

# Gaibandha Santals get their paddy

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

The Santals in the district's Gobindaganj on Thursday night finally received their paddy harvested from Shahebganj sugarcane farm, though their leaders had refused to receive it earlier in the day, demanding the removal of barbed-wire fence and withdrawal of cases filed against the indigenous men.

Rangpur Sugar Mills authorities on Thursday began harvesting Aman paddy grown by the Santals on its land amid no response from the community following the High Court order lifting restrictions on collecting their crops.

On the first day, they reaped crops on two and a half acres of land out of 45.5 acres with a combine harvester.

Of the Aman field, crops on 30 acres of land ripened, and the remaining would need 10 more days to ripen, said Abdul Awal, managing director of the sugar mills.

Abdul Hannan, Gobindaganj upazila nirbahi officer, said a 17-member team, led by Burna Bas Todo,

community head of Madarganj, and also a member of the Shahebganj-Bagdafarm land recovery committee, received 26 sacks, each contains two maunds of paddy, on behalf of the Santals in the presence of two magistrates.

"We would hand over all the paddy [to the Santals] as soon it is harvested."

"Earlier, we did not want to take the harvested paddy from the mills authorities. After discussions with the community leaders, we agreed to receive the crops. But our movement will continue for the Santal families' rehabilitation on the land from they had been evicted," said Todo.

The mills authorities yesterday deployed two combine harvesters to reap the paddy. They reaped crops on seven more acres by the harvesters and handed over 112 maunds of paddy to the Santal leaders.

They also employed labourers for harvesting the paddy quickly, as they would plant sugarcane stems on the fields. The plantation period will end

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Santals loading paddy, harvested from Shahebganj farm, onto a rickshaw van in Gobindaganj upazila of Gaibandha yesterday. They grew the crop on 45 acres of land. Inset, labourers employed by Rangpur Sugar Mills are also busy harvesting paddy.

PHOTO: STAR



# Outrage all around

FROM PAGE 1

Her failure to speak out in support of the Rohingya "is baffling to an international audience that persists in casting her as a human rights icon," said David Mathieson of Human Rights Watch.

"One version to explain her silence is callous indifference, another is calculated limited messaging... but the most likely is she simply has no control over the Burmese army."

Thousands of Rohingya have fled the army lockdown in Rakhine to Bangladesh, bringing with them horrifying stories of gang rape, torture and murder at the hands of Myanmar's military.

The military crackdown yesterday sparked angry protests from Jakarta to Dhaka.

Around 5,000 demonstrated in Dhaka after Friday prayers, with hundreds more protesting in Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta and Bangkok to accuse Myanmar of ethnic cleansing and genocide in Rakhine state.

Muslim-majority Malaysia's Cabinet also issued a statement condemning the violence, an unusually strong criticism against a fellow member of the 10-country Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean).

"Malaysia... calls on the govern-

ment of Myanmar to take all necessary actions to address the alleged ethnic cleansing," the statement said.

It said the Myanmar ambassador would be summoned over the crisis and that Malaysian Foreign Minister Anifah Aman would meet with de facto leader Aung San Suu Kyi and other top Myanmar officials "at the earliest possible date."

Rights groups say the military has used attacks on police border posts last month as an excuse for a crackdown on the Rohingya, a Muslim group reviled by many Myanmar Buddhists.

The government flatly denies the allegations, saying troops are defending the country from an armed insurgency.

It has barred investigators and foreign journalists from the lockdown area and lashed out at reports of abuse as "fabrications".

Suu Kyi, who has travelled to India and Japan during the six-week crisis, has commented only to say a probe into the attacks was underway in accordance with the law.

But she has faced growing criticism for her inaction.

The UN special rapporteur on Myanmar, Yanghee Lee, has slammed the lockdown as "unacceptable".

Researchers at Queen Mary

University London said her silence amounts to "legitimising genocide" and entrenching "the persecution of the Rohingya minority".

"Despite the fact that this is the most significant test of Suu Kyi's leadership, the country's de facto leader has remained remarkably indifferent," they said this week.

Even though she led her party to power Suu Kyi is hampered by a junta-era constitution that gives the army a quarter of parliamentary seats and control over security.

She is also cramped by the prevailing view among many Myanmar Buddhists that the Rohingya are illegal immigrants, meaning any moves to support them would risk a public backlash.

