

FORMER ENCLAVE DWELLERS

Indian police foil demo for basic rights; 20 hurt

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kolkata

A section of residents of now-defunct enclaves who chose to go to India have started a movement demanding basic rights, including permanent accommodation, employment and healthcare.

As many as 206 residents who went from Bangladesh are living in a temporary camp at Mekholiganj Bhotbari under Cooch Behar district in West Bengal.

More than 100 men and women have been continuing a peaceful movement before the office of Mekholiganj sub-division administrator.

They alleged that when some women protesters tried to enter the sub-division administrator's office for talks on Friday, police baton-charged them, injuring 20. Seventeen of them were admitted to Mekholiganj Sub-Divisional Hospital and Jalpaiguri Hospital, they added.

Sub-Division Administrator Aritra Ghosh denied the allegation. He claimed the agitators had tried to

enter and ransack his office and the police just removed them.

The All India Left Front and BJP have meanwhile called for separate hartal programmes in connection with the incident.

Local Left Front leader and former minister Pares Chandra Adhikary said both the central and state governments have pocketed political benefits cashing in on enclave dwellers. In reality, those people are still not free like the last 68 years, he observed.

BJP Mekholiganj South Mondal President Dariram Roy said the central government had given adequate allocation for these people, but the Trinamool state government had not ensured their benefits.

He alleged the Trinamool government never went beyond the equation of vote. Before the election the leaders flocked to the enclaves, but now they have forgot about them, he further alleged.

A women agitator told The Daily Star over phone that they were living at

Mekholiganj Bhotbari temporary camp, from where they would be shifted to remote Panishala.

She said despite financial allocation by the central government they were being rehabilitated in a place with very poor communication. She also claimed the administration did not pay any heed to their hunger strike for last several days.

After implementation of the historic border agreement between Bangladesh and India in 2015, people of both sides living in the adversely possessed enclaves got their chance to return to their homeland.

Though no Bangladeshis living in enclaves inside India returned to their homeland, 926 Indians living in enclaves inside Bangladesh returned to India. They have been kept in government camps in Dinhata, Haldibari and Mekholiganj under Cooch Behar.

Permanent camps have been built at Dinhata and Haldibari, but construction of a permanent camp at Panishala has started to shift 206 people living in Mekholiganj.



An injured woman being taken to an ambulance on Friday. She was hurt when agitating former Bangladeshi enclave dwellers residing in a temporary camp in Mekholiganj Bhotbari of Cooch Behar in West Bengal went to the sub-division administrator's office and police charged truncheons on them.

PHOTO: STAR

US destroyer

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happened at about 2:30 am local time (1730 GMT), while the Japanese Coast Guard said it took place at 1:30 am local time.

The Fitzgerald suffered damage on her starboard side above and below the waterline, causing "significant damage" and flooding to two berthing spaces and other areas of the ship, the Navy said.

The flooding was later stabilised, but it was uncertain how long it would take to gain access to those spaces once the ship docked, to continue the search for the missing, it said.

Back in Yokosuka, divers will inspect the damage and develop a plan for repairs, the Navy said.

The ship was able to operate under its own power with limited propulsion, the Navy said. The Japanese Coast Guard said separately the Fitzgerald was towed back to Yokosuka by a tugboat at about 3 knots.

Part of an eight-ship squadron based in Yokosuka, the Fitzgerald had in February completed \$21 million worth of upgrades and repairs.

Japan's Nippon Yusen KK, which charters the container ship, ASX Crystal, said in a statement it would "cooperate fully" with the Coast Guard's investigation of the incident. At around 29,000 tons displacement, the ship dwarfs the 8,315-ton US warship, and was carrying 1,080 containers from the port of Nagoya to Tokyo.

None of the 20 crew members aboard the container ship, all Filipino, were injured, and the ship was not leaking oil, Nippon Yusen said. The ship arrived at Tokyo Bay around 5:00 pm (0800 GMT), sailing under its own power, the Coast Guard said.

BUSY WATERWAYS

The waterways approaching Tokyo Bay are busy with commercial vessels sailing to and from Japan's two biggest container ports in Tokyo and Yokohama.

International maritime rules for collision avoidance do not define right of way for any one vessel, but provide common standards for signalling between ships, as well as regulations on posting lookouts.

Japan's public broadcaster NHK showed aerial footage of the Fitzgerald, which had a large dent on its right, or starboard, side. Images broadcast by NHK showed it had been struck next to its Aegis radar arrays behind the vertical launch tubes.

