

100 injured as villagers clash in Habiganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

At least 100 people, including three policemen, were injured as villagers clashed over purchase of scrapped goods from Omera Cylinder Company in Bahubal upazila town of Habiganj on Sunday.

At least 20 shops were vandalised and looted during the incident, said police and locals.

Of the injured, eight were admitted to Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital, 15 to Habiganj Sadar Hospital and 20 to the upazila health complex while the rest given first aid.

Mullah Monir Hosain, officer-in-charge of Bahubal Police Station, said when one Belayet Hossain and Dulal of Mirpur area went to purchase 4,000 scrapped cylinders from the company on August 28, Shamsu Master Group of Natun Bazar area resisted them.

Tension mounted in the area over a few days. People of Chargaon village took position for Belayet while residents of Purbo Joypur and six other adjoining villages supported Shamsu.

On Sunday night, supporters of Belayet and Shamsu equipped with lethal weapons clashed over the issue, leaving at least 97 people from both sides injured.

During the incident, three policemen were also injured when a police team rushed to the spot, said the OC.

The law enforcers fired at least 300 rubber bullets and 18 tear gas canisters to bring the situation under control, he said.



Remnants of trunks bear testimony to large-scale felling of gazari trees by alleged land grabbers in Holdibari Reserve Forest in Bhaluka upazila of Mymensingh on the night of August 21.

PHOTO: STAR

Land grabbers cut 14000 trees overnight

Locals say influential people fell the trees to clear land for sale to industrialists

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Thousands of gazari trees in Hobirbari Reserved Forest area in Bhaluka upazila of the district were cut down by miscreants about two weeks ago.

They felled about 14 thousand 10/12-year-old trees on August 21 to clear the land for grabbing, alleged locals.

Locals alleged that influential people of the area are behind the cutting down of trees to clear the land for sale to industrial-

ists, causing depletion of the forest.

Cutting down of trees with the connivance of a section of forest officials has been rampant in the Bhaluka forest area for years, but the authorities concerned are yet to stop the menace, they added.

Md Sharifur Rahman Khan, beat officer of Hobirbari, said he filed a case with a Mymensingh court against 30 people on August 22. He would be able to confirm the number of trees cut down after investigation, the official added.

Sharifur denied any nexus between forest employees and officials with the gang that cut the trees.

Gobinda Roy, divisional forest officer, said he was informed about the incident, and has formed a one-member inquiry committee with Abdur Rahman, assistant conservator of forest in Bhaluka Range, to investigate the incident.

Primarily it was found that the trees were on personal land, the official said. There are around 13,000 acres of reserve

forest land under Bhaluka Range, including around 8,000 acres in Hobirbari beat, he added.

"We have to oversee the total area but we have only 12 forest guards, which is not enough for patrolling the area," the official added.

Talking to this correspondent, Nurul Islam, a veteran journalist of Bhaluka, said proper preservation of forest is a must for better ecological balance in Bhaluka and its adjoining areas, but, unfortunately the forest areas are decreasing day-by-day.

UP COMPLEX

Construction not completed in three years!

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

Construction of much needed Rangabali Union Parishad (UP) Complex in Rangabali upazila headquarters could not be completed even after three years.

Since the UP did not have any office of its own it has been running its activities at a dilapidated room at the union land office.

The Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) approved a project worth Tk 80 lakh to set up a UP complex in 2012-13 fiscal years.

Officials at Rangabali LGED said local contractor Abdus Sattar Hawlader got the work order the same year.

The structure was scheduled to be completed within a year but the contractor allegedly left the site after completing 35 percent of its construction. Since then, the construction work of the UP office has not made any progress for reasons unknown.

Contractor Abdus Sattar said he had to stop the work due to a hike in the prices of different construction materials.

Engineer Nur Mohammad Mollah of Rangabali LGED said they have cancelled the previous work order and also fined the contractor Tk 8 lakh for failing to hand over the project in stipulated time.

A month ago, they have sent a fresh proposal to the authorities concerned for taking steps regarding the completion of the remaining work, Mollah added.

