

MOTIVE TO GRAB LAND

60 indigenous families living in fear of attacks

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

At least 60 Santal families at Khalippur Adivasipara village in the district's Nawabganj upazila are living in fear of attacks and have almost stopped going outside their village.

A gang of criminals on May 9 tortured four people of the community, hanging them from a tree. They were critically injured.

The victims are Som Soren, Babulal Soren, Sonaram Tudu and Bablu Soren. Of them, Babulal and Sonaram have been undergoing treatment at Dinajpur Medical College Hospital.

The victims alleged that a motive of grabbing their cultivable land is the reason behind the attack.

Locals said a gang led by Mahbubur Rahman, an influential man of Kazipara village, swooped on the four people when they were loading their paddy harvest onto a tractor-trailer in the village and beat them up.

The attackers also hung the four from a banyan tree and tortured them inhumanly, said Som Soren, one of the victims.

Their hands, legs and other parts of

the body were badly injured. They lost consciousness, said another victim, Sonaram Tudu.

Sonaram filed a case with Nawabganj Police Station on May 14, accusing eight people, including Mahbubur, of the crime.

The victims alleged that Rafiqul Islam, another accused in the case, had threatened them with dire consequences for filing the case.

During a visit to Khalippur Adivasipara on Thursday, this correspondent found the indigenous people living in fear. Nobody dared to say anything about the attack.

Injured Bablu, who is the lone bread earner of his family, cannot walk without his father's support.

"Bablu cannot move without me as both his legs have been fractured," said Mongal Soren, father of Bablu.

Meanwhile, villagers are patrolling the village to prevent any attack.

"How long can we do this?" questioned Nirata Tudu, wife of Som Soren.

Amirul Islam, officer-in-charge of Nawabganj Police Station, said police had arrested Mahbubur.

They are trying to nab the other accused, he added.



The indigenous families of Khalippur Adivasipara of Nawabganj upazila in Dinajpur are living in fear of attacks from local criminals who want to seize their arable land. Inset, Som Soren walking with a stick after he had been tortured on May 9.

PHOTO: STAR



Ex-PM Yingluck freed

FROM PAGE 16

after a tense standoff with armed soldiers in the city's retail heart.

It was the largest expression of dissent since the army seized power on Thursday after months of political turmoil.

There was no sign of soldiers or police on the streets during the march Sunday, which went ahead despite a junta statement calling on people not to protest and a martial law ban on gatherings of more than five people.

The military has detained scores of ousted government leaders and political figures, including Yingluck, since the coup, which brought sharp international criticism.

The armed forces seized power in a coup Thursday after months of turmoil that paralysed much of the government and caused deadly clashes in Bangkok.

Yingluck was freed after she reported to the Thai military, the junta source told CNN, adding that the former prime minister was asked to "help us maintain peace and order and not to get involved with protesters or any political movement."

The military source, who spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the situation, insisted that Yingluck has freedom of movement and communications.

A close aide to the former prime minister could not confirm when Yingluck was released, and contradicted the military's assertion that she was free to move around.

Bangkok has seen several smaller outbreaks of protest against the junta since army chief General Prayut Chan-O-Cha launched his takeover on Thursday.

Witnesses also reported demonstrations overnight in parts of the Shinawatra family's northern power base, with rallies in the city of Khon Kaen and a heavy military presence in Thailand's second largest city Chiang Mai.

More organized protests are expected in the capital today.

The junta on Saturday announced it had disbanded the Senate and placed all law-making authority in Prayut's hands. Civil liberties have been curbed, media restrictions imposed and most of the constitution abrogated.

Mostly Hindus

FROM PAGE 16

During his two-hour testimony, Matin, a resident of Guniauk under Nasirnagar, said he was a neighbour of Manjur Ali, a Muslim League leader and maternal uncle of Qaisar.

In mid-April, a Peace Committee was formed at Manjur Ali's home and Qaisar was appointed as the chief patron of the anti-liberation organisation, said the 64-year-old witness.

Qaisar had also formed Qaisar Bahini comprising 400 to 500 people from Nasirnagar and his hometown Madhabpur to assist the Pakistan army and started looting and torching houses of the Hindu community there, said Matin.

On June 23, Qaisar and his cohorts had attacked the home of Golam Noor of neighbouring Haripur village, looted and burned down their houses and picked up Noor's brother Golam Rouf, added Matin, also former chairman of Guniauk Union Parishad.

The witness said he had seen Rouf from his house when Qaisar and his men brought him to Manjur Ali's house and later took him to his village house in Madhabpur.

Earlier, Rouf's wife Nishamon testified that Qaisar and his cohorts had tortured her husband and father-in-law, taken away her husband and burned their house. Her husband was released in exchange of a ransom, but her father-in-law died after two weeks due to the torture, she added.