Germany's first

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"There's so much Islamist terror and so much evilness happening in the name of my religion ... it's important that we, the modern and liberal Muslims, also show our faces in public."

Ates told Der Spiegel newspaper that headscarves are banned at the mosque.

"No one will be let in with a niqab or burqa veil," she said. "This is for security reasons and also it is our belief that full-face veils have nothing to do with religion, but rather are a political statement."

More than 4 million Muslims live in Germany, the majority from Turkey but also from the Balkans, the Middle East and Northern Africa.

Raids on, and bans of, radical Muslim associations and arrests of extremist suspects have become commonplace.

Ates said the new mosque will be a place of liberalism where everyone is welcome and equal. Women will not have to wear headscarves, can preach as imams and call the faithful to prayer just like men.

"There won't be any hate preaching against democracy here," Ates said. Instead, followers can express doubt about their beliefs and approach their religion with sense and reason instead of blind devotion, she said.

Struck by twin tragedy

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Buddhist monastery while his wife and daughter continued to live in their home in Rangamati town.

"As that house went under the mud in Monday's landslide, my wife and daughter could barely manage to come out of it alive," the grieving man said.

Education certificates, documents of properties, jewellery and some cash were buried with everything else in the house, Bikram, who worked in a firm, said.

Hours after the landslide, he reached Uddanti Adam area, where the house was, only to find that it was buried in thick mud.

"I thank god they are alive. I have lost everything, but I have my family, which many people don't have after the deadliest landslide here," the man said while talking to The Daily Star at Juba Unnayan Centre in Rangamati on Friday evening.

He and his wife and 17-year-old daughter, who passed SSC this year, now live there. His son is in Dhaka now for college admission.

One of his biggest uncertainties now is how he would provide for the education of the two.

No thanks to 15pc VAT

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"I never thought these [items] would come under Value Added Tax. It will be an extra pressure on middle class families like us," he said.

Like him, other parents will see their spending go up from the next month on exercise books and other learning materials.

The guardians whose children attend English medium schools will receive a double blow as the 15 percent VAT will be applicable to education services at these institutions.

The cost of English medium education has already multiplied three to four times in the last few years. "It [new VAT] means my children's educational expenses will certainly go up further," said Samir whose son studies at Sunnydale School in the capital.

Ziaul Kabir Dulu, president of Obhibhabok Oikya Forum, a platform of guardians, said levying the tax would be a setback for the expansion of education in the country.

The new tax law seeks to impose a single and uniform VAT rate, instead of multiple rates now applicable to more than 100 goods and services, including paper and exercise books. Ballpoint pens and pencils have been exempted from VAT as of now.

Fifteen percent VAT is slapped on educational materials at a time when the government has been providing students from class one to class ten with free textbooks.

Currently, 3.69 crore students are studying at more than 1.67 lakh institutions of primary to university levels in the country.

The government has offered VAT exemption on a total of 1,043 items and services that do not include exercise books, ballpoint pens, pencils and English medium education. Many of the exempted materials are not needed in daily life.

With 15 percent VAT, the price of a 100-page exercise book will increase by Tk 3 to Tk 33, said Choudhury Atiur Rasul, director (accounts) of Pran-RFL Group that operates in diversified areas from processed food, plastic items to educational materials and stationery.

The cost of ballpoint pens and pencils will also go up for VAT.

The price hike of each exercise book may seem small or insignificant. But considering the total amount a learner requires nowadays, the spike is

"I lost my belongings in the arson attack in Tintila. My house was completely burnt," he said.

On June 5, The Daily Star correspondents met Bikram at Longadu when he was hiding in a jungle, fearing further attacks by Banglalee settlers.

Over two hundred houses of indigenous people were vandalised, looted and burnt in the attack on three villages of Longadu on June 2.

Ten days later, on June 12, a devastating landslide killed at least 112 persons in the district and destroyed many houses.

"I do not have any place to live with my wife and daughter. The admission of my daughter Nabanita Chakma is scheduled on June 20 in a college. But all her books and other documents are gone," he said.

"I can't think of a way to support the education of my son, daughter and build a house from scratch," he added.

Bikram alleged that the food provided by the government was inadequate and that the relatives and neighbours were providing food for 118 people who took shelter at Juba Unnayan Centre after the landslide.

likely to affect low and fixed-income families," Rasul said.

