



The evicted Santal people in Madarpur village cook and have dinner in the open and in the dark. They said moonlight was enough.

PHOTO: PINAKI ROY

Not words, they want their land back

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pleased with the assurances.
Meeting central Awami League leaders at a church in Madarpur village, they said the land belonged to their forefathers and that they wanted it back.
The AL leaders, led by ABM Mozammel Haque and ABM Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury, conveyed the prime minister's message that the Santal community need not fear anything and anyone, and that they would be rehabilitated.
But Adivasis said they would not receive any help unless their demand was met.
They alleged that local representatives and administration had played an active role in the eviction drive.
Local lawmaker Abul Kalam Azad and Sapmara Union Parishad Chairman Shakil Akhand Bulbul, accused of deceiving the indigenous people, didn't go to the church to accompany the central AL leaders.
Jatiya Adivasi Parishad Founding President Anil Marandi said local MP Azad had taken a huge amount of money from Adivasis who wanted to take out a lease on the land.
But instead of helping them get

what they wanted, Azad hatched a conspiracy to drive Santals out from the land, he said.
Anil also said police filed a case against 442 Santals over the November 6 incident that led to the killing of two Santals and injuries to another 15-20 but refused to register any case from Santal people when they went to Sundarganj Police Station.
More than a hundred Santal families have been passing their nights in the open since the attack on the indigenous community by mill labourers along with police.
Meanwhile, the mill authorities have installed 300 pillars and set barbed-wire fence around the land the Adivasis were evicted from, said a mill labourer.
Barnabas Tudu, one of those evicted, said Adivasis do not want politics of killing, politics of deceptions.
Without naming anyone, he said three to four people of his community had been killed.
"We saw who killed them," Barnabas said while speaking in front of the AL central leaders.
Talking to The Daily Star later, he said 32 acres of land of his grandfather had been acquired by the sugar mill

authorities.
Like him many others gave money to local UP Chairman Bulbul who assured them of helping to get the land back, Barnabas said.
Indigenous people paid Tk 300 to 500 a week to Bulbul, he said, adding that the chairman in total received Tk 5-5.5 lakh from them.
"He just used us as a vote bank," Mamata Hebrum, a relative of Barnabas, said.
Bulbul, however, refuted the allegations of taking bribe.
He said he was initially with the indigenous people but later he changed his stance learning that the land belonged to the sugar mill.
Indigenous people said local ruling party activists had warned them not to speak against the UP chairman.
At the meeting, the AL leaders said those involved in the conspiracy would be punished.
The government assured Adivasis of all possible help including rehabilitation, employment, food, health and education.
The five-member inquiry team from the ruling party's central committee, led by Organising Secretary Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury, visited Santal villages and

talked to the distressed families.
The government will do everything for the Santal families and so they need not be afraid, Khalid Mahmud said, adding that people "who instigated the Santal community" would be found out and tried.
A group of civil society group also visited the affected areas yesterday.
Rights workers, including Pankaj Bhattachariya, Prof Abul Barakat, Sanjeeb Drong, Khushi Kabir, Kajal Devnath and Dipayan Khisa were among those who met indigenous people at the church after their meeting with the AL leaders.
They demanded that the government rehabilitate the evicted Santal people and punish the culprits who planned and executed the eviction of some 1,500 families of Santals, Hindus and Muslims.
Workers Party Gaibandha district unit held demonstrations protesting the eviction, looting and killing of innocent Santal people.
Meanwhile, the district administration allocated six tonnes of food grains and Tk 50,000 for the distressed Santal families, said Abdus Samad, deputy commissioner of Gaibandha.