Huge supply, small sale of cattle

Traders say prices of sacrificial animals in Thakurgaon, Panchagarh markets are still higher compared to last year

QUAMRUL ISLAM RUBAIYAT, Thakurgaon

Though Eid-ul-Azha is only a few days away, cattle markets in Thakurgaon and Panchagarh, which usually become busy two weeks before the festival, see very little sale.

Due to less demand and more supply of sacrificial animals in the markets, the prices have dropped in comparison to a week ago but are still higher than last year's, cattle traders said.

Cattle traders said prices of sacrificial animals increased sharply a month ago as farmers and traders thought the prices would be higher than the previous year as cattle supply from India was restricted this year.

Sale in the cattle markets is yet to get momentum as the prices are higher this year in comparison to the same time last year. Local buyers are yet to buy animals, while the traders from other districts are worried about suffering losses.

During a visit to different cattle markets in Thakurgaon and Panchagarh on Saturday and Sunday, this correspondent saw that farmers and traders have brought large number of sacrificial animals to the markets, but there is very little sale.

Buyers said the prices were higher than last year, though they dropped a little in the previous week.

The cattle farmers and traders are not ready to reduce the prices of the animals as there are a few more days before Eid.

Hasibul Islam, a cattle trader in Boda cattle market, the largest market in Panchagarh, said selling of sacrificial animals was yet to get momentum as the buyers feel the prices are still too high. He said prices will drop in the next few days as there is a large stock of sacrificial animals.

Nazrul Islam, another trader in the bazar, said the prices dropped a little as

Indian cattle have started coming to the markets.

Sudaru, a cattle trader in Moidandighi village under Boda upazila of Panchagarh, said he bought two medium-sized bulls for Tk 85,000 about two weeks ago, but has not been able to sell them yet.

Md Zaman, lessee of Nekmarad Haat in Ranishankoil upazila of Thakurgaon, said cattle prices dropped by Tk 2,000-Tk 5,000 per animal yesterday due to huge supply in comparison to demand.

District Livestock Officer of Thakurgaon Md Rafiqul Islam said cattle farming increased in the district this year. Around 21,000 families raised about 4,68,000 cows, 6,000 goats, 170 buffaloes and 1,200 sheep under the cattle fattening programme centring Eid-ul-Azha.

About 33,000-34,000 cattle are needed during Eid-ul-Azha in the district, he added.



Although the Eid-ul-Azha is only a few days away, sacrificial cattle see poor sale still now. The photo was taken from a market at Boda upazila headquarters in Panchagarh district.

PHOTO: STAR

Dhaka reacts sharply

FROM PAGE 1

two brotherly countries," according to a note verbale issued by the foreign ministry here.

The note verbale was sent to the Turkish Embassy in Dhaka following a press release published in the website of Turkey's foreign ministry on Sunday, in which Turkey expressed sorrow at the execution of Mir Quasem, a convict of crimes against humanity and genocide committed during the 1971 Liberation War of Bangladesh.

The foreign ministry in Dhaka said that through the trial of war criminals, the long cherished aspiration of the nation would be fulfilled, justice ensured, the rule of law upheld and opportunities for true reconciliation created.

The note elaborated on the crimes perpetrated by Mir Quasem, one of the central commanders of the infamous Al Badr militia force in 1971. He had been involved in planning, instigating and executing geno-

cide, murder, abduction and torture of people in Chittagong during the war.

The capital punishment had been handed down on Quasem following an independent, fair and transparent judicial process, which national and international media had full access to and didn't face any political interference, the foreign ministry said in the note.

The prosecution had produced irrefutable oral and documentary evidence proving charges brought against Quasem beyond any reasonable doubt, it said, adding that the defence lawyers had been given unimpeded access to the court proceedings throughout the trial.

Mir Quasem was punished for the crimes he had committed during the war, not for his political identity or affiliation, the foreign ministry said.

