

TEESTA WATER SHARING DEAL Indian expert finishes survey

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Leading water expert Kalyan Rudra, heading the one-man commission set up by West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee to find an acceptable solution to Teesta river water sharing with Bangladesh, has said he has done his studies and is ready to finalise the report whenever he is asked to.

"I met Mamata Banerjee three months back and she told me to continue collecting the data and figures for some more time, as there were some discrepancies in the data provided by the Central Water Committee," Rudra said.

In September last year, Mamata had pulled out of Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's visit to Dhaka, opposing at the eleventh hour the proposed Teesta water sharing agreement, upstaging the signing of deal.

Meanwhile, India's former Central Ground Water Board member SP Sinha Ray predicted the Teesta River water sharing pact with Bangladesh would take time before it was concluded.

"The Teesta agreement still has some time to go because neither Sikkim state nor West Bengal state is fully aware of their rights about the river. Unless these rights are quantified and measured, how the agreement with Bangladesh can be concluded," Ray told a programme in Kolkata on Wednesday.



Workers unload free government textbooks meant for distribution among primary and secondary school students at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar in the capital yesterday. The government will start distributing the textbooks from January 1 so that those reach all students by the first week of the new academic session.

PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

38 Shibir men on remand

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday placed 38 leaders and activists of pro-Jamaat student body Islami Chhatra Shibir who were arrested in the capital on Thursday and Friday on a three-day remand.

Of them, 28 were shown arrested in a case filed with Tejgaon Police Station and the rest in another case with Jatrabari Police Station.

They were sued for vandalising and torching vehicles and preventing police from discharging duties on December 13 when BNP-led opposition's countrywide hartal was underway.

Police said most of the arrestees were unit presidents and general secretaries of Shibir's west zone in the capital.

Meanwhile, the Detective Branch of Police yesterday said Shibir activists were using stickers reading "press" on their motorbikes while launching sudden attacks on law enforcers.

They are also using those vehicles to transport anti-government books, leaflets as police usually do not intercept journalists' vehicles, it said.

The detectives extracted the information from the 38 remanded Shibir men. Yesterday, they seized five motorbikes marked with press stickers and six more activists.

A DB official told The Daily Star last night that they seized laptops from the detainees, which contained names of some activists, who were assigned to carry out subversive activities in the capital. The DB got 31 names in the laptops and has launched raids on their hideouts.

6 drown after boat capsizes

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Magura

Six people, including three of a family, drowned when an overloaded boat capsized in the Nabaganga river in Magura yesterday.

Deceased, Nirapada Pramanik, 62, assistant teacher of Buzruk Sreekundi Government Primary School, and Prajit Pramanik, 57, were brothers, and 13-year-old Dipro Pramanik was the grandson of Nirapada.

The other victims are Bijit Pramanik, 70, Uttam Pramanik, 50, and Kajol Mondol, 55, all hailing from Buzruk Sreekundi village of the district.

Quoting locals, police said the small boat carrying around 17 people capsized in the middle of the river around 1:30am. It had a maximum capacity for carrying 12 people. The other passengers swam ashore.

Tabibur Rahman, upazila nirbahi officer in Magura, gave Tk 25,000 to the six deceased's families.

VIOLENCE, POLICE PRESENCE ON CAMPUS RU students, teachers express dismay

RU CORRESPONDENT

Academic activities in Rajshahi University is not only being impeded by a politically volatile situation but also by the presence of over 500 policemen deployed there around the clock since 2009.

Teachers and students expressed their fear and discomfort at the constant sight of law enforcers around them, stating that the ambiance of campus life had vanished and they were unable to concentrate on their works.

The authorities deployed over 500 policemen following bloody clashes between pro-Jamaat student organisation Islami Chhatra Shibir and pro-Awami League student organisation Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) that left Shibir secretary Sharifuzzaman Nomani dead on March 13, 2009.

