

Man killed as villagers clash in Faridpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

A man was killed and at least 50 other people, including eight policemen, were injured in a clash between two groups of villagers over establishing supremacy in Faridpur's Sadarpur upazila yesterday.

Police fired over 100 bullets and 17 teargas shells to bring the situation under control.

The deceased was identified as Mannan Sikder, 60, son of Kosim Uddin Sikder of Radhanagar village of the same upazila.

Locals said there has been a long-standing conflict between Fakir Balal Hossain, chairman of Krisnapur Union Parishad and also the secretary general of Krisnapur Awami League, and Abdul Kaium, a former chairman of the same union parishad.

This year, a supporter of Kaium got the lease of Krishnapur Bazar for a year on April 9. Last year, the lease had been awarded to Fakir Balal Hossain.

Tension had been rife in the area since then.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 4



Brandishing spears, shields and other sharp weapons, a group of villagers take position in Krishnapur Bazar in Sadarpur upazila of Faridpur yesterday morning while their rivals occupy another part of the area, inset.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

INCIDENT AT DU SUFIA KAMAL HALL

BCL expels 24 of its leaders, activists

DU CORRESPONDENT

Chhatra League last night expelled its 24 leaders and activists over the April 10 incident at Dhaka University's Kabi Sufia Kamal Hall, according to a press release.

Among the expelled are Sufia Kamal Hall BCL Vice President Morsheda Akhtar, Organising Secretary Jannati Akhtar Sumi and Joint General Secretary Sharmin Akhtar Sumi. Many of them actively took part in the recent demonstration over reforms in quota in government jobs.

The release of the pro-Awami League student front, signed by its president and secretary, said the 24 were expelled from the organisation as they were "found involved in an unexpected incident".

Iffat Jahan Isha, BCL president at Kabi Sufia Kamal Hall, allegedly assaulted three students of the dormitory around 12:30am for taking part in the protest demanding reforms in the

quota system.

Hearing students screaming, Morsheda, a fourth-year botany student, rushed to Iffat's room. Finding it locked, she got angry, kicked a window of the room and cut her foot.

Learning about the assault on three protesters, some students of the dormitory broke into Iffat's room and beat her up, said witnesses.

Some photos of Morsheda's injured leg were circulated on Facebook with captions saying that Iffat had cut tendons of her leg. Morsheda later received treatment at a hospital.

In a video that did the rounds on Facebook, Morsheda claimed that she had to tolerate "torture by Iffat for a long time".

Iffat was expelled from the BCL and also from the university on that night. But making a u-turn, the BCL reinstated her just 48 hours after expelling her.

The BCL said its investigation found that Iffat was "innocent".

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2

Three hurt as BCL factions clash at DU

DU CORRESPONDENT

Three Chhatra League activists were injured in an intra-party clash in front of Madhur Canteen on Dhaka University campus yesterday.

Imrul Hasan Nishu, drama and debate affairs secretary of BCL central committee; Mahbub Khan, a former central committee member; and Maskat Hossain, an activist; are now undergoing treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Witnesses said around 3:00pm, Arefin Siddique Sujon, a vice-president of BCL central unit, told President Saifur Rahman Sohag that the central council of the organisation was going to be held on May 11-12. He wanted to know why he did not form a preparatory committee to hold the council smoothly.

Another BCL activist Aminul Islam Bulbul, former organising secretary of Shaheed Sergeant Zahurul Haq Hall unit BCL, also asked Sohag and BCL central unit General Secretary SM Jakir Hossain how much money they

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

Drainage disaster on the cards

FROM PAGE 1

about 60-70 percent of the job have been completed and the rest is expected to be finished by June.

But a first-hand experience tells a different story -- people's sufferings due to the "snail pace" of the work, the quality of it and a lack of supervision.

Subid Ali, 60, was pulling his rickshaw carrying three sacks of rice. He was heading to Shahidnagar of Lalbagh from Badamtoli wholesale market. As he crossed the Lalbagh Police Station, he found several manhole cover slabs in a narrow alley.

Sweating profusely, Subid managed to negotiate his way over a couple of slabs before his rickshaw tilted to one side. Luckily, he suffered only minor injuries on his back and left hand.

Interestingly, the incident took place on the afternoon of April 4, a few hours after DSCC Mayor Mohammad Sayeed Khokon announced the schedule for a mass cleaning campaign from his office.

"On March 28, they [contractors] poured concrete from Raj Narayan Dhar Road to Lalbagh Police Station and left the rest part in this state," said Habibur Rahman, one of the locals who rushed to help Subid.

The road known as Beribadh-Lalbagh connecting lane is about 677-metre long. And the contractor poured concrete over some 200 metres from both entrances, and left the rest in a sorry state. It is part of a Tk 6.4-crore job for repairing the road and the drainage of wards 23 and 24. The work was supposed to be completed by July last year.

Ward 24 Councillor Mosharrat Hossain said they complained about this to the mayor on a number of occasions.

"I informed the mayor several times about the sluggish progress. In my presence, he [the mayor] even admonished Jewel [the contractor]," Mosharrat told this reporter on March 20.

