



Santals bring out a colourful procession in Gobindaganj upazila of Gaibandha, and Chapainawabganj Sadar upazila (inset) yesterday marking 163rd anniversary of the indigenous community's historic rebellion, known as Santal Hool, during the British period.

PHOTO: STAR



# Historic 'Santal rebellion day' observed

Speakers demand justice for Gobindaganj killings in Gaibandha, ensuring land rights for indigenous people

STAR COUNTRY DESK

Indigenous Santal community yesterday observed the 163rd anniversary of their historic rebellion, commonly known as Santal Hool, in Gaibandha and Chapainawabganj.

Our Gaibandha correspondent reports: Hundreds of Santals of Jyoypara and Madarpur villages in Gobindaganj upazila of Gaibandha held a meeting at Pymara Government Primary School ground to pay homage to the Santal men who sacrificed their lives in the historic Santal mutiny on June 30, 1855, and those killed in police firing at Shahebganj sugarcane farm on November 6, 2016.

The meeting was organised jointly by Bagda Farm Bhumi Uddher Sangram Committee, Jatiya Adivasi Parishad, Bangladesh Adivasi Union, Adivasi-Bangali Sanhati Parishad, Janoudyog and CPB.

Speakers said over 10,000 Santals of Bhagnadihi at Santal Parogana in Jharkhanda state, under the leadership of Sidhu, Kanu Chand, Bhairab, Fulmoni and Jhano, revolted on June 30, 1855 against the misrule, torture and extortion by zamindars, wholesalers and police.

The revolution lasted eight months and thousands of Santals and other people were killed.

The speakers demanded exemplary punishment of those involved in killing three Santal men and torching their houses at Shahebganj sugarcane farm in the name of eviction drive on November 6, 2016.

Demanding return of their forefather's properties, Santal community has been continuing agitation, but the situation has remained the same, they said.

Our Chapainawabganj correspondent adds: Indigenous people of the district observed the 163rd anniversary of Santal Hool yesterday with a call to ensure the right to their ancestral lands.

Uttarbango Adivasi Forum and Sadar upazila unit of Adivasi Samajkalyan Samity jointly organised a discussion and cultural programme at the ground of Masudul Haque Institute in Atahar village under Sadar upazila. Several hundred indigenous people from different areas in Sadar upazila joined the programme.

Addressing the rally, speakers said land grabbers have been grabbing the cultivable lands, residences, ponds, graveyards, cremation ground and temple lands.

They demanded a separate ministry for the indigenous people of plain land and security of minority groups.

A cultural programme was also held.

# Six sued as elderly woman murdered

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pirojpur

Six people have been sued on charge of killing an elderly woman in Nazirpur upazila.

The victim's daughter-in-law filed the murder case with Nazirpur Police Station on Friday night.

The accused include Mahadeb Dhali, Uttam Dhali and Joydeb Dhali, neighbours of deceased Shova Rani Dhali, 60, of Balibabla village.

According to the case statement, the accused beat Shova, her son Bidhan Dhali and Bidhan's wife Sandha Dhali over a disputed land on May 31. Shova and Bidhan were admitted to the upazila health complex.

Later, Shova filed a complaint with Nazirpur Police Station, accusing the six neighbours.

On June 19, local union parishad (UP) member Sudev Halder took Shova and Bidhan to his home and assured them of resolving the problem over the disputed land. But Shova succumbed to her injuries on June 26.

The following day, she was buried without autopsy. Even, the family members did not inform police about the matter as Sudev forbade them to inform the law enforcers.

Regarding the matter, no comment came from the UP member as he was busy with a meeting when this correspondent phoned him several times. They are trying to arrest the accused, police said.

# Woman tortured by son, his wife

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

A woman was allegedly tortured by her son and his wife at Pashchim Bilbilas village in Baufal upazila for demanding alimony.

Victim Jamila Khatun, 55, of the village, is now undergoing treatment at the upazila health complex.