Magistrates must act

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show at least 126 people died in custody till September this year from January last year.
The law prohibits torture by law enforcement agencies even in an emergency situation.
Section 12 of the law says if a person commits any offence during the period of preparation of war, threat of war, internal political stability, or emergency or orders of superior authority or government, it will not be acceptable.
"The court is under no obligation to accept any sort of excuse and the offender shall be dealt with according to law. This provision is very important but practically we find no application of this section," observed the SC.
According to Section 15 of the law, the minimum punishment will not be less than five years and the maximum sentence is life imprisonment with a fine for crimes committed under this law.
Lack of effective enforcement of the law saw recurrence of custodial deaths, many of which were blamed on alleged torture by law enforcement agencies.
According to ASK, 57 people died in custody from January to September this year. Of them, 23 were convicted and 34 were detainees.
Last year, the number of custodial death was 69, and of them, 42 were facing trial, according to ASK's record prepared on the basis of newspaper reports.
Moreover, a section of lower-tier police officers were accused of engaging in extortion by threatening people with cases.
Since December last year, more than a dozen such cases were reported in Dhaka Metropolitan Police area alone, according to a Daily Star report published yesterday.
Had the law been enforced properly, incidents of torture and custodial death would have reduced, according to legal experts.
Asked about little application of the law, jurist Shahdeen Malik said this law is not widely known.
"Besides, people are too scared to file cases against police," he said.
In its verdict in May, the Appellate Division of the SC upheld a High Court judgment against law enforcers' arbitrary use of powers and stressed the need for application of the anti-torture law.
The HC delivered the verdict on April 7, 2003, in response to a petition by a group of human rights organisations and individuals after the tragic death of Shamim Reza Rubel, a student of Independent University, in police custody on July 23, 1998.
The then BNP-led government appealed against the verdict, and later the AL government did the same.
But the SC dismissed the appeal.
The anti-torture law was made after one and a half decade of Rubel's death in police custody.
The SC highly lauded the law, saying, "This is one of the finest piece of legislation so far promulgated after the independence of the country."
It reflects the aims, aspirations and objects of our founding fathers while framing the constitution, the apex court noted.
"By this law, the safeguards of human dignity, personal liberty, undue harassment and torture of a detainee at the hands of law enforcing agency, deprivation of life and liberty, honour and dignity, and also payment of compensation to the victim's family have been protected."
In its 2003 verdict, the HC recommended bringing changes to some provisions of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), Penal Code and Police Act for preventing custodial death.
The SC, however, sees no necessity for bringing those amendments after the enactment of the anti-torture law in 2013 which deals with custodial

death.
Referring to the provision of the anti-torture law, the SC directed that if a magistrate gets materials or information that a person has been subjected to torture or died in custody, he would refer the matter to the nearest doctor in case of torture. The magistrate would refer the matter to a medical board in case of death for ascertaining the injury or the cause of death.
"If the medical evidence reveals that the person detained has been tortured or died due to torture, the magistrate shall take cognisance of the offence suo-moto under section 190(1)(c) of the Code without awaiting the filing of a case," said the SC.
It pointed out that previously there was no safeguard of a detainee. "The court should not take such violation of human rights lightly and no leniency should be shown to such officer."
POLICE SOUGHT CHANGES IN LAW
In 2015, police submitted proposals to the home ministry for bringing major changes to the law, and sought safeguard for law enforcers from prosecution for custodial death and torture under this law.
Police wanted the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), the Special Branch (SB) and the Detective Branch (DB) of police excluded from the purview of the anti-torture law.
Police have sought cancellation of a legal provision that bars them from justifying torture and inhuman treatment of anyone in custody even in circumstances like war and political unrest.
In defence of the proposed changes, police argued that the law might cause impediment to the duties of law enforcement agencies to save lives and property during political instability, arson attacks and subversive activities during hartals and blockade.
The home ministry formed a committee to scrutinise the proposals and made a move to bring amendments.
At that time, rights organisations, including Amnesty International and ASK, expressed deep concern, and denounced the government move and the police demand.
They said the government enacted the law criminalising custodial torture in accordance with the UN Convention against torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.
Bangladesh became a signatory to the convention on October 5, 1998, promising effective legislation, and administrative and judicial measures to prevent torture.
Article 35 (5) of Bangladesh constitution also prohibits torture. It reads, "No person shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman, or degrading punishment or treatment."