Noor also gave almost identical testimony over the incident.

Matin said being frightened of such incidents, he had gone to India and after taking training returned to Bangladesh in September to take part in the Liberation War and taken shelter at Nasirnagar.

"In the meantime, I got information that Manjur Ali, his two nephews, a grandson Kamal and members of Qaisar Bahini had looted our houses," he said.

Matin said as they had information from sources that Qaisar, his force and the Pakistan army were planning a massive operation in Nasirnagar, freedom fighters in small groups took shelter in different places and he along

with five to six people had taken shelter in Chitna village.

"On the night of November 14, 1971, we got information from our sources that Qaisar, his men, nephews of Manjur Ali and like-minded people had held a meeting at the rest house of Manjur Ali and decided to carry out a massive operation in Nasirnagar on November 15 with the Pakistan army," he said.

Matin said in the morning of November 15, Kutub Raza, a pro-liberation man from his village, had arrived in Chitna village and informed him that 1,000 to 1,200 Pakistani army and Qaisar Bahini gathered at Manjur Ali's house to carry out the operation.

Getting the information, Matin and his group members had taken shelter at a cremation ground and around 9:30am they heard gunshots from nearby Gutna village, added the witness.

"From the hideout, we saw Qaisar and 40 to 50 members of Qaisar Bahini approaching Chitna village chanting slogans 'Naraye Takbir Allahu Akbar', 'Pakistan Zindabad'. Some 40 to 50 Pakistani army men followed them," said Matin.

"I could identify Tajul Islam and Joj Mia, who were Razakars of Haripur village and some others," said Matin, adding, "Then Qaisar divided his men in two groups and sent one group towards Burunga village and led another group towards Chitna village."

The next day he along with his group members visited five villages including Chitna secretly and found 31 people were killed there, said Matin, adding that later he had learned that more than a hundred people, mostly Hindus, were killed in that attack on 22 villages.

Matin, who identified Qaisar in the courtroom and sought justice, said the accused had fled the area before December 8 when Madhabpur was freed.

The three-member tribunal led by Justice Obaidul Hassan, with members Justice Md Mozibur Rahman and Justice Md Shahinur Islam, adjourned the proceedings until today when Matin will face cross-examination.

Very constructive

Mozena speaks of Dhaka's ties with China, India

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has deepening partnership with China and India, which is constructive and advantageous for everybody, US Ambassador in Dhaka Dan W Mozena said yesterday.

Referring to China Major Bridge Engineering Company that got the job of constructing the Padma bridge, he said Chinese engagement here was good and that the bridge would make a huge contribution to the country's gross domestic product (GDP).

Speaking at a lecture on the US-Bangladesh partnership, the US envoy also said Bangladesh had no option but to have good relations with India.

"Look at the map....There is no option....I have visited so many districts on the border. I have seen the potential for enormous flow of trade with the seven sisters [Indian states sharing borders with Bangladesh], which is really not happening now."

Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS) organised the lecture, titled "America's partnership with Bangladesh: stronger, deeper and broader than ever", at the BISS auditorium.

Bangladesh is a country of deep strategic importance to America as it is moderate and tolerant and offers a viable alternative to violent extremism in this troubled part of the world, the US ambassador said.

Mozena outlined America's considerable interests in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh is one of the countries working in partnership with the USA in countering terrorism and violent extremism, fostering regional security, sustaining global peace and achieving global food security, he said.

US interests also include expanding trade and investment, promoting democracy and respect for human

SEE PAGE 13 COL 4

All eyes on Delhi

FROM PAGE 16

today, a few hours before the swearing-in scheduled for 6:00pm.

The day after the oath-taking, the new Indian prime minister will hold separate bilateral meetings with the Saarc leaders, including Shirin, at the Hyderabad House. Each meeting is expected to last about half an hour.

Shirin, representing Bangladesh in place of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina who is on a tour of Japan, is also expected to call on Indian President Pranab Mukherjee at Rashtrapati Bhavan on Tuesday.

She will also be among the foreign dignitaries who will be hosted a banquet by Pranab Mukherjee soon after the administrators oath of office and secrecy to Modi. Earlier, the banquet was to have been hosted by the new Indian PM but a change has been effected a couple of days ago.

The separate bilateral meetings

between Modi and the foreign leaders are expected to start at 9:30am and continue for three and a half hours.

The oath-taking of Modi, 63, who steered his Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party to an astounding victory in parliamentary elections, has acquired a much higher profile due to the presence of the foreign leaders invited for the first time to an Indian PM's swearing-in.

Modi is the third PM to be sworn in the forecourt of Rashtrapati Bhavan after Chandra Shekhar and Atal Bihari Vajpayee. Usually, such ceremonies are held in the Durbar Hall of the Bhavan, which can accommodate 500 people. However, Modi wanted the forecourt to the venue to have a much larger number of people at the event.