"The government's response suggests that it either has no control over the still-powerful military, or considers protecting the ethnic minority as too politically charged," said risk analysts Verisk Maplecroft.

But inside the conflict zone, Rohingya still invest hope in Suu Kyi's star power.

"The international community must put serious pressure on Aung San Suu Kyi or the problem will not be solved," said one man, describing how troops stormed into a neighbouring village yesterday shooting indiscriminately.

# Titans subdue Bulls

FROM PAGE 1

Mahmudullah Riyad and Shuvagata Hom, Khulna Titans reached the target with eight balls to spare when the skipper eased a single to long on to end unbeaten on a 35-ball 36 with two sixes and a four.

In the day's afternoon match, Rajshahi Kings earned a hard-fought 12-run victory over then league leaders Rangpur Riders.

In the evening match, chasing 120, Khulna Titans got off to a rocky start with Taijul Islam bowling Hasanuzzaman for four runs with the fifth ball of the innings. Riki Wessels then departed in the fourth over, bowled by Rumman Raees, to leave Titans at 16 for two.

The fine job done by their bowlers, however, allowed them to relax and not worry about the run rate. Shuvagata and opener Taibur Rahman started the rebuilding job, adding 33 runs in 4.4 overs for the third wicket. Their association ended with the score on 49 in the ninth over when Shuvagata played the ball on the leg side and called Taibur through, but the opener could not beat Mushfiqur's direct hit.

That however brought the cool head of skipper Mahmudullah to the crease and he went about nullifying any fight left in Barisal with an inci-

dent-free 57-run fourth-wicket stand with Shuvagata. There was one last bit of joy for Barisal when Rumman bowled an excellent Yorker to disturb the bails of Shuvagata, who departed for a crucial and well-compiled 34-ball 40 with five fours and a six. By that time, however, just 14 runs were needed from 23 balls.

Earlier, after winning the toss, Mushfiqur Rahim's team could only manage 119 for five through a mixture of tight bowling from the Titans and irresponsible batting from Barisal, which included two unnecessary run-outs in the space of two overs.

The standout bowler for Titans was Junaid Khan, who sent down two overs for just eight runs while opening the bowling, and added the scalp of Dawid Malan, whose pull looped off the edge to wicketkeeper Nicholas Pooran in the fourth over.

Shafiqul Islam then came on in the next over and got rid of Jeevan Mendis who edged an attempted slog to third man. That brought Barisal's two most consistent performers in Mushfiqur and Shahriar Nafees together with the score on 24 for two.

It seemed that they would fish the Bulls out of trouble as Nafees slashed away two boundaries in the

sixth over bowled by Kevon Cooper. They did put on 42 runs for the third wicket in 37 balls, but Nafees being trapped in front by Mosharraf Hossain for a 27-ball 23 in the 11th over ruined hopes of a substantial turnaround. 66 for three quickly became 79 for five as first Nadif Chowdhury and then Mushfiqur were needlessly run out.

Nadif had only himself to blame as he was yorked by Mosharraf in the 13th over and over-balanced out of the crease, but in his daze he failed to get back to the crease before Pooran smartly flicked the ball back onto the stumps. In the 15th over, after just having hit his third four that took him to 31 off 25 deliveries, Mushfiqur set off for a suicidal leg bye which resulted in both him and Thisara Perera stranded at the non-striker's end.

Perera, who hit an unbeaten 17 off 19, and Enamul Haque took Barisal to the end of the innings, adding 40 runs in 5.4 overs. Junaid bowled two more fabulous overs for just four runs, ending with excellent figures of one for 12 from his four. 15 runs in the last over bowled by Shafiqul, thanks to a four and a six from Enamul, lifted Barisal to 119 -- a total that is likely to continue their losing run.

# Fake photos trolling

FROM PAGE 1

Up to 30,000 members of the ethnic minority have fled homes, the UN says, amid violence that is most serious since hundreds were killed in communal clashes in Rakhine in 2012.

Amid worldwide condemnations over the Myanmar government's action, a group of people are sharing fake photos with misleading captions on Facebook and Twitter. Some Bangladeshi newspapers have also published such fake and unverified photos.

And some people are sharing those without knowing that they are not authentic.

Leaders of minority communities say this online campaign using false information could be aimed at inciting communal tensions in Bangladesh.

