



An Indian policeman helps an elderly man on a wheelchair to go to the other side of the border through Burimari-Changrabandha route in Patgram upazila of Lalmonirhat. Besides the 92-year-old man, 129 people of five former enclaves in the district left for India yesterday.

PHOTO:
S DILIP ROY

Sons go to India leaving parents

STAR REPORT

It was a heartbreaking moment for the Barman family.

Jitendra Nath Barman and his wife Shanti Bala Rani yesterday went to Burimari-Changrabandha border in Lalmonirhat to say goodbye to their sons -- Sushanata Chandra Barman and Prashanta Chandra Barman -- who were leaving for India forever.

Embracing their sons one last time before they went to the other side of the border, the old parents cried, "Who will take care of us now? Who will give us food and cremate us when we die. We don't know how we will pass our time without them."

Residents of former enclave of Banskata in Patgram upazila of Lalmonirhat, the elderly couple did not want their sons to become Indian nationals.

When the sons and their wives decided to go to India, they persuaded their parents to join them but Jitendra and Shanti declined. They wanted to stay in their ancestral homestead with their only daughter Josna Rani.

With them, 130 people of 30 fami-

lies of five former enclaves of Patgram went to India through Burimari-Changrabandha route yesterday.

Sunil Agarwal, additional district magistrate of Cooch Behar in West Bengal, received them.

Meanwhile, a second batch of 147 people of 28 families of two former enclaves -- Coathhajini and Balapara of Debiganj upazila in Panchagarh -- left for India yesterday through Chilahati-Haldibari border.

Additional Deputy Magistrate Golam Azam handed over the people to First Secretary of Indian High Commission in Bangladesh Ram Kanta Gupta at checking and loading point at Gajokathi High School ground in Debiganj around 9:00am.

Ilysha Rani, additional district magistrate of Cooch Behar in West Bengal, received the people.

A total of 177 people were supposed to go to India yesterday, but 30 of them temporarily opted out, as they would go after selling their land, ADM Golam Azam said.

A third batch of 150 people and a fourth batch of 111 people will leave for India on November 24 and 26, he added.

Lies and audacity

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the history's worst genocides in Bangladesh in 1971 -- does actually feel anguished for war criminals, not for any great souls. It only proves that Pakistan can still not accept our victory in 1971.

But having said that we believe the audacity that Pakistan showed by meddling in our domestic affairs is beyond any reason. It has no business to say anything regarding our dealings with the war criminals. And it has lied about 1974 tripartite agreement among Bangladesh, India and Pakistan to deliberately confuse people.

Any student of history knows how Pakistan had repressed us the Bangalees economically, politically and socially. We served a deserving slap to the Pakistan ruling class by routing it in the 1970 election in the light of six-point demand of Awami League led by Bangabandhu.

But the Pakistani rulers would not let us come to power. Pakistan president started make-believe talks with Awami League on the point of power transfer basically to gain time for preparation of a military crackdown on Bangalees. Troops started amassing in Dhaka from West Pakistan.

As everything was complete, Yahiya silently left Dhaka for Islamabad leaving the talks inconclusive. And from that night, the military rolled on the street with its fire power, killing the sleeping innocents. And with them joined the war criminals, the horde of Pakistan lovers of the likes of Salauddin and Mojaheed. They together killed three million and raped two lakh women. Those of us who had gone through that time all know those days of horrors.

And now, as we try these killers, Pakistan feels deeply concerned and anguished. By making such a reprehensible undiplomatic statement, it not only revealed and validated the role these criminals played in their genocide. It also revealed what role Pakistan played in 1971.

Pakistan has also twisted facts by

saying that there is a need for reconciliation in Bangladesh in accordance with the spirit of tripartite agreement of 1974.

This agreement was done mainly for the repatriation of 195 Pakistani prisoners of war (PoWs) and a three-way repatriation of the PoWs and Pakistani and Bangladeshi people stuck in those lands.

Bangladesh specifically stated in the agreement that the excesses and crimes committed by these 195 prisoners of war constituted, according to the relevant provisions of the UN General Assembly Resolutions and International Law, war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide, and that these 195 Pakistani soldiers should be tried.

Pakistan in its deceptive way said it condemned and deeply regretted any crimes that 'may have been committed'. It took back its 195 soldiers and never tried them because it knew the genocide it committed in Bangladesh was a state decision.

The issue of reconciliation arose in the light of establishing relationship between Bangladesh and Pakistan and never in the context of genocides committed by the local collaborators. In fact the issues of collaborators were never raised in the agreement as it was solely Bangladesh's internal matter.

Any country that had fought wars for independence and had to face collaborators among its own people had tried them for war crimes. Vietnam had done it. So had Cambodia in recent times. Through such trials a country finally heals its wounds.

It is sad that Bangladesh had to do it so late. But it is better to be late than never. However, we cannot help if Pakistan now feels anguished for its partners in crime. We should rather feel anguished that Pakistan has not been able to reconcile with Bangladesh after all these years and still feels for its collaborators and not for the people of Bangladesh.

