

Tale of freedom, tale of joy at enclaves

SHYKH SERAJ

Dear readers, a few days back I went to a former Indian enclave in Panchagarh's Debiganj. The dwellers there became independent only two years back. Even after living on a land, they didn't have a country of their own. You already know there were 36 enclaves in Panchagarh, six of which in Debiganj. Many of you know about the enclaves of India and Bangladesh. Now, everyone of this area is having the taste of independence. In Bangladesh's 46 years of independence, this is one of the biggest of all achievements of the government and people.

I went there to see how they're living and what their dream is. What the expectations from their own land, Bangladesh, are. How they are building themselves.

Even two years back, they only had one question. Who are they? Neither did they belong to India nor did they belong to Bangladesh. They were rootless. For 68 years, they had been like that. On July 31 in 2015, everything changed. These enclave people got the right to sing the national anthem of Bangladesh. Their world changed in a moment. Only two years have passed since then. Unstoppable tide of development and dream entered the old enclave areas. As many as 111 enclaves of India were inside Bangladesh and those comprising a total of 17160.63 acres of land came under the ownership of Bangladesh. These lands were in Bangladesh's Lalmonirhat, Panchagarh, Kurigram and Nilphamari districts. There were 41, 449 residents on those lands. After they got their own identity, lives and views of the people living there changed dramatically. They became confident. From students to service holders to homemakers and elders, change is vivid. They are Bangladeshi.

I was talking with a local man, Jabbar Mia about his new experience of becoming a Bangladeshi. "We feel like we have achieved free-

dom," said Jabbar. "Now, we have electricity and other facilities from the government. What more could we have?" he added. "What else did you get from the government?" I asked him.

"Infrastructure developments that are going on," Jabbar replied. "How about schools?" I asked him again.

"Yes. We have high schools. We will soon have a college as well," he replied with great contentment.

They didn't have any shelter, any national ID. Nobody valued them before. Even they couldn't do any paper works for marriage. They used to face many problems.

"Now, we are independent people in Bangladesh. Just like what Bangladesh achieved in 1971, we have achieved that now," added Jabbar with great joy.

Kashem, a local farmer from Debiganj who could never imagine about any help or support, now confidently says that he is doing well. Stories of his success are fascinating to listen to.

"We didn't use to get fertilizers and other agricultural inputs. Thus, we were not able to cultivate any crop. Now, we can do plenty of cultivation as we are getting all the facilities and subsidy," says Kashem.

Many others said along with electricity they now have tube-wells provided by the Bangladesh government.

Saber talked about an issue which really had taken place frequently in the past.

"I secretly admitted my son to a school giving fake names of parents during the days we were not completely liberated," says Saber.

"Now, you are saved from doing all this, aren't you?" I asked.

"Yes, now it's fair and we have legally admitted our son," Saber replied.

"Now, you are experiencing the real essence of a citizen of an independent country. How do you feel now?" I asked Saber.

"I feel great and proud," Saber

replied. Freedom changes one's views. It brings a different rhythm into a life. This is what a man named Chanka shared with me.

"We were in a lot of suffering. We didn't use to get any support from outside. By the grace of Almighty, after the enclave issue was resolved, we started getting plenty of facilities and support," says Chanka.

When Babul first saw Bangladesh's flag in the enclave, he understood he along with others will have a fresh start from then on.

As I walk on the paths of the former enclave, I can sense the free and independent township. People are now greatly spontaneous. It is obvious that they are now free from long suffering and enjoying the taste of independence.

I talked with some students of Gajirhat High School.

"Did you get the books for this year?" I asked the students.

"Yes," they replied happily in chorus.

"Very good. Tell me, what do you want now?" I asked them.

"We want our school to develop and get scholarship from here," they replied.

"I am in the 8th grade of this school. It was horrible before. We never imagined that it would develop so much. We are really happy with our current state," says Monira.

"What do you want from the government now?" I asked Monira.

"To be able to enjoy all the government facilities," replied the talented Monira.

During the past two years, 17 academic institutions were established here. However, most of them are yet to receive government approval. Therefore, students and teachers are still going through some problems. The teachers are working hard but some of them are not getting salaries yet. This is what the headmaster of Gajirhat High School said.



Shykh Seraj talks with a woman at a former Indian enclave in Debiganj upazila of Panchagarh. The enclave, like scores of others of the kind, were attached with Bangladesh, following an exchange deal with neighbouring India two years ago.

Chairman of the local union parishad, Golam Rahman, says lot of development works are going on and things will change here gradually, not overnight.

Behind Hajiganj High School, a community clinic has been established on a temporary basis. The people of this area, who were deprived of medical treatment for ages, now come here for it. Rehana Parveen, an educated young lady of this area, is working here as a volunteer.

"What kind of treatment services do you provide?" I asked Rehana.

"First aid, and treatment for fever, cold etc. We also provide family planning services," says Rehana.