"Centring the Rohingya issue, numerous misleading posts and photos, seemingly to incite communal tensions, have been uploaded in social sites. We are very much worried about recurrence of any incident like the one in Ramu," said Prof Ashim Ranjan Barua, president of Bangladesh Buddhist Federation.

He said the Buddhists, mostly living in the bordering areas like Ramu and Ukhia, fear backlash over the Rakhine issue.

In 2012, Muslim zealots destroyed more than a dozen Buddhist monasteries in Ramu after a hate campaign was launched by using an "anti-Islam" photo on a photoshopped Facebook account of a Buddhist youth.

Talking to these correspondents, some journalists said this type of campaign overshadows the real plight of the community and the crisis that has its root in Myanmar.

Instead of sharing or uploading misleading info and photos, people should call upon the international community to put pressure on Myanmar to stop the atrocities and find a peaceful and permanent solution to the long-standing problem, they added.

At present, 31,759 registered Rohingyas stay in two refugee camps in Cox's Bazar.

census held from February 1 to 23, say that about three lakh other Rohingyas are living illegally in the district. Many including locals believe the figure would be as many as five lakh.

TRUE & FALSE

There is a Facebook page titled "Stop Killing Muslim in Burma: Today in Burma, tomorrow in Bangladesh and one day in the entire world". One of the photos posted in the page on November 20 shows some Buddhist monks standing among piles of dead bodies.

This photo, uploaded in some other pages as well, was shown as "an example of Buddhist violence against Rohingyas".

However, the picture is not of any incident in Myanmar at all. It was taken in the aftermath of an earthquake in China in April 2010.

The Tibetan monks were preparing for mass cremation of earthquake victims on a mountaintop in Yushu county of Qinghai province, China. It received second prize singles (General News) in World Press Photo Contest, 2011.

More interestingly, a clip of fifth part of Hollywood's Rambo film series "Last Blood" is hovering in Facebook with texts in Bangla -- "Video of torture on Rohingyas: share it with everyone" and "Hefajat-e-Islam".

Hefajat, a Qawmi madrasa-based organisation, denies any link with the video.

A Facebook user on November 20 shared a disturbing video of a girl in flames, and described it as an incident in Myanmar. Writing a caption, "Stop Killing Burma Muslims", the user requested people of Bangladesh to share the video.

It's virtually an incident in Guatemala.

A 16-year-old girl was beaten and burned to death by a lynch mob in May 2015. Several international media outlets, including CNN, The Independent and Daily Mail, reported it along with photograph and video.

A Facebook page named "Stop Muslim Genocide in Burma" on October 16 shared several photos including the one in which a woman is

lying on the ground with hands and legs tied with ropes.

This photo was uploaded by Bangladesh's news portal Bangla Tribune on August 30 with a story. The headline was "Annie is now in hospital in critical condition after enduring torture in her-in-law's house."

Some Facebook users shared a widely circulated photograph showing a motorbike riding across the hands of school students lying on the ground with outstretched arms.

They described it as an image of torture on Rohingyas.

The photo was actually a stunt by a martial arts trainer in south India. The BBC Trending on June 6, 2015 in a story headlined "The fake pictures of the Rohingya crisis" made mention of this photo.

Besides, three photos were uploaded in a page named "Stop Killing Muslim in Burma" with extreme hate speech against Buddhists.

A pro-Jamaat newspaper published an AFP photo on its fifth page on November 20.

As its caption, AFP wrote: "This handout photograph was released by the Myanmar Armed Forces on November 18, 2016, with information stating that Myanmar soldiers are putting out a fire in Wapeik village located in Maungdaw in Rakhine State near the Bangladesh border on November 13, after attackers allegedly set fire to 80 houses..."

But the Bangladeshi newspaper wrote in the caption: "Myanmar army is setting fire to the houses of Rohingyas in Rakhine state". However, the photo credit was given to AFP.

WHO ARE DOING THESE? Julfikar Ali Manik, an investigative journalist who has long experience of working on issues relating to Rohingya crisis, militancy and war crimes, said a group of Rohingyas is carrying out a widespread propaganda by using fake photos in an organised and planned way.

He said networks of several Bangladeshi mobile phone operators are available in parts of Rakhine's Maungdaw, and many Rohingyas over mobile phones send fake photos to the

Rohingyas staying in Bangladesh and Bangladeshis acquainted to them.

"When someone sends such a [fake] photo from Myanmar, saying that such an incident has taken place there, people start to believe it. And then Rohingyas and locals in Cox's Bazar spread it considering the photo credible," he said.

