

Make fair list for land acquisition

Mymensingh char people reiterate their demand

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

As their demand for removal of their homesteads and farmlands from the proposed acquisition list has not been met yet, hundreds of char people held a protest rally at Char Durgapur village in Sadar upazila on Saturday evening.

Demanding a fair list involving four unions alongside the Brahmaputra river for the division's development activities, the char people have been continuing their movement under Basatbhita Rokkha Committee for the last five months.

Speakers at the rally said when the government is trying to save farmlands from unplanned use for human settlements the fresh list of 4,366 acres involving seven villages is totally unexpected and unwise.

"As we are deprived of development compared to other areas of the district, we also want the development of Mymensingh division, but we do not want to be evicted from our ancestral lands," they also said.

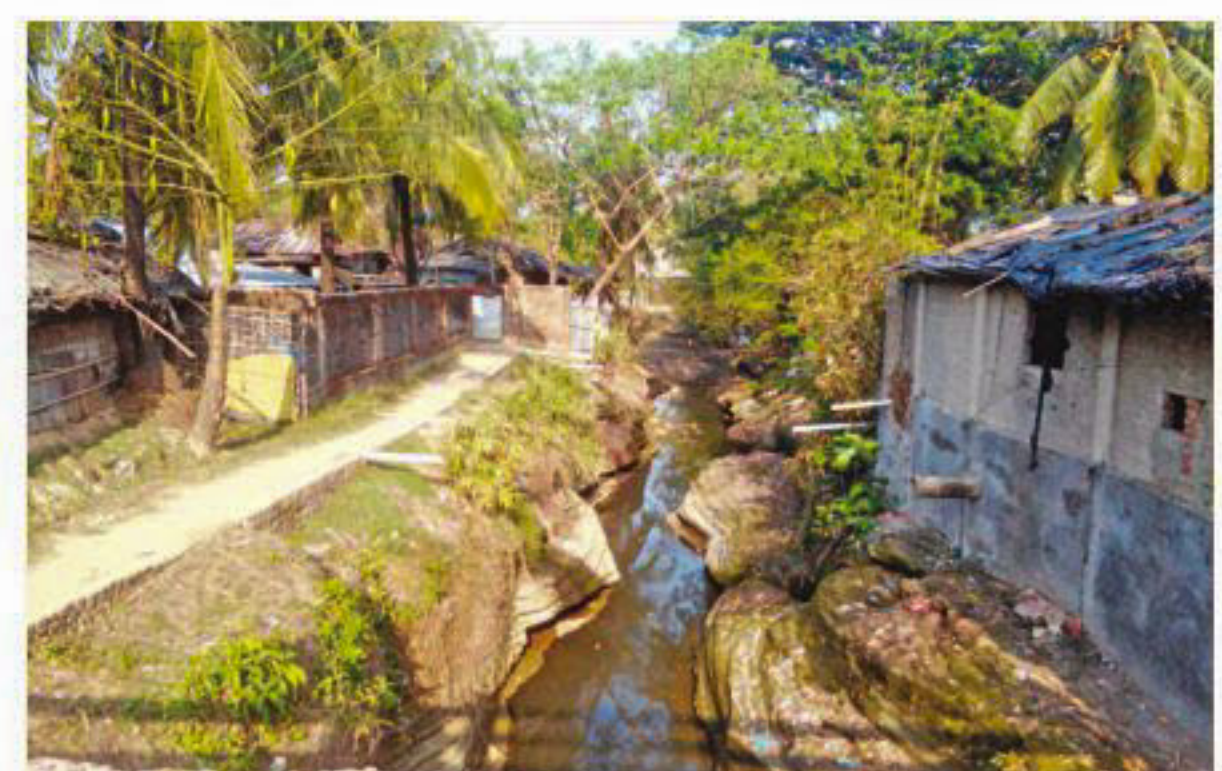
The ongoing movement will become tougher to press home the demand, the speakers warned.

They alleged that the administration had earlier prepared a list of 1,220 acres of land for development of the division but it was later cancelled, and a new list of 4,366 acres was released.

Terming the char villages an agricultural hub for centuries, they also urged the administration to implement the first phase to avoid serious losses of farmlands and households.

Freedom fighter Karim Razaq, Dr Harun-ur-Rashid, Kazi Rafiqul Islam, Nadim Mahmud, Abul Mansur and Sadequul Islam Sabuj spoke at the rally.

Basatbhita Rokkha Committee convener Prof Syed Mosharrar Hossain presided over the rally.



Above, a killing ground of Pakistan occupation forces during 1971 at Dakkhin Hindupara in Moheshkhali municipality of Cox's Bazar shows all signs of neglect. Below, a madrasa building at the site of a large killing ground in Cox's Bazar town, private houses built in a mass grave area at Puran Pollan of Teknaf upazila headquarters, and the office of the upazila fisheries officer at the site of a '71 killing ground in the upazila.

