

25 injured in clashes over land disputes

STAR NATIONAL DESK

At least 25 people were injured as rival villagers clashed in Gaibandha and Rangpur districts over disputed lands yesterday and the day before.

At least 17 people were injured in a clash between two groups over capturing *khas* land at Bhati Kapasia village in Sunderganj upazila of Gaibandha yesterday, reports our correspondent.

Locals said a group of landless people had been living on 4 plots of *khas* land in Kapasia shoal areas for long. They were preparing to cultivate *aman* seedlings on the lands.

Yesterday, land grabber Musa Mia of village Chandipur in the upazila along with about 100 hired goons attacked the landless peasants with deadly weapons to vacate the land.

The gang beat up the family members of the landless peasants, injuring 17.

In Rangpur, eight people were hacked during a feud over land at Manshingapur Pulpura village under Radhanagar union at Badarganj upazila on Wednesday afternoon, reports our correspondent.

The injured were identified as Abdul Kader, 48, Amjad Hossain, 80, father of Abdul Kader, Shahinur Begum, 43, wife of Abdul Kader, Nur-e-Jannat Sumi, 22, daughter of Abdul Kader and his brother Mitaleb Hossain Babu, 25, Saiful Islam, 50, Rashidul Islam, 38, and Jabbar Islam, 42.

Police and locals said, Abdul Kader purchased 70 decimals of land from his uncle Tobarok Ali. But Azizur Rahman and Abdur Rauf, another two uncles of Kader, objected.

There was a longstanding dispute between Kader and his uncles over the matter.

The rival groups locked in an altercation over the matter on Wednesday afternoon. At one stage, Azizur, Rauf and their men hacked Kader and others with sharp weapon, leaving them critically injured.



Workers at Saidpur railway workshop in Nilphamari rebuilding railway carriages with recycled scraps.

PHOTO: STAR

Railway carriages now being rebuilt, not just repaired

EAM ASADUZZAMAN, Nilphamari

A vibrant team at Saidpur railway workshop is rebuilding railway carriages with the help of recycled scrap materials.

The team has gone out of their traditional way of just repairing and overhauling the carriages. The project would not only discourage Bangladesh Railway's (BR) long practice of import but also save huge amounts of foreign currency.

Since 2009, BR's initiative of "Carriage Rehabilitation Project" is aiming to build 60 broad gauge railway carriages from scraps within 2013, Monzur Alam Chowdhury, divisional superintendent (DS) of Saidpur railway workshop said. A private firm has been involved to share the Tk 27.42 crore project. So far the team has already 'rehabilitated' 20 carriages from scraps retrieved from the junk carriages, dumped at the workshop.

Established in 1870, Saidpur railway workshop was one of the largest and best equipped workshops in the then undivided India. But alleged negligence towards the rail sector by successive governments has rendered it inefficient and useless. However, this rehabilitation programme comes at a time when the

entire country realises the importance of improving the railway sector along side the road sector, officials observed.

"Under this project, 30 more rail carriages are being rehabilitated. Twenty carriages built earlier have already been pressed into service in the West Zone," Chowdhury said.

During a recent visit to the workshop, this correspondent found workers and engineers working on four dilapidated carriages. The bodies of the carriages were broken and badly rusted. Workers were found busy cutting the old metal plates manually. They used simple locally made tools to dismantle the structures. The shed of the workshop did not have any electric fans and the heat generated inside the workshop could be clearly seen on the faces of the working men.

Mosharaf Hossain, sub assistant engineer at the carriage shop said that the rehabilitated carriages get almost the same economic life like those of the imported carriages.

This job of rebuilding the carriages is quite arduous for a team of 228 men in different sections of the workshop, he said.

"Here the workers are really sincere in doing the job but they are slowed down

for lack of necessary equipment," said works manager Omar Faruk.

Zahirul Islam Zahir, a worker at the carriage shop, observed that for them the job is a big challenge. "We have to prove our potentiality by using manual labour and simple tools only. We want more facilities and would like to urge the government to continue this project for the benefit of the country," Zahir said.

Moksedul Momin, president of Jatiyo Sramik League railway workshop unit in Saidpur, said that only Tk 34 lakh was spent for building each new carriage.

"If you go to import the same carriage, it would cost around Tk 3-4 crore each. Thus the project helped save crores," Momin added.

The general manager (GM) of Western Zone of Bangladesh Railway, Ferdous Alam, told this correspondent that the government has undertaken such a project for the first time.

"It has been proven now that modern and new carriages can also be built at a very cheap rate at Saidpur workshop," he said.