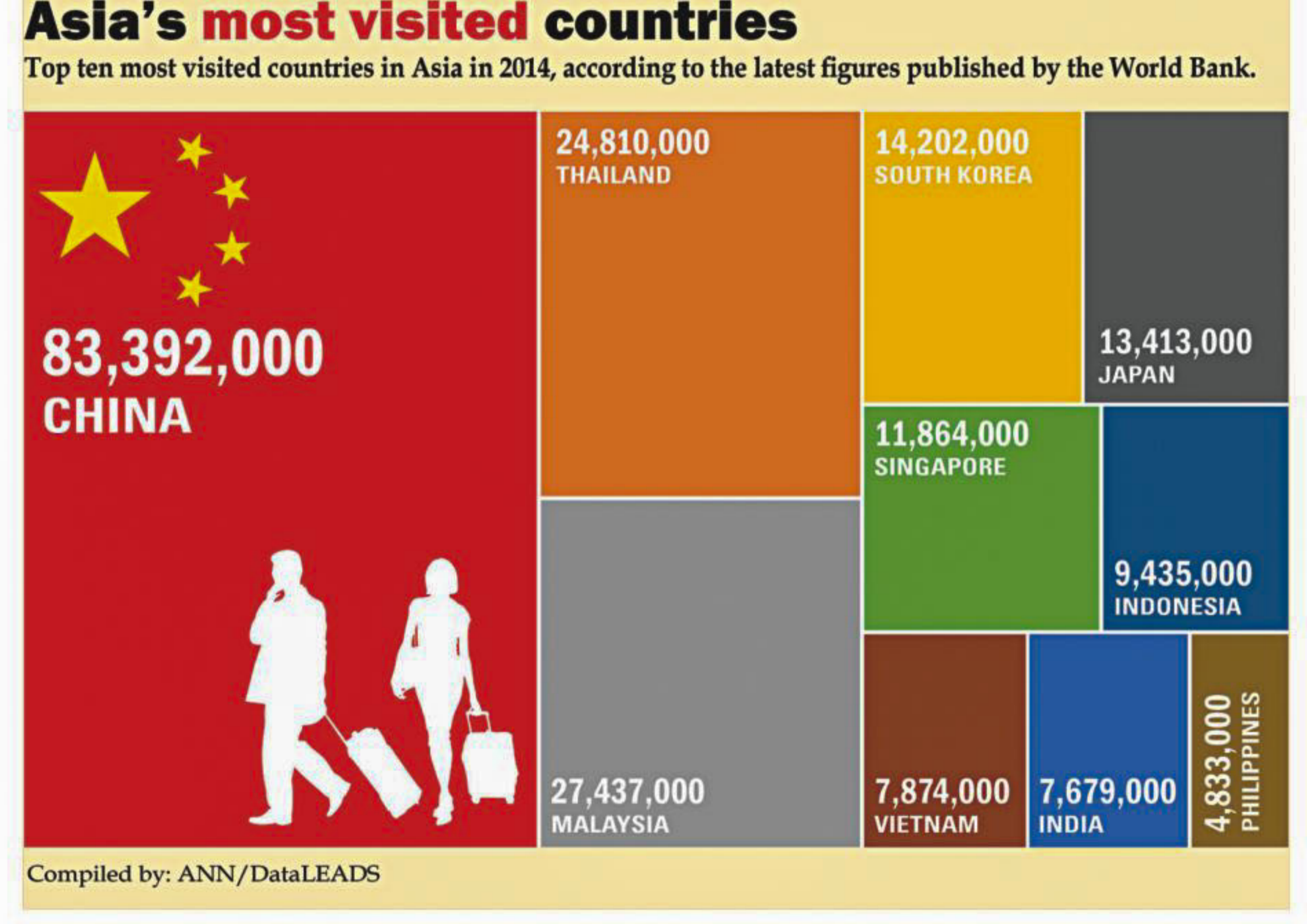
16 fishermen rescued from Indian territory

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Sixteen Bangladeshi fishermen drifting on the Indian territory of the Bay of Bengal were rescued by Indian Coast Guard on Saturday.
The fishermen crossed the Indian maritime boundary after their engine boat went out of order amid the recent turbulent weather caused by a cyclone in the bay.
Indian Coast Guard vessel the 'Sucheta Kripalani', during a routine patrol off the coast of Indian state of Odisha, sighted the Bangladeshi fishing boat approximately 35 nautical miles east of Paradip port.
A team was sent out from the patrol vessel immediately to investigate the matter, said an ICG official, adding that the master and the crew on the fishing boat told the ICG investigators "they sailed on November 2 from Patuakhali in Bangladesh and had been drifting since November 3" after the boat's propeller shaft started to malfunction amid cyclonic weather.
The ICG provided necessary medical and food assistance to the fishermen and towed the fishing boat to Paradip anchorage for further investigation, he said.
After the credentials of the fishermen were determined and authenticity of the incident was established by a joint interrogation team consisting all departments concerned, the ICG provided technical assistance to repair the fishing boat, he added.
Currently the ICG is escorting the fishing boat toward the maritime boundary of Bangladesh with its 16 crew members on board.