Locals said Jamila's son Jalal Sarder, 42, lives in Dhaka with his wife Sharmin Begum, 25, for several years while Jamila lives at the village.

The couple came to the village home two or three days ago. On Saturday, Jamila asked Jalal for alimony. Over the matter, Jalal and his wife became angry and beat her with stick. They also hit her with brick.

Neighbours said Jamila was often seen begging for a living as her son did not take care of her.

This correspondent could not reach Jalal as his cellphone remained switched off.

# 'Free school land from grabbers'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

A large number of students joined by locals formed a human chain on Uttara EPZ road in Nilphamari Sadar upazila yesterday, protesting grabbing of land of a government primary school.

Nurul Islam Shah, 47, president of Sonarai union unit of BNP, in collaboration with his brother Abdul Mannan Shah, 52, president of the union unit of Awami League (AL) has grabbed a portion of the land of Joychandi Government Primary School in the union, said the speakers at the programme.

A team of police was deployed in the area during the rally as the grabbers threatened the teachers and students of dire consequences if they participated in the programme.

School management committee President Shankar Kumar filed a written complaint with Sadar Police Station, seeking security and also legal

action against the perpetrators.

"Nurul Islam grabbed 30 decimals of the school's ground by encircling it with corrugated iron sheets on May 29 when the school was closed during Ramadan vacation," Headmaster Kazi Ziaul Islam said.

"I brought the matter to the notice of Sadar upazila nirbahi officer, who directed the upazila assistant commissioner of land (AC land) to look into the matter. After investigation, the AC directed the grabber on June 7 to vacate the land within the next seven days, which Nurul ignored," the headmaster added.

"The primary school was set up in 1930 and late Provananda Adhikari donated 60 decimals of land for the institution. Academic activity has been running unhindered for the last 88 years. Now the influential person has committed a heinous act by occupying its land," said Sonarai-Sangolshi Degree College Principal Abdul Mazid,

also a former student of the school.

"Most ruling party activists are against the grabbing, although a few are collaborating with the grabber BNP leader at the directive of the party's unit president Mannan," said ex-secretary of Sonarai AL Tofazzal Hossain.

However, AL leader Mannan supported grabbing of the land by his younger brother Nurul, saying that the latter had bought the land from its real owners, a few people belonging to the Hindu community, but the school authorities illegally kept the land in their possession for decades.

"I have not grabbed school land but bought it from the genuine owners. I will go to court to prove it," said alleged grabber Nurul.

"I received a complaint from the school authorities and deployed police to avert any untoward incident," said OC of Sadar Police Station Babul Akhtar.

# Travellers face illegal toll on Kuakata road

Each vehicle charged up to Tk 100 near Sheikh Kamal Bridge

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Kuakata-bound buses, most of them carrying tourists, are forced to pay illegal toll in the name of 'Pouro Kar' (municipality tax) while crossing Sheikh Kamal Bridge on Patuakhali-Kuakata road near Kalapara upazila headquarters.

Many bus drivers alleged that each vehicle has to pay Tk 100 to cross the bridge but the law enforcing agencies are not taking any step against the culprits.

A local influential group collects Tk 40,000 to Tk 50,000 toll in Nachnapara to Sheikh Kamal Bridge area round the clock, locals alleged.

During a visit to the area on June 19, this correspondent saw a group collecting toll from buses, minibuses, battery-run auto-rickshaws and even rental motorbikes.

Two men blocked the road near the bridge when a passenger bus of

'Golden Travels' from Gangni upazila of Meherpur reached the spot with 60 tourists and forced its driver Shajibul Islam to pay Tk 100 toll.

Amzad Hossain, driver of another passenger bus from Jhenidah, had to pay Tk 100 toll while crossing the bridge with 65 tourists the same time.



