

Five return home from Indian jail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Five Bangladeshis returned home from India on Friday on completion of their two and a half years' imprisonment in an Indian jail.

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) handed over the returnees to Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) through Benapole check post.

Nazrul Islam, commander of BGB camp at Benapole check post, said the five entered Indian territory without valid documents through Jessore border in search of work two and a half years ago.

Indian police arrested them in Kolkata in 2014 for illegally entering the country.



A group of indigenous women reap paddy at Golabari Headman Para in Khagrachhari Sadar upazila on Monday last.

Benevolence extraordinary

A CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

The ordinary act of reaping paddy by a group of women turned out to be an extraordinary one as these women, mostly solvent housewives and female college students, are doing the work solely for a benevolent purpose.

The 30 to 35 women were beaming with graceful smile while singing Marma folk song in chorus as they will donate the money gained from selling the paddy for construction of a new building of Keyaka Pru Bihar, a Buddhist temple at their village in Golabari Headman Para under Khagrachhari Sadar upazila.

They remain engaged in reaping paddy for a few hours from noon daily during the

ongoing harvesting season.

In the evening, they gather in a tea stall to have homemade snacks together.

"This season we harvested crop from 25 bighas of land and the total amount earned from the work will be given to the temple," said Happy Marma, a college student.

"We are doing the work for the temple for two consecutive years. Last year we bought a refrigerator for the Bouddha Bihar with the amount we got from selling paddy reaped by us," said Reimraso Aung Marma, a housewife.

Their initiative has drawn appreciation from locals.

Everybody should learn from them, said Kalachan Chowdhury, an elderly person of the village.

A journey without end

Bedey community seeks land for permanent settlement

HABIBUR RAHMAN with ANDREW EAGLE

A very long time ago, in 1638 to be precise, a community mainly comprising ethnic Mong-tong from Arakan accompanied the fugitive king Ballal Raja to settle in the area of Munshiganj. It was the start of the journey of the contemporary Bedey people, who subsequently spread out to the remote corners of Bengal and Assam, many converting to Islam along the way. Traditionally nomadic, the wanderings of the Bedey have never ceased; but there are some who hope to find a permanent dwelling place.

"How can I go to school?" asks Subel Sarder, a 13-year-old Bedey. "We have to change our location regularly and it's not possible to study while living in such a way." He dreams of a formal education but as for many Bedeys it's an elusive dream.

"We have no chance to study," agrees Md Rian, 16, who has already started working with his parents.

According to research by AKM Masud, the executive director of the organisation Grambangla Unnayan Committee, 69 percent of Bedeys never went to school and more than 95 percent cannot read or write, with the illiteracy rate among females at almost 100 percent. Around 98 percent of the 5-lakh strong Bedey community lives below the poverty line.

The term Bedey is believed to have arisen from the Bangla word "baidda"

meaning village doctor; and the Bedey in general have pursued a variety of occupations centred on traditional healing practices. They are divided among nine groups, each roaming specific parts of the country, practising unique customs and specific traditional livelihoods.

The Daily Star spoke with Bedeys based in Munshiganj while they were sheltering in 23 tents beside the Baleshwar River in Togra village of Pirojpur.

"We follow our forefathers' professions," says Sarwar. "But nowadays we can't earn enough because people's attitudes towards us have changed."

"After walking from dawn to dusk it has become difficult to earn Tk 200," says Shadinata, 46, a woman among the group.

Bedey women, who are often the primary breadwinners, often walk more than twelve miles in a day. Bedey medical treatment commonly involves extracting "bad blood" with an instrument made of animal horn called a "singa". They sell amulets to protect against illness and evil, including plastic bangles and chains of catfish bone to be worn around the waist. They chant spells and sometimes extract "tooth worm" from troublesome teeth. A consultation costs up to Tk 50, though Bedeys are sometimes paid with paddy, rice or coconuts.

School-age Bedey kids often assist parents in earning



Some homeless Bedey people take shelter by setting up tents beside the Baleshwar river in Togra village of Pirojpur. Inset, a group of them pose for a photo in front of a tent recently.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

ing an income, by selling amulets, catching snakes, performing acts of magic.