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) now collects Tk 3,750 and Tk 4,500 as VAT on per tonne of exercise books and commonly used writing and printing papers, said paper industry insiders.

The VAT is charged based on tariff value or minimum value set at Tk 25,000 per tonne and Tk 31,625 per tonne.

Under the new law, 15 percent VAT will be imposed on the market price of writing paper, which now stands at Tk 65,000-Tk 75,000 per tonne.

There will be a big impact on the prices of paper for VAT, said MM Nurun Nabi, general manager of Partex Paper Mills Ltd.

Bangladesh annually requires up to 60,000 tonnes of exercise books and note books, part of its total annual demand for paper of 10-12 lakh tonnes, said Mustafizur Rahman, spokesperson of Bangladesh Paper Mills Association.

The demand for exercise books is rising as students are shifting from buying unstitched paper sheets, said Mustafizur, also deputy managing director of Bashundhara Group that has paper mills.

Eighty percent of the yearly use of pens -- some 60 crore pieces -- are by students since the increasing use of computers has reduced the need for pens in public and private offices, market insiders said.

Alok Karmakar, who runs a stationery store at Tikituli in Dhaka, said the prices of exercise books and paper remained steady for nearly a year. "If prices go up, customers misunderstand us. They will not be interested in buying them," he said.

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According to eminent educationist Prof Siddiqur Rahman, VAT on education materials is not logical and justifiable.

"When the government provides textbooks for free to encourage education and reduce pressure on guardians, the VAT on education materials will increase burden on many low income families," said Siddiqur, a former teacher of the Institute of Education and Research at the University of Dhaka.

"So the chapter is closed," he told reporters after closing an Islamic education workshop.

Sarawak Tourism, Arts, Culture, Youth and Sports Minister Abdul Karim Rahman Hamzah had called on the government to defer the implementation of the tourism tax in Sarawak and Sabah. This invited criticism from Nazri.

Musa

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the helicopter, she said.

Food at the base camp was exhausted and things would take a turn for the worse if they were not rescued immediately, Sharaban said, calling for deploying army helicopters for rescuing the three mountaineers.

Mohammed Rafah Uddin, CEO of Everest Academy which was founded by Musa, said the tour operator was supposed to send another helicopter to the camp around 4:00am BST today.

In a Facebook post, Noor Ayesha, elder sister of Musa, said, "We are anxiously waiting to hear from Musa Ibrahim, Satyarup Siddhanta and Nandita. As per their last update via Satellite phone, all three have been stuck in the Base Camp since 13 June [limited or without food]. Let us kindly pray for their survival and safe return."

Bangladesh has no embassy in Papua New Guinea.

Last night, The Daily Star tried to contact the Bangladeshi embassy in Indonesia, a neighbour of Papua New Guinea, but no one from the embassy was available for comments.

Musa conquered the world's highest peak in 2010. He scaled up Mount Kilimanjaro of Africa in 2011, Mount Elbrus of Europe in 2013 and Mount Denali of North America in 2014.

ICT

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said, "We need to prepare for some more cyber attacks."

The government and its offices across the country have more than 25,000 websites and ICT division is the host of these websites, including the ministries and divisions.

"This means all the information preserved in the websites were accessible to the hackers," said an official of the division, adding that the authorities should carry out a thorough probe into the hacking.

Cyber security expert Tanvir Hasan Zoha said the hacker's claim of being an Indian could be a trick.

"The hacker could even be a Bangladeshi making claims to confuse the investigators," Tanvir, who once worked for ICT division, told The Daily Star.

"What is more worrying is that the hacker might have inserted a malware in the host server or server of the ICT division. If so, it will keep sending information from the websites to the hacker even after ICT division took control of its domain," he said.

Sources said some websites were hacked earlier and in most of those cases the hackers claimed that they did it from India.

The ICT division also experienced a similar hacking incidence in July 2015.

Malaysia

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"At present, some states receive little (funds), some get more," he said. Under the new tax, hotel guests will be charged between RM2.50 and RM20 for every night's stay, depending on the classification of the hotel.

Zahid disclosed that a cabinet meeting on Wednesday directed that the tourism tax spat involving Tourism and Culture Minister Nazri Aziz and the Sarawak and Sabah governments be put to an end.

"The prime minister chaired the cabinet meeting and I have personally met with the chief ministers of Sarawak and Sabah.

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May under

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residents heckling May and storming the local authority headquarters on Friday.