Rafiq Ahmed, a first year student of mass communication and journalism department, said the constant sight of armed policemen everywhere made him anxious.

A residential student of Shaheed Shamsuzzoha Hall, Mazedur Rahman, said he felt embarrassed at being encircled round the clock by policemen.

"I can not even sing a song while walking on the campus after studies as I feel like an inmate inside a prison with policemen at every point of the campus," he said.

Over 26,000 students are enrolled in RU out of which 8,000 students reside in the university's halls.

Many teachers and students opined that such a huge deployment of law enforcers, however, had not deterred clashes while violence, extortion, snatching, beating and other illicit activities had continued unabated.

Since the deployment of police, over 100 violent clashes took place on the campus claiming the lives of three students and leaving over 600 injured, campus sources said.

The role of police came under stern criticism first after the February 9, 2010 violence on the campus.

That day, Shibir cadres hacked over 100 BCL men. BCL activist Faruq Hossain was hacked and his tendons were cut in front

of police and later his body was dumped into a manhole, campus sources said.

Shipon Ahmed, president of RU unit of Bangladesh Chhatra Union, said the university authorities chose to be silent spectators alongside the law enforcers, which in turn has been encouraging the perpetrators on the campus.

"The authorities have not taken any step against the perpetrators of BCL or Shibir who regularly create anarchy on the campus," he said.

Resident students are leaving their halls everyday and starting to live in rented houses outside the campus over a feeling of total insecurity following the recent incidents of violence, said Iqbal Ahmed, president of RU unit Bangladesh Chhatra Moitree.

Selim Reza Newton, an RU professor who was jailed following the August 2007 unrest on the campus during the then caretaker government, said police failed to ensure security of the students and teachers.

"The police presence is also spoiling the congenial academic mood on the campus," said the member of "Swadhin Shikkhak Network", a newly launched teachers' forum of RU.

"The authorities have turned the campus into a large prison which has totally eliminated the open intellectual practices," added Prof Newton.

The on-duty police on the campus deployed to avert unwanted situations were not inactive, claimed Deputy Commissioner of Police of Motihar zone (East) SM Mahmud.

Police have strengthened patrolling on the campus to ensure security. "It is difficult to take effective steps to avert untoward situations as criminals always commit crimes in a preplanned way," he said.

Denying all allegations, RU Proctor Chowdhury Muhammad Zakaria said they deployed policemen to ensure security of students. "Police presence is to bring a congenial atmosphere on the campus," he added.

RU Vice Chancellor Prof Abdus Sobhan and Pro-Vice Chancellor Prof Muhammad Nurullah were not available for comment.

Growing slums beset Ctg city with multifarious problems

MINHAJ UDDIN, Ctg

A host of environmental and social problems beset the port city of Chittagong due to mushrooming of slums, which is largely blamed on unplanned urbanisation.

More than two hundred slums accommodating some 10 lakh people are scattered across the city, shows a 2010 survey of Chittagong City Corporation.

These people make up 20 percent of the total CCC population.

Residents of the neighbourhoods around the slums observe that the slum areas have been a haven for criminal and anti-social activities.

"All sorts of crimes, including drug peddling, burglary, mugging, and prostitution, centre around the slum areas," Abu Kalam, a shopkeeper in Postogola area, next to Dewanhat slum, told The Daily Star.

"If you walk in the area at night you can see with your own eyes which kind of criminal activities take place there."

Many more residents of the neighbourhoods have similar observations and say the slums are used for storing and transiting illicit drugs.

From the embankment of Patenga sea beach to the hilltops of Tigerpass, wherever there are empty places,

slums have grown at an alarming pace.

Majority of these slums are situated on the Ice Factory road, along the railway tracks under Dewanhat Bridge, Sholosohor No-2 gate area, Pahartali, Chittagong Railway Station, and Lalkhan Bazar Mati Jhorna area.