Lack of access to formal education is not the only disadvantage of a nomadic lifestyle. There are health consequences. Bedey births are often unregistered, with children unable to take the benefits of routine vaccinations. Child marriage is commonplace with girls often wed before they turn 14 and boys before 18, which results in the associated health risks of early pregnancy. By age 16, many Bedey women are mothers.

Due to their peripatetic lifestyle Bedeys often cook with and drink unsafe water, and knowledge of basic hygiene and nutrition are at a minimum. When sick the Bedey rarely consult a quali-

fied doctor.

But now some seek change, to live more as others do, in broader society. "Most of us don't like our traditional professions anymore," says Abdul Kader Sarder, leader of the group in Togra. "But we have nothing to do."

Across Bangladesh there are around 10,000 nomadic groups including the Bedey who on average travel, traditionally by boat, to around 90 locations during their 10 months of wandering a year. Around 90 percent of Bedeys own no land.

"If we had some land where we could settle," contemplates Abdul, "we could get involved in other jobs and leave our ancient professions. We could educate our children. But we are in need of help to get started."

FULBARIA COLLEGE

Who'll look after us?

Dead teacher's daughter asks

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Teachers and students of Fulbaria Degree College in the district have demanded arrest and punishment of the perpetrators responsible for the death of two persons including a teacher of the institution on November 27.

They made the demand at a mourning rally on the college campus yesterday.

Abul Kalam Azad, 55, assistant professor of botany of the college, and Safor Ali, 65, a passer-by, were killed as police swooped on the procession of the teachers and students who were demanding nationalisation of the college. Over 100 others were also injured in the attack on Sunday noon.

At yesterday's rally, deceased Abul Kalam Azad's elder daughter Samiha Azad Shochi said in a choked voice, "I demand punishment of the perpetrators and also nationalisation of the college, which was dream of my father."

"Who will take the responsibility of our family now? We want to meet with the prime minister to tell about the sufferings of our family following the tragic death of my father," said Samiha, an honours final year student of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology at Bangladesh Agricultural University.

Former vice-chancellor of Bangladesh Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Agricultural University Prof Dr Abdul Mannan addressed the mourning rally, among others.

Crackdown could radicalise Rohingya

FROM PAGE 1

In October. The attacks in Rakhine State were a possible sign that a small number of Rohingya were starting to fight back against persecution by majority Buddhists who view them as illegal immigrants although many have lived in Myanmar for generations.

The top US diplomat for East Asia, Daniel Russel, is critical of the military's heavy-handed approach and says the escalation of violence risks inciting jihadist extremism in the country also known as Burma. He is also calling on neighbouring countries, such as Muslim-majority Malaysia and Indonesia, to resist the urge to stage protests that could

further stir religious passions.

Assistant Secretary of State Russel told The Associated Press that, "if mishandled, Rakhine State could be infected and infested by jihadism which already plagues neighbouring Bangladesh and other countries."

The plight of the Rohingya, once characterised by the UN as the world's most friendless people, has attracted the attention of Muslim extremists since a spike in inter-communal violence in Rakhine in 2012 that left hundreds dead and forced more than 100,000 into squalid camps.

Meanwhile, Malaysia

accused Myanmar of engaging in the "ethnic cleansing" of its Rohingya minority yesterday, as former UN chief Kofi Annan visited a burned out village in strife-torn Rakhine state.

"The fact that only one particular ethnicity is being driven out is by definition ethnic cleansing," Malaysia's foreign ministry said in an unusually strongly-worded statement.

Myanmar has balked at such criticism, saying the Rakhine crisis is an internal issue -- but international pressure on the country is mounting.

Malaysia's statement noted that hundreds of thousands of Rohingya have

fled to neighbouring countries in recent years -- including some 56,000 to Muslim-majority Malaysia.

That, the statement said, "makes this matter no longer an internal matter but an international matter".

A convoy carrying the former UN chief arrived outside the Rohingya village of Waapeik yesterday morning, which has seen significant damage from fire.

Non state media journalists were stopped by police from coming close to the convoy or entering the village, an AFP photographer at the scene said.

Annan is not expected to brief the media until Tuesday -- after his visit to Rakhine

ends.