"But we urgently need to upgrade the existing machines and recruit more skilled manpower for this workshop," added Alam.

Prisoner's 'mysterious' death at court *haj*

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

An under trial prisoner was found dead at a court *haj* (custody) in Rangpur on Tuesday.

He was identified as Mosharraf Hossain Babu, 35, son of late Momtaj Ali of Purbo Khasbagh area in Rangpur city. Babu was arrested in a drug smuggling case on September 27 in 2011.

Police brought Babu to the court *haj* in the morning to produce him in the Chief Judicial Magistrate's Court-4 in connection with the case.

Some prisoners, who were also brought to the custody from jail, said on condition of anonymity that police demanded Tk 400 from Babu's mother to buy food for him.

As Babu's mother refused to give them (police) money, they stopped supplying food to him, the prisoners said, adding that Babu locked

in an altercation with the police men over the issue and at one stage, they strangled him.

Refuting the allegation, police said the under trial prisoner committed suicide by hanging himself from the ventilator of toilet of the court *haj*.

They sent the body to Rangpur Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy. A UD case was lodged with Kotwali Police Station the same day.

Family members alleged that Babu was tortured to death at the court *haj*. A procession was also brought out on the court premises on the day demanding exemplary punishment to the persons responsible for Babu's death.

Citing the autopsy report, Officer-in-Charge of Kotwali Police Station Altaf Hossain yesterday told this correspondent that the under trial prisoner committed suicide.

2 children drown in Chandpur

UNB, Chandpur

Two children drowned in Meghna River at Jafrabad village in Sadar upazila on Wednesday afternoon.

The deceased were identified as Sabbir, 5, son of Hashim Bepari and Kabir Hossain, 7, son of Khokon Khan of the village.

Locals said, Sabbir suddenly fell into the river near their house while playing on its bank with Kabir in the afternoon. Kabir also drowned as he tried to save his friend.

Both the boys did not know how to swim.

Later, local people and family members rescued the boys and took them to 250-bed Chandpur General Hospital where the attending doctors declared them dead.

A pall of gloom descended over the area following the tragic death of the two children.



PHOTO: STAR

Hindu devotees celebrated Janmastami, the birth anniversary of the god incarnate Sri Krishna, across the country yesterday. The photo was taken from a procession in Lalmonirhat town.

8 of 15 villagers abducted in Rangamati yet to be freed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

Police and army are yet to rescue the eight villagers abducted by an armed gang from Rajdwp area of the town.

The gang on Wednesday night picked up 15 villagers. They are Sujat Chakma, Shoibal Dewan, Probal Dewan, Suprakash Chakma, Anni Chakma, Nipam Marma Shukra, Sadhan Chakma, Suvas Chakma, Nirupam Chakma, Rupayan Chakma, Sindhu Chakma, Biswanath Chakma, Swapan Chakma, Bipul Chakma and

Kakya Chakma.

The abductors came to Lechubagan of Rajdwp in engine boat at about 8:00pm and took all the 15 to the deep forest, said Saiful Islam, officer in-charge (OC) of Kotwali police station.

The criminals released seven of them at night. They are Sadhan Chakma, Nirupam Chakma, Suvas Chakma, Shoibal Dewan, Probal Dewan, Anni Chakma and Biswanath Chakma.

"We have communicated with the kidnappers and urged them to free the rest of the villagers," said Kalayan

Chakma, councilor of Rangamati municipality.

But he could neither identify the abductors nor explain why they kidnapped the villagers.

Army and police are conducting a combined operation in different areas to trace out the remaining villagers, said the OC.

Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) in a press release on Wednesday night blamed its rival United People's Democratic Front (UPDF) for the abduction.

However, UPDF refuted the allegation.



A colourful procession in Mymensingh town, marking International Day of the World's Indigenous People yesterday, right, Jatiya Adivasi Parishad Thakurgaon unit marching on the streets of the town demanding constitutional recognition as indigenous people.



PHOTO: STAR

Recognition as 'indigenous' demanded

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Ethnic communities across the country yesterday observed the International Day of the World's Indigenous People with demand for their constitutional recognition as 'indigenous people'.

The leaders of different ethnic communities at a rally in Rangamati Town Hall yesterday urged the government to take steps for ensuring their political, economic and social rights, reports our Rangamati correspondent.

Criticising the foreign minister for her statement that there are no indigenous people in Bangladesh, the speakers said the ethnic peoples in Bangladesh fulfil all criteria, as per ILO convention, to be regarded as indigenous people.

They criticised the present government for failure to fully implement Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) peace accord and solution to land dispute in CHT region.