The alarming growth of slums has environmental consequences too. This occurs largely due to harsh living conditions there.

Deprived of basic facilities like water, electricity, and sanitation, the slum people resort to open defecation, seriously polluting the environment.

In Dewanhat slum, there are only four to five toilets for about two thousand inhabitants. Latifa Begum, a domestic help and resident of the slum, said, "Every time we have to stand in a long queue to go to a toilet."

Dr Ali, health officer of the CCC, said nearly 50 NGOs provided facilities like education, water supply, sanitation, and healthcare to the slums, but serving such a huge number slum people was beyond their capacity.

As the slums grow, more spaces are required. This is why hills and trees are cut, putting at risk the environment as well as the lives of those

slum residents for recurring landslide.

Noted urban planner Architect Jerina Hossain said, "If we want to build Chittagong as a modern and aesthetically beautiful city, it is inevitable to rehabilitate the slum people as soon as possible."

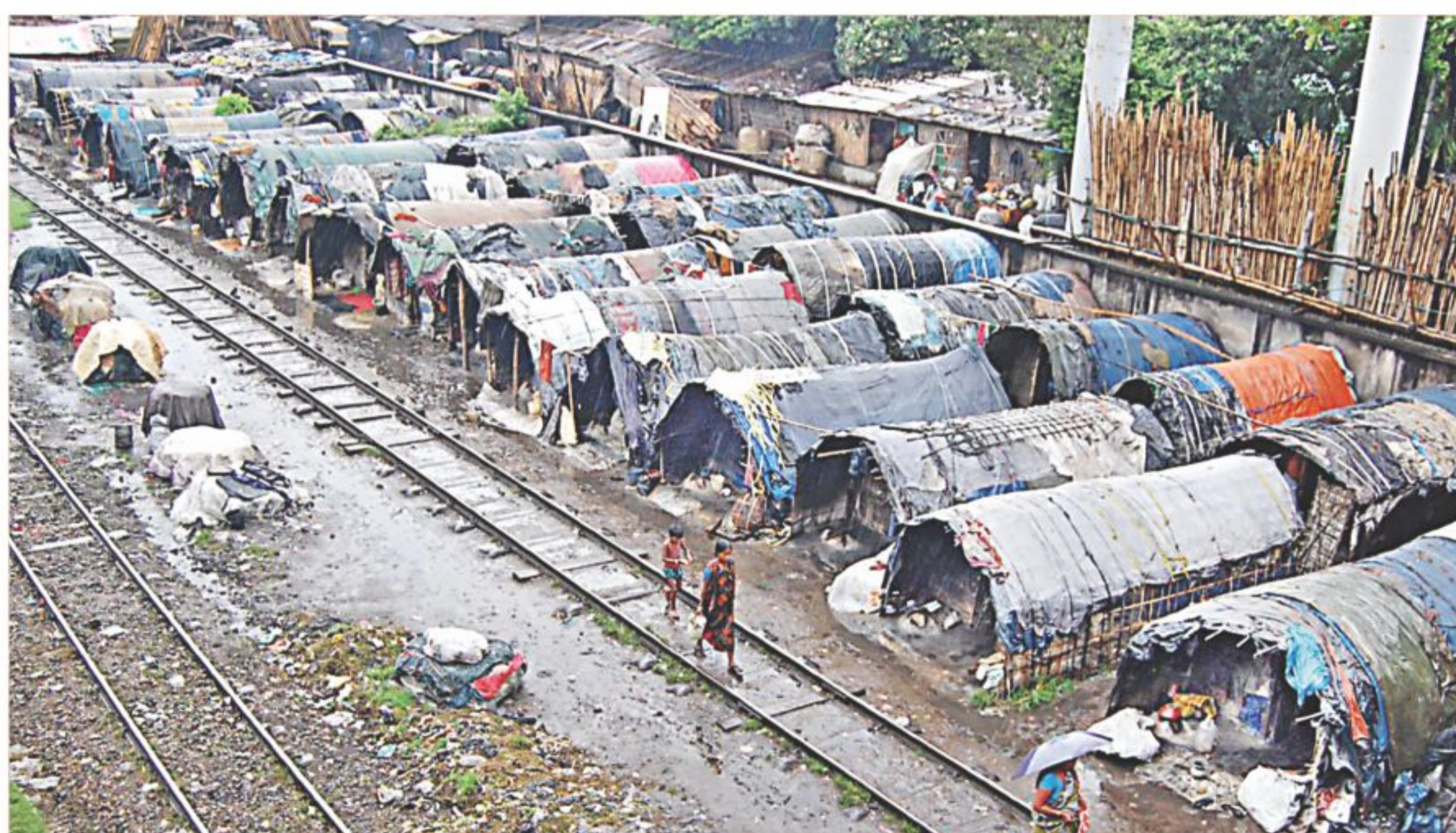
He laid stress on political intention to do so and said many countries, including Thailand, had reduced the number of slums to almost zero.