Myanmar has restricted access to the northern part of the state and says its military is hunting down the militants behind the attacks.

But rights groups and Rohingya refugees who have made it to Bangladesh have accused the military of killing civilians and razing entire villages as a form of collective punishment.

The Rohingya have long faced persecution and government restrictions on movement that many have likened to apartheid.

Much of Myanmar views the Rohingya as illegal immigrants from Bangladesh even though many have lived there for generations.

Law at mercy of lawmakers

FROM PAGE 1

But what three MPs of Natore allegedly did at a recent meeting of the parishad went beyond their jurisdiction.

Sajedur Rahman, administrator of Natore district council, found the "advice" of the lawmakers as "interference" in the functions of the parishad and announced that he would resign in protest.

The parishad held the meeting on October 16 to finalise proposals for annual development and allocate over Tk 5 crore for this.

Ruling Awami League lawmakers Abdul Quddus, Shafiqul Islam Shimul and Abul Kalam Azad demanded 95 percent of the development fund be allocated in line with their proposals, meeting sources said.

The administrator did not agree with their demand. A number of upazila chairmen present at the meeting also

raised objection.

The MPs still put pressure on the administrator to accept their proposals.

At one stage, the administrator walked out of the meeting and the upazila chairmen followed suit.

"I had decided to resign because of such interference by the MPs," Sajedur Rahman told The Daily Star recently.

"Why should I hold the post if I cannot do anything independently?"

He, however, did not quit finally "at the request of some of his well-wishers".

"They advised me not to resign towards the end of my term," he said.

The parishad could not finalise the development projects on October 16 as the meeting ended abruptly.

It met again the next day. The MPs this time came up with new proposals -- 50 percent of the fund will be spent as per their proposals,

30 percent according to the suggestions of upazila chairmen and 20 percent in line with the administrator's proposals, officials of the parishad said.

The administrator alleged that MPs have been grabbing 50 percent of the development projects illegally for the last three years.

Shariful Islam Ramjan, chairman of Natore Sadar Upazila Parishad, said, MPs cannot submit project proposals; they can only advise the district council (zila parishad).

"MP's have no voting rights in the district council but they still put illegal pressure on it to get their proposals passed," he told this correspondent.

The Natore MPs denied the allegations against them and accused the administrator of ignoring the law regarding taking advice from them.

Contacted, Abdul

Quddus, MP of Natore-1, said that according to the law, the administrator has to finalise projects after holding discussions with MPs. But he never takes their advice.

The lawmaker said they have informed the LGRD ministry about the matter.

Abul Kalam Azad, lawmaker from Natore-4, said there is no question of "percentage" in project distribution.

"The administrator doesn't know which development projects are needed. So MPs have submitted the project proposals," he told The Daily Star recently.

Such allegations of interference by MPs have also been raised in some other districts, including Bogra, Chittagong, Pirojpur and Gazipur, reports our correspondents.

development proposals placed by MPs of the district.

"We can take part in implementation of development projects prepared by MPs if we have good relations with them," Abdul Jalil, chairman of Sripur upazila, told The Daily Star.

Jalil was elected chairman with the AL backing.

Izadur Rahman, chairman of Gazipur Sadar Upazila Parishad and also a local BNP leader, said they need to maintain good relations with MPs to get allocation for development projects from the zila parishad.

Nazrul Islam, chairman of Nazirpur upazila parishad of Pirojpur, said, "Lawmakers take away most of the annual allocation."

MA Salam, administrator of Chittagong Zila Parishad, said lawmakers' projects get funds more than that of others from the allocations for annual development.



Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Bangladesh Railway, Rail Bhaban, Dhaka

Invitation for Bids

Date	29 November 2016.
Loan No. and Title	3301-BAN: Railway Rolling Stock Project.
Contract No. and Title	BR/ADB-2/Automatic Train Washing Plant Procurement of 1 (One) Meter Gauge (MG) and 1 (One) Broad Gauge (BG) Automatic Train Washing Plant for Bangladesh Railway.
Deadline for Submission of Bids	30 January 2017, 11:00am (Bangladesh Standard Time).