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humanity and genocide, Pakistan once again acknowledged its direct involvement and complicity in the mass atrocities committed during Bangladesh's Liberation War in 1971, said the note.

"This perhaps more than explains why the dominant narrative in Pakistan has not only been on a denial mode about the war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide in Bangladesh, but has also maintained its unrelenting opposition to Bangladesh's efforts to ensure justice and break the culture of impunity for the crimes committed forty-four years ago," it added.

The Daily Star has obtained a copy of the protest note.

Acting Foreign Secretary Mizanur Rahman handed over the note to Pakistan High Commissioner in Dhaka Shuja Alam, who was summoned to state guesthouse Padma yesterday.

The secretary told the envoy to take note of the points raised by Dhaka and bring those to the attention of the authorities concerned in Pakistan.

In the note, Dhaka said the uncalled-for comments were nothing less than a brazen interference in Bangladesh's internal affairs, which was unacceptable.

"The Government of Bangladesh expected that the quarters/authorities in Pakistan would act responsibly and would refrain from continuing such uncalled for statements."

Refuting Pakistan's labelling of the judicial process as "flawed trials", the note reiterated that the verdicts against the convicted individuals had been handed down through an independent, sound, fair, impartial and transparent judicial process, and without any political interference.

The trials took into consideration solely the crimes committed by them and had nothing to do with their political identity or affiliation, it said.

"Pakistan should in no way make biased, borrowed and unfounded comments about the independent judiciary of a sovereign country."

Referring to the misleading reference by Pakistan to the Agreement of

1974, Dhaka said the agreement never implied that the masterminds and perpetrators of war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity would continue to enjoy impunity and eschew the course of justice.

The note further pointed out it was Bangladesh that consistently advocated regional peace, harmony, reconciliation and integration.

Dhaka also reminded Islamabad that Pakistan has failed to meet its obligation to bring to justice those of its nationals identified and held responsible for committing mass atrocities in 1971, and Pakistan could not escape the historic obligation it owed to the people of Bangladesh as well as to the international community.

"Bangladesh deeply regretted continued malicious campaign by Pakistan against the trials of the crimes against humanity and genocide, and stated that this would not augur well for the friendly bilateral relations between Bangladesh and Pakistan."

On the trials of war criminals by the International Crimes Tribunal, the note said full transparency was maintained in the conduct of proceedings.

"The trials were neither summary nor closed, but were 'open trials' with full access given to the national and international media, relatives of the victims and accused, members of diplomatic missions and research organisations."

It said the Pakistan foreign ministry spokesperson in the November 22 statement referred to Salauddin Quader Chowdhury as a "leader" of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), an affiliation he certainly did not have in 1971 since the party itself was not in existence at the time.

"The spokesperson does not mention the political affiliation of Mr Ali Ahsan Muhammad Mujahid, but for the people of Bangladesh what matters is that he was the President of Islami Chhatra Sangha and also the leader of the infamous Al-Badr militia force in 1971."

The protest note mentioned that at the time of the trial Mojaheed held the position of secretary general of Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami, which is

not registered with the Election Commission as a political party.

Any discerning observer could find some deliberate attempts in the spokesperson's remarks to omit or obfuscate the true identities of the convicted individuals, it said.

According to foreign ministry sources in Dhaka, the Pakistan envoy went to state guesthouse Padma around 2:30pm to meet the acting foreign secretary. The meeting lasted around half-an-hour.

Diplomatic sources said the meeting was originally scheduled to take place at the foreign ministry but the venue was later shifted to the Padma to avoid media attention.

"It could have been embarrassing for the Pakistani envoy, as dozens of TV reporters and other media men lined up at the main gate of the foreign ministry since 12:00noon," a senior official told The Daily Star wishing anonymity.

"Considering the dignity of a foreign envoy, we hurriedly decided to change the venue," said the official.

Learning about the change of the venue, journalists rushed to the Padma, but most of them, especially those of TV channels, could not get any photographs or video footage.

Talking to reporters at his office, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam categorically said Bangladesh and its 16 crore people are no longer in a position where they will accept any adverse remarks on the war crimes trial.

"From where Bangladesh stands today, we will not accept any negative comments from any country, not only Pakistan, on trials related to war crimes and crimes against humanity," he said shortly after Dhaka formally lodged a strongly-worded protest with Islamabad.

Replying to a query, he said the government was frustrated over Pakistan's statement, as Bangladesh expected that this time no country or organisation would make negative comments on the executions.

The state minister said Pakistan's statement was "beyond diplomatic etiquette".

Bangladesh had no plan to downsize its diplomatic presence in Pakistan following the latest development, he said in response to another question.

Meanwhile, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), a political party led by former cricketer Imran Khan, yesterday presented a resolution in the Punjab Assembly "against the hangings of individuals in what it termed the garb of 1971 war crimes", reports Geo TV.

PTI's opposition leader in Punjab Assembly, Mian Mehmood-ur-Rasheed, put forth the resolution which regrets "the execution of individuals who had supported Pakistan in 1971 war".