Turkey in the press release said, "We have learnt with sorrow that the death sentence issued by the International Crimes

Tribunal in Bangladesh against Mir Quasem Ali, key-financier and central executive council member of the Jamaat-e-Islami, has been executed in Bangladesh.

"We stress once again that the wounds of the past cannot be healed with these methods and hope that this wrong practice will not lead to separation among the brotherly people of Bangladesh."

It may be mentioned that Turkey reacted with anger after the execution of Jamaat chief Matiur Rahman Nizami who was hanged for mass murder, rape and massacre of Bangalee intellectuals in 1971.

A statement by the Turkish foreign ministry on May 11 said, "It did not believe that Nizami deserved such a punishment."

Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan condemned his punishment, saying "such proliferation of hatred" went against "democratic mentality," according to the local media.

Padma poised to spoil Eid

FROM PAGE 16 is normally around an hour's trip.

Passengers, particularly women and children, suffered the most due to poor toilet facilities and inadequate food and drinking water at the terminals.

Officials at the terminals said passengers' sufferings might aggravate ahead of Eid-ul-Azha, which falls on September 13, when people would start leaving the capital to celebrate the festival with their near and dear ones.

It would take time to make the two ferry landing stations operative due to the erosion and strong currents in the mighty river, added officials.

Abdus Sattar, manager (marine) of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC) at Aricha, said it would be very tough to keep ferry services normal during Eid holidays as the number of vehicles would increase significantly.

Around 3,500 vehicles ply the Paturia-Daulatdia route daily and it would increase up to 6,500 ahead of Eid, he said.

PASSENGERS SUFFER

Ayesha Khatun along with her two children and mother was traveling to Khulna on a bus of Royal Prabahan.

Talking to The Daily Star around 6:20pm yesterday, she said she started from Gabtoli at 8:00am and reached Paturia within two hours. But she had been waiting at the terminal since then.

"We don't know when we will be able to cross the river as our bus is not moving an inch," said a worried Ayesha.

Like her, Chuadanga-bound passenger Tanzina Tanzin, Magura-bound Abdur Rahim and Meherpur-bound Abid Hasan expressed frustration over the delay after remaining stranded at Paturia for around nine hours.

Ferry services on Daulatdia-Paturia route have been disrupted since mid-July due to damages caused to landing stations at Daulatdia by erosion.

Shipping Secretary Ashoke Madhab Roy said his ministry deployed all the BIWTA engineering staff at Daulatdia terminal to make the ferry landing stations operative again.

"Hopefully we'll be able to resume services at all the ferry landing stations before Eid," he said, adding that vacations of BIWTA officials have been cancelled.

The officials have been asked to stay at Paturia and Daulatdia ferry ghats to deal with any developing situation, the secretary told The Daily Star.

Asked if the ministry would seek help from the Bangladesh Army to this end, he said: "We are trying our best. If we fail, we might think of involving other agencies in the job."

Ashoke said they advised passengers and bus operators to use Bangabandhu Bridge instead of Paturia-Daulatdia route to avoid sufferings.

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader said they assured the shipping ministry of providing mega dredgers, which were being using at the Padma bridge construction sites, to dredge the river near the ferry landing stations on an emergency basis.

"I have talked to the shipping minister and assured him of providing any kind of assistance from our ministry," he added.

About his ministry's plan to deal with home rush, Quader said they were working relentlessly to facilitate smooth journeys for holidaymakers.

"Around 1,000 volunteers would be deployed alongside police and ministry officials to manage the flow of traffic," he said.

High alert at Benapole for Zika virus

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Immigration police at the check post of Benapole land port has been kept on special alert to prevent the spread of Zika virus through the border.

A five-member medical team is examining every foreigner entering Bangladesh through the check post, said Pronoy Sarker, in charge of Benapole health centre.

"The medical team members are conducting initial test with thermal scanner provided by the health services directorate in Dhaka. We have also increased surveillance in the check post area," he added.

Around 2,000 passport holders including one hundred foreigners go to and come from India through this port every day, officials said.

Benapole immigration police said the medical team started working yesterday following an order from the health ministry.