Invites have been sent to an estimated 4,000 people.

Modi's 90-year-old mother Hirabhaben will be among the invitees to the oath-taking ceremony.

Need Japan by our side

FROM PAGE 16

strengthen democratic institutions and democratic process with respect to the rule of law and practice of good governance."

In the process, Hasina said, her government has taken a policy of zero tolerance for terrorism and extremism.

"We're trying the war criminals for the crimes committed during our War of Independence in 1971," she added.

The prime minister said it was a matter of great pride and honour for her to be among them as it reminds her of them and their families' invaluable contribution that gave Bangladesh strength and inspiration during its heroic struggle for independence in 1971.

"It also reminds me of your tireless efforts in mobilising public opinion in Japan that persuaded your government to be among the first countries to accord recognition to Bangladesh as an independent nation. Indeed, you have been our friend in need and have carved out a

permanent niche in our hearts," she added.

Hasina said Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman ensured that Japan should be one of the first countries for him to visit as to express Bangladeshi people's gratitude for Japan's selfless and passionate support at a time when it was desperately needed.

"His historic visit in 1973 paved the way for cementing the best of relationship between our two countries. Your contribution during our nation's independence movement can never be repaid. However, during my immediate past tenure as prime minister, we endeavoured to recognise our Japanese heroes with our highest State Awards," she added.

The prime minister said she was saddened to learn that some of the Japanese friends have died. Among them was Professor Tsuyoshi Nara, a great friend of Bangladesh and one who had promoted Bengali language, philosophy and cul-

ture in Japan.

"His absence will be sorely missed but he'll remain in our hearts forever. I see Mrs Nara with us today and I express my deepest condolences to her as I do also to the families of our other good friends of Bangladesh - Takashi Hayakawa and General Fujiwara and others who have passed away. Their spirits will always be with the people of Bangladesh," she said.

Hasina said some in this esteemed gathering are former ambassadors of Japan to Bangladesh who are familiar as she had interacted with them during her years as the prime minister or as the leader of the opposition.

While in Bangladesh, she said they served sincerely to consolidate the relationship between the two countries.

She thanked the friends of Bangladesh for their noble initiative to translate 'Unfinished Memoir', the autobiography of Bangabandhu, in Japanese language.

Earlier, a one-minute silence was

observed as a mark of respect to the memory of Prof Tsuyoshi Nara, a great friend of Bangladesh.

A total of 18 friends of Bangladesh and former Japanese ambassadors to Bangladesh were present at the function.

The prime minister handed over the copies of 'Unfinished Memoir', the autobiography of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, with her autographs to the friends and former ambassadors.

Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali, State Minister for Foreign Affairs M Shahriar Alam, Ambassador at Large M Ziauddin, PM's Media Adviser Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury, PM's Principal Secretary Abdus Sobhan Sikder, Foreign Secretary Shahidul Haque, PM's Special Assistant Mahbubul Hoque Shakil were, among others, present.

Bangladesh Ambassador to Japan Masud Bin Momen conducted the function held at the Akasaka Palace.

FROM PAGE 16

kick-off looms for the tournament.

"Ticket mark-ups are one of the main risks that fans face when purchasing from illegitimate, unauthorised or illegal sources, in that they will be paying highly inflated prices for tickets which are very likely to be invalid or counterfeit," a MATCH spokesman told AFP.

"We have repeatedly seen fans reporting to us as having paid two to three times the face value on the ticket prices published by FIFA," he said.

In some cases, ticket sellers are trying to squeeze even more out of fans.

In the online marketplace viagogo.com -- which connects sellers with would-be buyers of concert, sports and theatre tickets -- World Cup tickets have been marked up by almost 500 percent, according to MATCH.

According to viagogo.com's customer policy, sellers do not get their money until the buyer has been to the event.

But even if they do not ultimately make the pay-out for such a ticket, fans

risk being out of pocket because they have spent money on travel to a stadium and are then unable to get in.

FIFA voids tickets discovered to have been sold or resold illegally, and the only legitimate online source is the world football governing body's website, fifa.com.

"To date MATCH Enforcement have identified around 150-170 websites worldwide engaging in unauthorised ticket resales, with countries such as Spain, the United States, Mexico, China, the Netherlands, Brazil, Britain and Colombia being home to such websites and also the home to fans who are being most affected by this activity," the spokesman said.

Fans who have any doubts about the legitimacy of any alleged source of tickets are invited to contact MATCH directly.

They are also working with national justice authorities in Brazil and beyond.

Under Brazil "Fan Statute" legislation it is a criminal offence to sell or supply a ticket for more than the face value.

Beware of ticket touts