Court orders

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After a long hearing, Senior Judicial Magistrate Mizanur Rahman issued the arrest warrants.
Ratan Ali Seikh, inspector of Kushtia Judge Court, said the copies of the arrest warrants would be sent to the police station concerned.
Despite repeated attempts, none of the accused police officials could be contacted for comments.



China most visited country in Asia

DATALEADS/ANN, New Delhi
China is the most travelled destination in Asia for global tourists, according to the latest figures published by the World Bank.
Around 83 million tourists visited China in 2014, taking the country on top of a list of 10 most visited countries in Asia.
Since the Beijing Olympics in 2008, tourism has been a national priority for China, which is promoting tourism as a comprehensive industry and an important driving force for economic development.
According to the China National Tourism Administration, the Chinese government authority responsible for development of tourism, 956 million international tourists have already visited the country as of September this year.
The World Bank has ranked Malaysia as the second most visited country in Asia. In 2014, around 27 million tourists visited the country known for its unique diversity.
Under the Malaysia Tourism

Transformation Plan, Malaysia has identified tourism as a key growth area to transform the country into a high-income nation by 2020 having set a target of arrival of 36 million tourists.
Thailand is ranked third with 24 million tourists visiting the country in 2014. According to the Tourism Authority of Thailand, 22.4 million international tourists have already visited the country as of this August, generating around \$31.2 billion.
India, the world's second most populated country, sits at the ninth place with seven million tourists visiting the country in 2014.
With four million tourists visiting the country in 2014, the Philippines acquired the 10th place in the WB ranking.
South Korea is fourth with 14 million tourists, Japan fifth with 13 million, Singapore sixth with 11 million, Indonesia seventh with nine million and Vietnam is eighth on the list with 7.87 million tourists, according to the WB data.

Never too old to learn

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youth. There wasn't even a village school. Abdur grew up without an education and never so much as thought to learn basic reading. "The years passed that way," he says. "I couldn't understand writing at all."
Then in 2012 he faced financial crisis. "Being from a farming family a lack of money wasn't uncommon; from time to time crops incur losses," Abdur explains. "But in 2012 I decided to pawn 40 decimals of land to raise funds for a new paddy crop."
That he did. But after selling the crop, when he returned to the pawnbroker to repay the money to retrieve his land, the broker told him that he had sold it to him.
"It was a big disaster in my life," Abdur says. "It was late but I properly understood that illiteracy is nothing but a curse. I resolved then and there to go to school."
Upon entering the classroom, with eight-year-olds for classmates, Abdur was nervous. "It took a few months to settle in," he recalls. "At first to understand the letters of the Bangla and English alphabets was quite difficult."
Initially too he wore lungi to class, until his teachers requested that he

wear trousers like the other students do. "I bought and experienced the feeling of wearing trousers for the first time in my life," says Abdur with a smile.
There was also the matter of how he would relate to his much younger classmates. "At first we felt shy when he joined our class," says ten-year-old fellow student Jharna Rani, "but now it's normal. He is our classmate and our friend."
"The children in my class are very good to me," says Abdur. "They call me Bondhu and I call them the same." In Bangla, bondhu means friend. "Maybe our ages are different," he continues, "but academically we're the same."
There is no difference either between Abdur's other school activities and those of his friends. On days when they have a physical exercise lesson he does it too; like his classmates, every afternoon means attending a coaching centre.
Thus, despite initial apprehension his academic career is proceeding nicely. "Abdur has done well in all his exams," says Anil Chandra Roy, the school's headmaster. "He has also established good rapport with the other students."

"I can read and write now," says Abdur, proudly. "It's been my greatest joy. I'm determined to see it through and complete my Primary School Certificate."
There is, however, an age limit for Primary School Certificate candidates. "We are really impressed by Abdur Rashid's enthusiasm," says Saifuz Zaman, an officer of the district's primary education department. "If needed, we will be happy to write a special request letter to the ministry to ensure he can sit for his certificate exams despite his age."
Of course in other ways his life is more useful for a sexagenarian. The widower, whose wife died of sudden illness in 2001, has one daughter who he supported through her own schooling. He has a granddaughter too, currently studying for her Higher School Certificate.
In Jessore village and beyond, Abdur Rahim's determination and passion for learning later in life have inspired. From his example many local parents have come to better appreciate the benefits of their children's education, best completed now, while sons and daughters are yet young.