CCC and Chittagong Development Authority can construct multi-storeyed buildings with cheap, small flats for slum dwellers, he said.

Khaled Mamun Chowdhury, additional deputy commissioner of Chittagong, said they did not plan to rehabilitate slum people right now due to space constraint.

The district administration however urged CCC, Bangladesh railway, and Water Development Board to rehabilitate the slums dwellers, he said.

Ahmedul Haque, estate officer of CCC, said the city corporation would construct a seven-storey building to house nearly 200 poor families living in Tigerpass hill area now. The project will be completed within a year, he added.



Shanties being set up along rail tracks without taking into consideration the dangers it may bring, as hordes of poor people are migrating to Chittagong city from across the country these days. The photo was taken in Dewanhat area recently.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

SUSPECTED LINK TO TERROR OUTFIT Bangladeshi held in India

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

A Bangladeshi national, Hasibul Jamal Hasu, was arrested by a special task force of police in Kolkata on Friday for his suspected links with Pakistan-based terror outfit Harkatul Jihad al Islami (HuJI).

Another suspected HuJI activist Mizanur Rehman, who was arrested on Wednesday, had met militant group Indian Mujahideen's Second-in-Command Amir Reza Khan in 2008 at a training camp in Bangladesh, according to the task force.

Hasu had been in regular touch with Mizanur for the past 18 months and he had no valid documents to stay in India, it said.

"We have arrested Hasu," said an officer of the task force, "and after production before the court, he has been remanded in

custody till December 30."

Police said Mizanur was one of the few operatives in India who had direct links with Reza Khan.

A probe showed Mizanur had in recent years acted as a liaison between the leaders of HuJI and its Bangladesh chapter and was active in recruiting youths from Bangladesh.

The task force claimed Mizanur, 45, who was a prime accused in the abduction of prominent Indian businessman Partha Roy Burman, was one of the key logistic suppliers to HuJI activists involved in the blasts in India's Uttar Pradesh state and Delhi.

Police expect Mizanur will provide leads about Reza Khan who has remained elusive since the terror attack on United States Information Service in Kolkata in 2002.

Road crashes kill 6

METRO DESK

Road accidents killed six people and injured ten others in three districts yesterday.

Our Faridpur correspondent reports, three persons were killed and ten others injured as a bus fell into a ditch beside Faridpur-Saltha road in Balia Bazar area of Saltha yesterday.

The deceased were Hashi, Panna, 30, and her son Neamat.

In Gopalganj, a microbus hit Sohan, 15, on Gopalganj-Tungipara road at Charboya in sadar upazila, killing him yesterday.

Locals blocked the road for half an hour. Meanwhile, Salam, 40, died as he fell down off a human hauler in Bajunia area yesterday.

In Chittagong, an unidentified man died as a truck hit him in Nimtola of the city yesterday.



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