At the greater enclave area, 11 cluster villages have already been established. A female resident, Reshma Begum, took me to her home. Reshma now has a home with almost all household

facilities. She's a tailor and also does some household farming.

Reshma Begum talked to the honourable Prime Minister through a video conference on behalf of the women of the enclave. That was a historic event for the people of the cluster village. I had a little chat with her.

"How many families were given homes by the government in this cluster village?" "30 families," she said.

"Where were you before?"

"I was a resident of the enclave."

"Did you have your own home?"

"No. I used to live on others' lands.

We couldn't vote before. Now, we can."

These people are feeling the real essence of a new country and freedom. Dreams are playing in the minds of every one in every house. They want the government to solve all the problems as promised. And, they also thank

government for the way development works have taken place so far. On the 2nd anniversary of enclave exchange, I wholeheartedly greet all the citizens residing in these localities.

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A scene of erosion by the Jhinai river at Kazirapara in Kanchanpur union in Basail upazila of Tangail. PHOTO: STAR

BGB won't bar 5 of 2 families

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number of cattle entry was 1,14,338 in Satkhira while in 2015-16, the number stood at 76,918.

BGB closed those corridors where any fighting or killing took place, but the corridors which are peaceful, will be left alone, the DG said.

"We have engaged our local representatives, administration and businessmen to keep a healthy environment at the border area," he said.

The BGB chief said that they have already taken some initiatives in this regard like - opening the cattle corridor in a specific region, registration of cattle traders, employment of all the cattle traders, small projects in border area etc.

Asked, whether allowing Indian cattle would affect the local business, the DG said, "We would be happy, if we could stop it now. But we don't have enough time to stop it before Eid. We should have preparation for this, having more home-grown farms."

The public relation officer of BSF south zone told this newspaper's Kolkata correspondent over phone that they knew nothing of this matter.

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told our Patuakhali correspondent.

Talking to The Daily Star, Faruk Hossain, additional superintendent of police in Patuakhali, claimed that Delwar and his family had a land dispute with some of their neighbours, and his nephew was murdered four months ago in this connection.

"We are not sure who killed them and we are considering all the issues," he said.

In Jamalpur, two sisters were killed in Dewliabari village of Sadar upazila yesterday.

The deceased were identified as Bhabna, 14, a ninth-grader; and Lubna, 10, a fourth-grader.

They were the daughters of Malaysia expatriate Shamim Hossain, and Taslima Begum of the village, police said.

Taslima along with her youngest daughter Ayesha Moni went to her parents' in Jamalpur town on Tuesday and spent the night there.

Bhabna and Lubna were home alone.

When Taslima returned yesterday around 8:00am, she noticed that one of the doors of the house was open. She went inside and found her daughters' bodies lying on the floor, said Rashedul Hassan, officer-in-charge (investigation) of Sadar Police Station, quoting the victims' mother.

Bhabna and Lubna had their throats slit. Police recovered the bodies and sent them to Jamalpur General Hospital morgue for autopsies, he told our Jamalpur correspondent.

"But we suspect that the girls were killed by someone they knew," Rashedul said.

Jhinai devours 400 homes in a week

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Around 400 dwelling houses in four unions under Basail upazila of the district have gone into the Jhinai river, a tributary of Jamuna, in last one week.

Besides, over 500 families living along the riverside have been passing their days in fear of erosion, while many have already shifted their houses and belongings to other places.

Locals said people who had already lost their dwelling houses have taken shelter on their relatives' houses or on the government roads.

The situation turned serious in the last couple of days due to strong current created by onrush of water from upstream and incessant rain.

Therefore, dreadful erosion started in 20 kilometre area under Kasil, Kanchanpur, Fulki and Habla unions, which turned acute about a week ago.

Over 200 dwelling houses and vast tract of croplands were devoured by the river last year.

Sources at the four union parishads (UPs) said over 70 houses at Kazirapara, Bilpara, Manikchar and Adajan villages under Kanchanpur union, 10 houses at Bilpara village in Habla, around 200 houses at Dapnazar, Deolee, Kamutia, Nothkhola, Kasil, Thupia, Nakachhim and Biala villages in Kasil and about 40 houses at Dohar, Hakimpur, Joshihati and Akhdala villages under Fulki union have already gone into the river.

Villagers alleged that erosion started increasing after Water Development Board (WDB) stated dredging of the river three years ago and as a result several hundred houses and vast tracts of croplands are devoured every year.

Advice must before cops Breakthrough

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allegation," it said, asking police officials to make sure that no innocent people are harassed.

The order said various media outlets were running stories on cases filed under the section, and some reports alleged due legal process was not followed before taking cases.

Meanwhile, Abdul Latif Morol, the reporter of Khulna-based Daily Probaho who was arrested under the section for sharing a Facebook post over the death of a goat, got bail yesterday.

District Senior Judicial Magistrate Nusrat Jabin gave the bail order, a day after Latif's arrest, said his lawyer Motiar Rahman Mollah.

