with Vice Chancellor Professor M Afzal Hossain in the chair.

Campus sources said the university will go on a 15-day summer vacation from June 15. Therefore, classes and examinations will remain suspended for 20 days until June 30.

Fahim Mahfuz Bipul, 23, a final year student of veterinary department and also the vice-president of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) HSTU unit, was stabbed to death in broad daylight on Saturday by an employee of the university. He hailed from Pirganj

Follow-up

upazila of Thakurgaon district.

The university unit of BCL is divided into two factions. One is led by President Iftekhar Ahmed Real while the other by General Secretary Arun Kanti Roy. Bipul belonged to Iftekhar faction.

Several clashes took place in recent times between the two factions over taking control of the campus and tender issues.

BCL university unit sources said Fahim was stabbed when two central BCL vice presidents--Mahmudul Hasan Maruf and Rezaul Hasib--were holding a meeting with the leaders of the two factions on the campus to settle their disputes.

According to police and witnesses, Mrinal Kumar Goswami, a class four employee at HSTU library department, and Bipul had an altercation over an issue at a tea stall near the campus at around 1:00pm and at one

stage, Mrinal stabbed Bipul in front of people, leaving him critically injured.

Locals rescued Bipul and took him to Dinajpur Medical College and Hospital where he died at around 2:40pm.

BCL sources said Mrinal has a link with BCL Arun faction and is also involved in tender issues on the campus. He called Bipul to the tea stall over cellphone when he (Bipul) and other members of Iftekhar faction were holding talks with BCL central leaders, sources added.

Mrinal went into hiding soon after the incident. Contacted, Aslam Iqbal, officer-in-charge of Dinajpur Police Station, said they are raiding different areas to arrest Mrinal.

Students of the university yesterday took out a procession on the campus demanding immediate arrest of Mrinal and others involved in the killing.

Bipul was buried at his family graveyard in Pirganj yesterday morning.

KAZIRHAT-PATURIA SERVICE RESUMES

Vehicles remain stranded for want of ferries

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR
TOPU, Pabna

Resumption of ferry service on Kazirhat-Paturia route has failed to make the truckers happy as 40 to 50 trucks get stranded at the entrance of Kazirhat terminal daily due to lack of sufficient ferries.

After five years of virtual suspension, Kazirhat-Paturia ferry service resumed on May 18 this year and Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC) engaged two K-type ferries for the purpose.

But they are too inadequate to accommodate the vehicles coming to the terminal and the BIWTC authorities have to incur losses due to high fuel cost on the 19-kilometre route, sources said.

To reduce the distance by half and add more ferries on the route, BIWTC authorities have proposed shifting Kazirhat ferry terminal to Khoyarchar point.

During a visit to Kazirhat terminal yesterday, this correspondent found long

queues of loaded trucks waiting for ferries.

"We are going to the capital with raw materials. We came to the terminal in the morning but yet to get any ferry. We often face the same regularly as there is not enough ferries here," truck driver Md Abdur Rahim said in the afternoon.

Several other truck drivers waiting there echoed the same.

"Some 80 to 100 trucks go to the capital daily from the district. But due to the shortage of ferries at Kazirhat terminal, many truck drivers move to Jamuna bridge," Md Shahidul Islam, president of Pabna district unit of truck owners association.

Md Sabbir Rahman Mishtu, ticket counter operator of Kazirhat ferry terminal, said 30 to 35 trucks cross the route on two K-type ferries in three trips but 40 to 50 trucks often get stranded at the entrance. Ro-Ro ferries are essential to run the ferry service smoothly.

Officials of BIWTC said they have to incur huge

losses to run ferry service on Kazirhat-Paturia route.

"Operation of a K-type ferry on the 19-kilometre Kazirhat-Paturia route requires Tk 23 to 25 thousand as fuel cost for each trip (up and down) but it brings only Tk 15 to 20 thousand as fare," said Md Shahadat Hossain, deputy general manager of BIWTC.

"If Kazirhat terminal is shifted to Khoyarchar point the distance will be reduced by 10km and it will save 50 percent of the fuel cost. Shifting the ferry terminal is also necessary for operating of Ro-Ro ferries on the route as the existing terminal is too small," he said.

Truck owners and truck drivers' association leaders jointly informed the shipping minister and the planning minister about the poor ferry service on this route and demanded introducing sufficient ferries there, said Abul Hossain Khan Mohon, president of Pabna district truck owners association.



PHOTO: STAR

Loaded trucks get stuck in a long tailback near Kazirhat terminal yesterday as they fail to avail a ferry to reach Paturia on the other end of the route. The spot often sees a similar situation due to shortage of ferries on the important route.