- The People's Republic of Bangladesh (the "Borrower") has received financing from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) toward the cost of **Railway Rolling Stock Project**. Part of this financing will be used for payments under the contract named above. This contract will be jointly financed by Government of Bangladesh (GOB) and ADB. Local currency portion will be financial by GOB and foreign currency portion will be financed by ADB. The eligibility rules and procedures of the ADB will govern the bidding process.
- The **Bangladesh Railway** (the "Purchaser") represented by Chief Mechanical Engineer/Development and Project Director, now invites sealed Bids from eligible Bidders for **Procurement of 1 (One) Meter Gauge (MG) and 1 (One) Broad Gauge (BG) Automatic Train Washing Plant including installation, testing, commissioning with all civil and electrical works**.
- Only eligible bidders with, but not limited to, the following key qualifications should participate in this bidding.
 - The bidder/supplier shall have experience of successful completion record as main supplier, supply of automatic train washing plants and related services for \$ 10 million within the last 15 (fifteen) years comprising of at least one contract valued at \$ 3 million and not more than six contracts valued combined at minimum of \$ 8 million. The manufacturer shall have a minimum of 10 (ten) years of overall experience in manufacturing Train Washing Plant. The manufacturer shall have specific experience of manufacturing minimum 30 (thirty) Train Washing Plant and related services. The manufacturer shall also have experience of exporting 5 (five) Nos. Train Washing Plant including related services to foreign railways in the last 10 (ten) years. Delivery period: Design, manufacturing, delivery, installation, testing and commissioning to be completed within 24 months from effective date of contract in all respect (date of receipt of Commitment Letter from ADB by the beneficiary's bank will be the effective date of contract).

The above requirements are indicative. Bidders should refer to the bidding documents for detailed qualification requirements. In case of any discrepancy between the information provided in this IFB and the Bidding Document, the Bidding Document (and addendum, if any) shall prevail.

- International competitive bidding** will be conducted in accordance with ADB's Single-Stage, Two-Envelope bidding procedure and is open to all Bidders from eligible source countries.
- Interested eligible Bidders may obtain further information from Chief Mechanical Engineer/Development and Project Director and inspect the Bidding Document at the address given below, from 10am to 04:30pm. Date of selling of bid document: up to 30 January 2017 till 10am.
- The Bidding Document, in the English language, may be purchased by interested Bidders on the submission of a written application to the address below and upon payment of a nonrefundable fee of BDT 10,000.00 (Taka ten thousand). The Bidding Document can either be picked up at the address below, or upon request of the bidder the Bidding Document will be sent by surface mail or courier for overseas delivery by the purchaser. The cost for overseas delivery will be paid by the bidder on an at cost basis, and should be paid at the same time when the Bidding Document is purchased. The method of payment will be in the form of Pay Order in favour of "Financial Advisor & Chief Accounts Officer/Project", Bangladesh Railway, Dhaka. No liability will be accepted for loss or late delivery.
(Md. Harun-ar-Rashid)
Chief Mechanical Engineer/Development & Project Director
Bangladesh Railway, Rail Bhaban (Room No. 609)
16, Abdul Gani Road, Dhaka-1000
Mobile: 0088 01711506944
E-mail: cmedev@railway.gov.bd
- Bids must be delivered to the address below on or before 30 January 2017, 11:00am (Bangladesh Standard Time).** All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid Security as described in the bidding document. Late bids shall be rejected. Bids will be opened in the presence of the Bidders representatives, who choose to attend at the address below at 11:30am on 30 January 2017.
- Bangladesh Railway will not be responsible for any costs or expenses incurred by Bidders in connection with the preparation or delivery of Bids.
- The invitation for bid is available in the following websites:
 - Bangladesh Railway;
 - ADB (Business Opportunities) and
 - Central Procurement Technical Unit (CPTU) of Ministry of Planning, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.
- The address referred to above is:
Room No. 609, Rail Bhaban Bangladesh Railway 16, Abdul Gani Road, Dhaka-1000 Bangladesh.

Md. Harun-ar-Rashid
Chief Mechanical Engineer/Development & Project Director
Bangladesh Railway, Rail Bhaban 16, Abdul Gani Road, Dhaka-1000

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