But when he mentioned the name of Khairul Hasan Jewel, an organising secretary of Awami Swachchhasebak League, it served as a riddle.

Document shows that a different company owned by a different person got the tender and signed a contract with the DSCC on February 27.

When The Daily Star contacted the owner of that construction firm, he first declined to comment. Pressed, he admitted that his company was doing that work, but did not want to talk further.

This is how much you are supposed to get officially when unofficially so many arm-twisting stories are widely discussed and shared -- ranging from participation in tender till completion of the job -- in the corridors of the DSCC and many other government works elsewhere.

Jewel's company Opal International, however, got a lot of the project works.

Opal and Nawal Construction, owned by Bhola-3 Awami League MP Nurunnabi Chowdhury, won 15 tender bids involving Tk 133 crore. Both firms are at fault of working well

behind the schedule.

DSCC took up 24 projects titled "Development of different Infrastructures under Dhaka South City Corporation" for 44 wards.

Of the 24, Opal's got three projects worth Tk 27 crore for repair of roads and footpaths and cleaning drains under 10 wards were supposed to be completed between May and December last year.

But during a recent visit to different spots, this correspondent found that the construction firm has failed to meet deadline of the work in the 10 wards -- 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 12 and 13. The only lucky area is Segunbagicha, which is under ward 20.

The main road of east Basabo falls under ward 4 and some parts of it will give you a hell of an experience. With construction materials carelessly left unattended and large manhole slabs standing in the way, the otherwise 30-foot wide road turns into a narrow passage at some points, creating nuisance for rush-hour traffic.

Amid such a chaos, Majid Mia was trying to pull out his rickshaw van, crammed with students, from a pothole as a long queue of vehicles grew behind him.

At last, with the help of a local shopkeeper, he managed to pull out his van.

"I couldn't ask the students to leave the van for their safety... Who do I blame?" he said, while paddling his way to Siddheshwari.

"They began construction in September last ... the rest you can see. They left it like that two months ago," said Abdul Hakim, manager of a furniture shop there.

Opal International has also got another seven tenders involving Tk 39 crore for sidewalk drainage and road improvement for pedestrian mobility under the CASE Project funded by the World Bank and improvement of road median in the DSCC area and repair of damaged road of wards 23, 24, 25, 26, 28 and 29.

Nawal Construction got five tenders worth Tk 67 crore from the DSCC for repair of roads and footpaths and cleaning drains in wards 55, 39 and 19.

The work in wards 19 and 39 were supposed to end by mid-2017, while those in ward 55 by March 11 this year.

The construction companies failed to complete their job in any of these wards by the stipulated deadline.

In ward 19, workers were seen installing blocks on footpath and covering road with earth the road adjacent to Viqarunnisa Noon School and College on April 5.

"It will take another 10-12 days to complete the work," said a worker under a sub-contractor.

In ward 39, Nawal renovated the drains but did not repair the adjacent road.

While such delay is a common phenomenon, the quality of work, according to locals and ward councillors, hardly matches the specifications of the tender documents.

On a night of the last week of March,

ROHINGYA ISSUE

Necessary steps in place to start repatriation

Claims Myanmar

UNB, Dhaka

Though there has been no sign of repatriation yet, Myanmar claims work is proceeding steadily in this regard and necessary steps are in place to start the repatriation of Rohingyas from Bangladesh to Myanmar.

"All requirements for repatriation are in place," says a statement issued by Myanmar State Counsellor Office.

A prosecutor from the International Criminal Court (ICC) has recently sought jurisdiction over the "deportation" of Rohingya people from Myanmar to Bangladesh, with the aim of investigating and prosecuting those responsible.

In a filing, court prosecutor Fatou Bensouda said, "This is not an abstract question but a concrete one, affecting whether the court may exercise jurisdiction ...to investigate and, if necessary, prosecute."

The prosecutor is seeking a ruling to "verify that the Court has territorial jurisdiction when persons are deported from the territory of a State

SEE PAGE 10 COL 4

Trump 'morally unfit' for office

FROM PAGE 16

Hillary Clinton in a 2016 investigation because of her strong poll numbers in the presidential race.

"Comey drafted the Crooked Hillary exoneration long before he talked to her (lied in Congress to Senator G)," Trump fired in an early morning tweet.

"Then based his decisions on poll numbers. Disgruntled, he, [former FBI deputy director Andrew] McCabe, and the others, committed many crimes!"

Late Sunday, Comey launched a publicity tour for his new memoir, "A Higher Loyalty: Truth, Lies and Leadership," with an ABC television interview in which he branded Trump a serial liar who will "stain everyone around him."

Comey's book, which leaked out last week ahead of its official release today, takes on the president who fired him in May 2017 over the troubling Russia election meddling investigation, a probe that poses a deep threat to Trump's 15-month-old presidency.

TRUMP 'MORALLY UNFIT'

Comey is schedule to give interviews on the book to major television networks this week and travel to a dozen cities to promote the book in person.

"I think he's morally unfit to be president," Comey told ABC.

Trump "talks about and treats women like they're pieces of meat" and "lies constantly about matters big and small and insists the American people

believe it."