"These hangings are taking place at the behest of India," the resolution stated.

It expressed sympathies for the families of Salauddin and Mojaheed.

The resolution demanded that the Pakistan government "play its part in preventing Bangladesh from resorting to such cruel practices".

Block on social network sites to go upon Home order Says Tarana UNB, Dhaka

State Minister for Post and Telecommunications Tarana Halim yesterday said the block on Facebook and other social networking sites would be lifted upon directives from the home ministry.

Talking to reporters at the secretariat, she said the government's suspension of access to social networking sites such as Facebook has helped prevent untoward incidents from happening in the country.

On November 18, the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Authority (BTRC) blocked Facebook, Messenger, Viber and WhatsApp in Bangladesh for security reasons.

Spend Tk 270cr

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in every ward within 12 hours. This has to be done in addition to the improvements in the drainage infrastructure proposed in the Detailed Area Plan and Sewerage Master Plan.

Floods and waterlogging in Dhaka regularly disrupts the lives and livelihoods of the city dwellers. The most affected are those living in the fringe areas and slums, the study shows.

And with more frequent and intense rainfalls, climate change is likely to further aggravate flooding and waterlogging in the coming years and decades.

"A mega city like Dhaka needs smart investments to meet the demands of a growing population and rapid urbanisation in a changing climate," said Christine Kimes, acting country chief of the WB.

The entire Dhaka city faced a great urban flooding in 2004 with just 341 millimeter rain in 24 hours, which exposed how poorly managed the city's drainage system is.

The climate change is likely to cause more of such heavy rains in the coming decades, speakers said, adding that the government should take steps to increase the city's resilience.

In a changing climate scenario, the investment of Tk 270 crore would reduce the accumulated damage cost to Tk 4,900 crore for the period of 2014-2050, said Susmita Dasgupta, the lead environmental economist of the WB and coauthor of the study.

Annisul Huq, mayor of Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) who spoke as the chief guest, said, "Already we have taken some measures to reduce traffic jams in the Dhaka city. We are going to recover all the grabbed canals. And it is going to happen."

Later, asked when the DNCC would recover the canals, he said the grabbers were powerful people and there were many cases against canal grabbers pending at the court. "So it is hard to say exactly when the canals will be recovered."

As different parts of Dhaka and its surrounding areas vary significantly in terms of infrastructure, facilities and resilience to flood and waterlogging, the study assessed Dhaka's local preparedness for urban flood emergencies at ward level, measuring Climate Disaster Resilience Index (CDRI).

The study found that already some parts of the city is severely vulnerable to waterlogging and floods. At least 10 wards of Dhaka city out of 93 are extremely exposed to flood and waterlogging. The wards are 9, 10, 25, 40, 58, 82, 86, 87 and 90. Khilgaon area, which is outside the DND, is also exposed.

S Korea stages live-fire drill near sea border

AFP, Seoul

South Korea yesterday staged a major live-fire exercise near the disputed inter-Korean sea border despite North Korea's warning of possible "merciless" retaliation, military officials said.

The drill was carried out around front-line islands in the Yellow Sea to mark the anniversary of North Korea's deadly shelling of one of them five years ago, the South's defence ministry said.

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Day 1 • Friday 27 November

Bharatnatyam by Pallavi Dance Center

Tabla kirtan by Bengal Parampara

Carnatic flute by Jayaprada Ramamoorthy

Dhrupad by Music Dept, University of Rajshahi

Santoor by Rahul Sharma

Vocal by Kaushiki Chakrabarty

Sitar by Pandit Kushal Das

Vocal by Vidushi Bombay Jayashri

Day 2 • Saturday 28 November

Dhrupad by Avijit Kundu, Bengal Parampara

Saraswati Veena by Jayanthi Kumaresh

Vocal by Susmita Debnath, Bengal Parampara

Day 3 • Sunday 29 November

Manipuri dance by Warda Rihab and troupe

Dhrupad by Ustad Wasif Dagar

Sarod by Yousuf Khan

Violin by Dr. N Rajam

Vocal by Vidushi Shruti Sadolikar

Mridangam ensemble by Guru Karaikudi Mani

Vocal by Vidushi Shubha Mudgal

Day 4 • Monday 30 November

Kuchipudi by Guru Raja & Radha Reddy

Carnatic violin by Ganesh & Kumaresh Rajagopalan

Santoor by Pandit Shivkumar Sharma

Sarod by Pandit Tejendra Narayan Majumdar

Vocal by Pandit Ullhas Kashalkar

Tabla solo by Ustad Zakir Hussain

Day 5 • Tuesday 1 December

Dhamar by Geetobitan Bangladesh:

Animesh Chowdhury & troupe

Bharatnatyam by Vidushi Alamel Valli

Surbahar by Irshad Khan

Vocal by Sameeha Kashalkar

Sitar by Pandit Shujaat Khan

Vocal by Ustad Rashid Khan

Flute by Pandit Hariprasad Chaurasia

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