"We tried to convince court that section 57 is not applicable for the case. This section has been misused by filing this case and the court issued the bail order on Tk 10,000 bond," he told The Daily Star.

Police arrested Latif on Tuesday at his home in Dumuria upazila, hours after he was sued for defamation. Later, a Khulna court sent him to jail.

According to the case filed by Subrata Kumer Fouzder, himself a reporter of Jessore-based daily Spondon, Latif shared a story run by breakingnews.com.bd headlined "Protimantrir sokale deya chhagol raate mrittu" (Goat given by the state minister in the morning dies at night).

In another development, Office-in-charge Sukumar Biswas of Dumuria Police Station was withdrawn from his post for recording the case against the journalist "without following due procedure," Nizaul Hoque Mollah, Superintendent of Khulna Police told The Daily Star last night.

Police also formed a one-member committee to investigate the whole issue, he added.

Earlier in the day, roads and bridges Minister Obaidul Quader acknowledged that section 57 was being misused.

"Arresting journalists in cases filed over trivial matters is a misuse of section 57," he told a programme in the capital, urging the information minister to step in to stop such misuse.

Journalists have been demanding the repeal of section 57 of the ICT Act 2006 for its "widespread misuse to muzzle freedom of speech and the press". They say the section has vague wording, allowing it to be used for silencing journalists and social media users.

Amid widespread criticism, Law Minister Anisul Huq on several occasions said the section would be repealed.

However, cases filed under the section are piling up.

Under the ICT Act, police submit either charge sheet or final report upon investigation to the Cyber Tribunal in Dhaka, the lone tribunal to deal with these cases.

The tribunal received 763 reports till July 30 since 2013, when the Act was amended with provisions for harsher punishment, a tribunal source said.

Ninety percent of the cases were filed under section 57, the source added.

"So the total number of cases filed under section 57 would be much higher as this number came at the end of the investigation," the source said.

Of the 763 cases, 205 have so far been disposed of -- 84 after trial and the rest either after getting final reports or after being withdrawn by plaintiffs, the source said.

The tribunal received 342 reports till July 30 this year. Of the cases, 300 were filed under section 57.

CPJ STANDS BY ABDUL LATIF
The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) called for dropping all charges against journalists and urged the Bangladeshi authorities to drop all charges against Abdul Latif Morol.

"Jailing a journalist for reporting the death of a goat is beyond absurd," CPJ Asia Programme Coordinator Steven Butler said from Washington, DC. "Abdul Latif Morol should be released immediately, and the Bangladeshi government should urgently heed its pledges to reform the law that makes such abuses of the justice system possible."

15-yr-old girl

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morning, locals heard the girl crying inside the truck, the SI added.

Police seized the truck, but both the driver and the helper managed to flee.

Later, law enforcers detained truck driver Mehedi from Siddhirganj around 7:00pm.

The SI said the girl, from Kapasia upazila of Gazipur, was sent to Narayanganj 100-bed General Hospital for medical tests.

Trump

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seized two Russian compounds in New York and Maryland in December in response to the election meddling. Russia responded by ordering the US to cut staff at its diplomatic mission by 755 employees, as well as seizing two US diplomatic properties.

The new sanctions bill hits Russia's energy and defence sectors, and also includes fresh sanctions against Iran and North Korea.

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in human embryos using the approach. A study demonstrating the technique was published in the journal Nature yesterday.

Last week, the MIT Technology Review released the first news of this scientific feat, describing the research as the first-known attempt at creating genetically modified human embryos in the United States.

However, Juan Carlos Izpisua Belmonte, a co-author of the study, described it as the first in the world to demonstrate gene-editing to be safe, accurate and efficient in correcting a pathogenic gene mutation in human embryos. Previous attempts by Chinese researchers were unsuccessful at achieving this without safety concerns.

"This is the first that has been demonstrated as safe and working," said Belmonte, a professor at the Salk Institute for Biological Studies' gene expression laboratory in La Jolla, California.

"All cells of the embryo were corrected," he said. "It seems to be working from these samples that we have chosen, but we need to do much more basic research with many other genes."

The study was a collaboration between the Salk Institute, the Oregon Health & Science University in Portland and Korea's Institute for Basic Science.

'Rape victim'

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Some local influential people took part in an arbitration to solve the 'problem', he said.

Arbitrator Arif Ullah told this correspondent, "Yunus and the victim's father are relatives. They asked me for arbitration. I helped them solve the problem."

Victim's older sister Runa Begum said, "Yunus has been stalking my sister for a long time. He disturbed her regularly on her way back from the college. She rejected Yunus and that is why Yunus and his gang raped her."

"My sister was very upset and felt insulted by the arbitration. She took her life by taking poison Tuesday night following this humiliation."

Moin Ahmed, officer-in-charge (investigation) of Jagannathpur Police Station, said the victim's father made a complaint to me verbally.

Harun-ur-Rashid, OC of Jagannathpur Police Station, said no formal case had been filed yet. The alleged rapists were in hiding since the suicide, he said.