Renowned educationist Dr Manik Lal Dewan inaugurated the rally.

Ushatam Talukder, member of CHT Regional Council, attended as chief guest at the rally presided over

by Prakriti Ranjan Chakma, president of Bangladesh Adivasi Forum, CHT chapter.

Later a mammoth colourful procession joined by indigenous people from different far flung areas paraded main thoroughfares in the town.

On the other hand, Samo Odhikar Andolan, a platform for Bangalee settlers in CHT, formed a human chain at New Court Building area in the town yesterday, urging the government not to recognise the jumma community in CHT as indigenous people.

Our Khagrachhari Correspondent reports: MN Larma faction of Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) at a rally held at Surjashikha Club ground in the district town yesterday demanded cancellation of the 15th amendment of the constitution and official recognition of the ethnic communities as indigenous people.

The speakers at the rally urged the government to take immediate initiative for ensuring their fundamental rights including those regarding land, culture, education and language.

The also demanded the full implementation of CHT peace treaty.

Sudha Sindhu Khisha, co-chairman of central PCJSS (MN Larma faction), presided over the programme where educationist Ananta Bihari Khisha attended as chief guest.

Meanwhile, the PCJSS activists blocked Khagrachhari-Mahalchhari road for four hours from 9:00am yesterday after their fleet of vehicles faced obstacle while going to join a programme organised on the occasion of the International Day of the World's Indigenous People.

The blockade was withdrawn at around 1:00pm after a negotiation with the local administration.

Earlier, Bangladesh Adivasi Forum and Bangladesh Marma Oikya Parishad formed a human chain at Golabari of Khagrachhari district town yesterday.

Our Thakurgaon reports: Thakurgaon district unit of Jatiya Adivasi Parishad, a platform of the ethnic communities, yesterday organised different programmes marking International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples with demand for their constitutional recognition as indigenous people.

At a discussion at Thakurgaon Press

Club auditorium, the speakers demanded establishing constitutional rights of indigenous people and formation of a separate land commission to protect land rights of the indigenous people living on plan lands.

District unit Pof Jatiya Adivasi Parishad Surjo Mormu presided over the meeting while advisor of district unit of Jatiya Adivasi Parishad advocate Imran Hossain Chowdhury attended there as chief guest.

They urged the government to save the indigenous people from the land grabbers and withdraw all false cases against the indigenous people.

Our Barisal Correspondent adds: Rakhaine community people and socio-cultural-human rights activists on Wednesday organised rally and discussion Patuakhali and were organised in Kalapara of Patuakhali and Taltali upazila of Barguna.

Speakers at the programmes urged the government to establish a separate ministry to ensure the ownership and right to live on their ancestral land for the plain land indigenous people of the country.

Similar programmes were also held in different areas including Mymensingh and Pabna.

Jubo Dal man murdered in Comilla

UNB, Comila

A Jubo Dal activist was brutally murdered at Chanpur near Harun Govt Primary School in the city early yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Jasim, 25, a worker of Jubo Dal and son of Ismail Mia of Old Chowdhury para.

Local people said a gang of criminals waylaid Jasim and stabbed him indiscriminately with sharp weapons at about 1:00 am in the area while he was returning home by his motorbike. He died on the way to Comilla Medical College Hospital.

Later, police recovered the body and sent it to hospital morgue for autopsy.

Police suspected that Jasim was killed by the gang due to previous enmity.

Two housewives killed allegedly for dowry

UNB, Satkhira

A housewife was beaten to death allegedly by her husband for dowry at Machhiara village in Tala upazila of Satkhira district on Tuesday night.

The victim was identified as Tanjila Khatun, 22, wife of Salam Sardar of the village.

Family sources said Salman used to torture Tanjila, daughter of Nazrul Gazi of Jeyala Nalta village of the same upazila for dowry since their marriage four years back.

On the fateful night, Salman picked up a quarrel with Rozina over the issue and at one stage beat her mercilessly, leaving her dead on the spot.

Salman went into hiding after the incident.

Tanjila's father filed a murder case with Tala PS.

In Gazipur, a garment worker was stabbed to death allegedly by her husband for dowry at Kashimpur in Sadar upazila early Wednesday.

The victim was identified as Rozina Khatun, 25, a worker of Kashimpur BD Cotton Club and wife of Hannan Mia.

Police and local people said Hannan used to torture Rozina for dowry since their marriage a few years back.

On the fateful night, Hannan picked up a quarrel with Rozina over the issue and at one stage stabbed her indiscriminately, leaving her dead on the spot.

Hannan went into hiding after the murder.