Those people use propaganda to draw sympathy of the global community as well as the people of Bangladesh. Their sympathisers in Middle-Eastern and some other countries support their online campaigns.

"They often use Islam as their tool," said Manik, who also contributes to The New York Times.

He added that several Rohingya insurgent organisations active in Myanmar have long been connected with militant organisations like JMB and Huji in Bangladesh, and these local outfits play a vital role in the propaganda.

A senior reporter of The Daily Star now covering the Rohingya issue in Teknaf found several locals who saw these photos in Facebook.

Maulavi Faridul Alam from Jhilmongkhali village said he was very upset when he saw the pictures. Asked if he knows there are many fake photos among those, Faridul, who is in his mid 50s, said he believes many of them are genuine.

A carpenter named Russell showed a number of photos to the reporter, saying, "Look how they are torturing [Rohingyas]. The correspondent could identify some of those images that are not linked to Myanmar or Rohingyas."

Polash Datta, a journalist who runs polashdatta.com that monitors mainstream and social media contents, said these same photographs are used whenever a major communal attack involving Muslims takes place anywhere in the world.

However, posting of fake photographs over Rohingya crisis this time has exceeded what was done in the past, said Polash, who also works on data journalism.

Asked about what the authorities could do, he said blocking the sites or removing those posts or photos won't

be very effective, because if one site is blocked, they create another. So the government should launch counter propaganda against these elements, he added.

NOT NEW

Inciting communal violence using social media is not something new in Bangladesh.

Take Ramu incident as an example.

The zealots in a planned way spread the photoshopped image through Bluetooth or picture message services from mobile phones in September 2012.

Months before the attack, fake photos with misleading captions of atrocities against Rohingyas were seen in the social media. Following a communal violence in June 2012, a huge number of Rohingyas attempted to enter Bangladesh fleeing persecution in Myanmar.

The Rohingya insurgent groups in Rakhine were suspected of being among the planners of the Ramu mayhem, The Daily Star learnt at that time.

The Rohingya Solidarity Organisation (RSO) tops the list of suspects as it participated in attacks on Buddhist temples and houses on the night of September 29 in 2012, according to a person who has close relations with some RSO leaders and activists.

During the war crimes trial of top Jamaat-e-Islami leaders in 2012 and 2013, a massive online campaign was launched against the long-cherished trial often by using fake photographs and misleading information.

Pro-Jamaat Facebook page BasherKella played a vital role in that campaign, also backed by some right-wing newspapers.

Some of those newspapers published the photo of a ceremony of changing the Gilaf (cover) of Holy Kaaba in Makkah with misleading captions. A report described the ceremony as "a human chain led by the khatib of Holy Kaaba protesting the war crimes trial in Bangladesh."

CONCERN

Bangladesh Buddhist Federation President Prof Ashim Ranjan Barua said, "We're very concerned over the situation."

The Federation discussed the issues of fake posts in social media at a meeting on Tuesday. They have already conveyed their concerns to the Police Headquarters. Officials assured them that law enforcers are alert, he added.

Eminent historian Prof Muntasir Mamoon, however, said some fake photos might have been circulated over the Rohingya issue but it cannot be denied that Rohingyas are being persecuted in Myanmar.

"It is true that the villages are being razed," he said.

Rana Dasgupta, general secretary of Bangladesh Hindu-Buddha-Christian Oikya Parishad, said they have seen in the past that a communal force attempts to attack minorities here following any communal violence in neighbouring countries.

Replying to another query, Rana said he fears that communal attacks might take place centring on the Rohingya issue.

A journalist of this newspaper yesterday visited a Buddhist-dominated village in Hnila union of Teknaf. There is a sense of insecurity among the residents there.

Contacted, AKM Shahidur Rahman, deputy inspector general (media and planning) of police, said they are looking into the online propaganda.

"We usually take necessary action whenever we receive any specific allegation," he added.

# AL backs

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government bodies will cast their votes to elect a chairman, 15 general members and five women members in reserved seats in each district council, according to the District Council (Amendment) Act, 2016.

The elected representatives of each district include chairmen and members of union parishads; chairmen and vice-chairmen of upazila parishads and mayors and councillors of municipalities and city corporations.

The election will be held in 61 districts, excluding three hill districts -- Rangamati, Bandarban and Khagrachhari.