PHOTO: MOHAMMAD ALI JINNAT

Killing grounds, mass graves grabbed

Govt offices, madrasas, schools, private houses built at the spots in Cox's Bazar

MOHAMMAD ALI JINNAT, Cox's Bazar

The killing grounds, mass graves and other places bearing memories of the Liberation War are lying in utter neglect in different places of the district although 46 years have passed after the country's independence.

Many of the spots have already been grabbed and various establishments have been set up there as the authorities concerned did not take proper steps for their preservation.

Two years ago, the deputy commissioner (DC) formed a committee with the additional district magistrate as its convener, following demand by Bangladesh Muktiyoddha Sangsad's district unit and several cultural organisations, Cox's Bazar DC office sources said.

The committee was given the responsibility to identify the killing grounds, mass graves and places with the memory of the Liberation War.

They visited different areas of the district and talked with freedom fighters, witnesses, members of the affected families and local people.

They identified a place bearing the memory of the Liberation War on Airport Road in Cox's Bazar, five killing grounds and mass graves in the district town, ten killing grounds in Moheshkhali upazila, a killing ground and mass grave at bordering upazila Teknaf.

The biggest killing ground in Cox's Bazar town was on a six-acre land that now includes Sea Beach Rest House of the Public Works Department.

The Pakistani occupation forces and their collaborators Razakars picked up freedom-loving Bangalees from different areas of the district, made them stand in queues and killed them by brush firing there, said district Muktiyoddha Sangsad Commander Mohammad Shahjahan.

Several hundred people were buried in the mass grave, he said.

The report prepared by the district administration's committee mentioned that a school, a madrasa, the old building of Shilpakala Academy, some shanties and a few government establishments have been set up in the area of the killing ground and mass grave.

Most other killing grounds and mass graves at Cox's Bazar town and Moheshkhali

and Teknaf upazilas have also been grabbed.

Noted cultural activist Biswajit Paul Bishu, also former general secretary of Cox's Bazar district Shilpakala Academy, said the authorities concerned should take immediate steps to preserve the memories of the Liberation War.

It is essential to preserve the killing grounds, mass graves and other reminders of the Liberation War to instil its spirit in the mind of new generation, said Satyapriyo Chowdhury Dolon, president of Cox's Bazar chapter of Sammilito Sangskritik Jote.

Deputy Commissioner Md Ali Hossain said, "Lately the spots have been identified. Now work will be started to preserve the places as per the directive of the ministry concerned."

15 injured in AL feud

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Munshiganj

At least 15 activists were injured in a clash between two factions of Awami League over celebration of the Independence Day in Sreenagar upazila of the district yesterday morning.

Both groups-- one led by Sukumar Ranjan Ghosh, law maker from Munshiganj-1 constituency, and another by Golam Sarwar Kabir, a central AL leader,-- blamed each other for the incident.

Police fired over 100 rubber bullets and tear gas canisters to bring the situation under control, said Kazi Maksuda Lima, Munshiganj assistant superintendent of police.

Baruni Snan begins

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Historic 'Baruni Snan', a three-day-long religious ritual of the local Hindu community, began at Boalmari Baruni village in Boda upazila of Panchagarh yesterday.

Hindu devotees of all age groups are flocking to the venue to take a holy dip, a symbolic gesture believed to wash away sins, in the Korotoa river and offer puja.

Ajit Kumar Singh, president of Boalmari Baruni Ganga Temple, said Baruni Snan is an annual event that begins on Chaitra 13, in the Bangla calendar.

Nearly five lakh devotees from different areas take a holy dip in the river every year, Ajit added.

Along with the religious event, a seven-day fair also began on the river banks.

Traders from Thakurgaon, Dinajpur and Nilphamari districts have set up about 500 stalls, displaying handicrafts, household items, pottery, handmade toys and other articles at the venue.

A neglected reminder of mass resistance

Ill-equipped locals freed Pabna, defeating Pakistan troops at Pabna telephone building

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

The then Pabna telephone exchange building at Gopalpur in the town witnessed the valiant resistance of the freedom-loving people, who kept the district headquarters free from the Pakistan occupation army for 10 days in the early days of 1971 Liberation War, defeating the Pakistan occupation army stationed there.

But surprisingly, no step has been taken to preserve the historic building or officially recognise the heroic people contributing to one of the significant events in Liberation War.

After Bangabandhu's historic announcement on March 7, the people of Pabna took preparation to fight against the Pakistan army. We organised the locals and managed some personal firearms," said freedom fighter Baby Islam, also one of the commanders of the fight.