Comey also said that serving in Trump's administration poses a serious ethical dilemma.

"The challenge of this president is that he will stain everyone around him," he told ABC.

"And the question is, how much stain is too much stain and how much stain eventually makes you unable to accomplish your goal of protecting the country and serving the country?"

REPUBLICANS: 'LYIN' COMEY'

Trump and the Republicans have sought to stifle the impact of his book by accusing Comey of leaking classified materials and of corruptly handling the 2016 investigation into Clinton.

The Republican Party set up a website to attack the book, branding him "Lyin' Comey."

"This is somebody who wants a payday," Ronna McDaniel, the chairwoman of the Republican National Committee, told CNN.

Trump called Comey an "untruthful slime ball" and said it was his "great honor" to fire the veteran Justice Department prosecutor.

"Slippery James Comey, a man who always ends up badly and out of whack (he is not smart!), will go down as the WORST FBI Director in history, by far!" Trump said Sunday.

In a separate ABC interview, White House press secretary Sarah Sanders reiterated the charges of lying and divulging classified materials.

"Look, it's been very clear that James Comey is a self-admitted leaker. He lied to Congress," she said.

TRUMP'S LEGAL TROUBLES

In his book, Comey likens Trump to a dishonest, ego-driven mob boss and says he demanded the then FBI chief's personal pledge of loyalty.

That damning account has infuriated the president at a moment of intensifying legal pressure on other fronts.

The probe into possible collusion between the Trump campaign and Russians during the 2016 presidential race, now led by independent special prosecutor Robert Mueller, increasingly menaces Trump's inner circle.

And last week federal agents in New York raided the office and hotel room of Trump's longtime personal lawyer and fixer Michael Cohen, possibly in connection with secret hush payments he made to women claiming they had affairs with Trump.

In his interview Sunday, Comey said Trump could be guilty of obstruction of justice in the way he tried to get the FBI to drop a probe of one of his staff in early 2017.

But Comey said he could not confirm suspicions that Moscow possesses compromising material -- an alleged lurid video of the president with prostitutes -- or evidence of collusion during the election that could be used to blackmail the US president

"I think it's possible. I don't know," Comey said.

Trial run on April 23

FROM PAGE 16

by over 100km, reports our New Delhi correspondent.

The trial buses would leave Dhaka on April 23 and halt for the night in Rangpur. The vehicles will cross Fulbari border and reach Siliguri in Darjeeling district in the evening next day.

On April 25, the buses would start from Siliguri at 8:00am, cross Panitanki-Kakarvitta on India-Nepal border and proceed towards Damak in Nepal and reach Kathmandu the next day.

The buses will carry 23 Bangladeshi passengers, 11 Nepali passengers and eight Indians. Members of the Asian

Development Bank (ADB) will also join the journey.

Officials at the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Road Transport and Bridges said the trial is scheduled just before a meeting among the representatives of the three countries to work out the protocol for movement of passenger vehicles and start negotiations for protocols for movement of cargo vehicles.

The three countries are also scheduled to exchange letters for implementation of BBIN Motor Vehicles Agreement. The BBIN agreement was signed on June 15, 2015 at a meeting of the BBIN Transport Ministers in Thimphu, Bhutan. It makes

way for seamless flow of passenger and cargo traffic in the region.

The agreement has been ratified by India, Nepal and Bangladesh. Unable to ratify the BBIN motor vehicles agreement, Bhutan has asked the other stakeholders to go ahead with the plan and will join in it after clearance from its parliament.

Foreign ministry officials said the three countries are set to start regular bus services after signing a passenger protocol likely to be signed in Kathmandu after the trial run. The success of the trial run will pave the way for taking a decision for formal launch of the bus services.

Nasa to launch

FROM PAGE 16

Nasa predicts that TESS will discover 20,000 exoplanets -- or planets outside the solar system -- including more than 50 Earth-sized planets and up to 500 planets less than twice the size of Earth.

"They are going to be orbiting the nearest, brightest stars," Elisa Quintana, TESS scientist at Nasa's Goddard Spaceflight Center, told reporters on Sunday.

"We might even find planets that orbit stars that we can even see with the naked eye," she added.

"So in the next few years we might

even be able to walk outside and point at a star and know that it has a planet. This is the future."

Just a couple of decades ago, the notion of finding habitable planets -- or any planets at all -- was a mere fantasy, said Paul Hertz, astrophysics division director at Nasa.

"Humans have wondered forever whether we were alone in the universe, and until 25 years ago the only planets we knew about were the eight in our own solar system," he told reporters on the eve of the TESS launch.

"But since then, we have found thousands of planets orbiting others stars and

we think all the stars in our galaxy must have their own family of planets."

TESS is designed as a follow-on to the US space agency's Kepler spacecraft, which was the first of its kind and launched in 2009. The ageing spacecraft is currently low on fuel and near the end of its life.

Kepler found a massive trove of exoplanets by focusing on one patch of sky, which contained about 150,000 stars like the Sun.

TESS, with its four advanced cameras, will scan an area that is 350 times larger, comprising 85 percent of the sky in the first two years alone.