A receipt used for collecting illegal toll from buses at Kalapara on Patuakhali-Kuakata road. PHOTO: STAR

Many drivers like Shajibul and Amzad alleged that they have to pay Tk 100 toll each time they cross the bridge.

"We have to pay the toll as we don't have any alternative," driver Md Sohel of 'Joyraj Paribahan' said.

About 400 to 500 vehicles, including passenger buses, ply the route every day and the syndicate men collect Tk 40,000 to Tk 50,000 daily, he said.

Locals alleged Oli Ullah of Puraghata in Barguna Sadar upazila and Sohel of Chakamoia in Kalapara upazila collect the toll round the clock, posing themselves as ruling party men.

Despite repeated attempts this correspondent could not reach Oli Ullah and Sohel for their comments.

Kalapara municipality Mayor Bipul Chandra Halder said he informed the police officials concerned to take immediate step against the culprits.

Officer-in-Charge of Kalapara Police Station Jahangir Hossain said they will take legal step if anyone submits a written complaint in this regard.



Students of different educational institutions form a human chain on Uttara EPZ Road in Nilphamari yesterday in protest against the illegal occupation of a portion of the ground of Joychandi Government Primary School (inset) in Nilphamari Sadar upazila. PHOTO: STAR



Locals form a human chain in Gharinda Railway Station in Tangail yesterday demanding start of commuter train service on Dhaka-Tangail route. PHOTO: STAR

# Start Dhaka-Tangail direct train service

Demand human chain of Tangail citizens

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Residents of the district formed a human chain at Gharinda Rail Station yesterday, demanding introduction of Dhaka-Tangail commuter train service as per direction of the prime minister.

Leaders and activists of political parties, professionals, representatives of socio-cultural organisations, students and others joined the demonstration organised by Dhaka-Tangail Direct Train Service Implementation Committee.

The district people have been continuing their agitation for direct train service with the capital as they face untold sufferings to travel only 100 kilometres due to inadequate bus service and regular traffic congestion on Dhaka-Tangail Highway.

They have been observing various programmes -- mass signature campaign, human chain, rally and sit-in -- for the last two years to realise their longstanding demand.

Several thousand people, including service holders, traders and students, travel to the capital for different purposes every day.

Although about two dozen trains ply the route, only a few of them stop for a few minutes

at Tangail rail station, with only 120 seats for several thousand passengers, the speakers said.

A direct train service, which will start from Tangail for Dhaka at 6:30am, and from Dhaka for Tangail at 6:00pm, is needed urgently.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, at a public meeting in Tangail on June 30 in 2012, said Dhaka-Tangail commuter train service would be introduced. A letter was also sent immediately from her office to the railway ministry in this regard, they said.

The PM's commitment has not been implemented even after six years, although all necessary facilities are available to start the service, the speakers added.

The speakers also threatened of tougher movement, including blockade of the train route, if the demand is not met before Eid-ul-Azha.

Among others, Sayeed Mohammad Lutfullah and Sazzad Khoshnobbish, convenor and member-secretary of Dhaka-Tangail Train Service Implementation Committee, cultural and business personalities Harun-or-Rashid and Mostofa Kamal Labu, local AL leader Meher Nigar, local BNP leader Rashedul Alam, MA Rouf, Shafiq Alam, Akibur Rahman Iqbal, Sammo Rahman and Shahin Chakladar, spoke on the occasion.

# Drug smuggler shot by cops

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

An alleged drug smuggler was injured in firing by police at Gawchulka village in Hatibandha upazila on Friday.

Police seized 10 kg of hemp from the possession of the smuggler -- Abdul Jalil, 36, of Gotamari village, said Omar Farooque, OC of Hatibandha Police Station.

Tipped off, a police team raided the area when five to six drug smugglers were transporting contraband drug items.

Police opened fire when the drug smugglers were fleeing the scene.

Jalil sustained bullet injuries in his right leg. Police arrested him and sent him to the upazila health complex.

He is accused in six drug cases with the police station, said the OC.