"When the Pakistan army began crack-down in Dhaka on the night of March 25, a troop of the occupation force also entered the district headquarters at Pabna.

"As locals got united to resist the force, the then deputy commissioner Nurul Kader Khan gave necessary instructions to the people and provided them access to the arsenal of Pabna Police Lines for getting armed.

"On March 28, thousands of people,

many of them carrying merely bamboo sticks and cleavers, encircled the telephone exchange office (now abandoned) where the Pakistan troop made their camp. Defying bullets from the enemies' strong firearms, we fought back with small firearms. We killed at least 40 soldiers after the daylong fight," he said.

The next day, the Pakistan forces conducted an air attack to help rest of their troops move to safety and Pabna remained free from the occupation troops from March 29 to April 9, said Rabiul Islam Rabi, another hero of the fight.

"Later the occupation troops along with their local collaborators committed a number of massacres in the district from April 10 till the nation's final victory on December 16. The people of Pabna feel proud of country's first resistance fight," he said.

Unfortunately, the now abandoned historic telephone exchange compound has become a safe haven for drug users, giving a painful sight to locals, especially the freedom fighters who led the fight.

"We urge the government to recognize the heroic battle of the common people that freed Pabna from occupation troops during one of the country's first resistance fights and take steps for preserving the historic building," said Baby Islam.

No step has been taken to recognise the heroic people contributing to the significant event.

The derelict building of Pabna telephone exchange that witnessed defeat of a troop of Pakistan occupation army in a frontal fight with local people on March 28 in 1971, a glorious event of mass resistance during the early days of the Liberation War.



PHOTO: STAR

Nasirnagar ASI closed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

An assistant sub-inspector of Nasirnagar Police Station was closed to the district police lines for his alleged negligence of duty in connection with Monday's clash that left at least 30 people injured.

Superintendent of Police Md Mizanur Rahman took the decision for ASI Md Ashraf's negligence of duty, said Md Abu Zafar, officer-in-charge of the police station.

Over 30 villagers were injured in a clash between two rival groups at Dharmondol in the upazila over establishing supremacy in the area, said police.

1500 get free treatment

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Over 1500 people got free treatment from a day-long medical and dental camp at Gorea Degree College in Thakurgaon Sadar upazila yesterday.

A 15-member team led by Medical Officer of Bangabandhu Medical University Dr Mohidul Islam treated the patients at the camp from 9:00am to 3:00pm.

Former lawmaker late Khademul Islam Smrity Parishad organised the event in memory of late Awami League leaders Joshir Rahman and Mofiz Uddin.

In response to people's demand, the organisers assured them of conducting such camp every year.



The memorial built in memory of the martyrs of 1971 near Balabari Railway Station in Chilmari upazila of Kurigram.

PHOTO: ABDUL WAHED

None owns war memorial

Local administration or the ministry concerned do not take responsibility of Balabari memorial completed in 2012

ABDUL WAHED, Kurigram

The memorial built here to commemorate the martyrs of the War of Liberation in 1971 could not be handed over to any authority even four years after its construction was completed.

The memorial is situated near Balabari Railway Station in Shikarpara village of Chilmari upazila of the district.

Kurigram Public Works Department (PWD) constructed the memorial in 2012 at a cost of around Tk 28 lakh under the Ministry of Liberation War Affairs.

There was a large camp of the Pakistani army in the area, where the occupation forces, along with Razakars and members of Al-Badr, killed the innocent people and dump their bodies in a ditch near the station.

Fierce fighting took place between freedom fighters and Pakistani army on October 17 in 1971 where around 20 Pakistani soldiers were killed while three freedom fighters embraced martyrdom.

Commander of Sector-11 Colonel Taher led the freedom fighters in the battle, in which the Pakistan army was defeated.

Manjurul Islam, 63, of Shikarpara, said, "Pakistani army would dump the bodies of innocent people here after killing them in different areas during the Liberation War. Around 50 bodies were dumped inside the memorial area. Besides, the Pakistani army dumped a large number of bodies in different ditches near the station."

Citing from an office file, Executive Engineer Dewan Maududur Rahman said, "After completing the memorial in 2012, we tried to hand over it to the

local administration, but they did not receive it. They sent a letter to the ministry concerned, asking who will receive the memorial and maintain it, but the ministry has not replied yet."

There are two quarters of the railway department next to the memorial, he said, adding that the PWD requested the railway department to remove the structures but to no effect. He said the memorial could not be handed over till now.

Chilmari Upazila Chairman Shawkat Ali Sarkar Bir Bikrim said, "The memorial was constructed in 2012. We the freedom fighters do not know who gave the funds to build it, or whether the work was completed according to schedule. There is no plaque of inauguration of it. The monument is essential for remembering the fight in Balabari during the War of Liberation."