

JOYPURHAT BORDER

BSF's bid to build fence foiled again

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinaipur

Bangladesh Border Guard (BGB) yesterday stopped the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) from putting up a barbed wire fence at the Uchna border area in Joypurhat's Panchbibi upazila.

The BSF tried to erect the fence within 30 yards of the international zero point, violating border agreements, so the attempt was foiled, a BGB official told this newspaper.

According to local sources, BSF personnel from the Chakgopal Camp began building the fence early in the morning amid dense fog, just 25 to 30 yards inside the border on the Indian side, opposite the Bangladeshi land that is under the jurisdiction of the 20-BGB Hatkhola Border Outpost (BOP).

Upon noticing the activity, BGB personnel intervened, prompting the BSF to withdraw their materials and leave the site, Lt Col Nahid Newaz, commander of the 20 BGB Battalion, told this newspaper.

"BSF's attempt to construct a fence so close to Zero Point was a clear violation of international border laws," he said.

BGB acted promptly to prevent the violation, and a flag meeting was offered to the BSF at the company commander level to resolve the matter, he added.

This is not the first border-related incident in Joypurhat this month.

On January 13, BSF personnel fired a blank shot near the Bhuidoba border at Main Pillar 282, Sub-Pillar 43. BGB sources confirmed the incident at the time, saying that BSF admitted firing at suspected smugglers. However, no injuries were reported.

Despite these events, BGB officials have assured that the situation along the border remains calm, with efforts ongoing to maintain peace and prevent further tension, said the BGB officials.



Thousands of Beximco Group workers hold a rally at Sunsity of Gazipur's Kashimpur yesterday, demanding the reopening of 16 factories inside the Beximco Industrial Park. They also demanded payment of their dues.

PHOTO: MONJURUL HAQUE

Thousands of workers demand reopening of 16 Beximco factories

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

Thousands of workers held a mass rally yesterday in Gazipur, demanding the reopening of all 16 factories which were shut down within the Beximco Industrial Park.

The workers also called for payment of outstanding salaries at the rally at Sunsity in Kashimpur's Sreepur.

The rally started around 2:30pm, said Abu Taleb, Assistant Superintendent of Police for Gazipur Industrial Police 2 (Konabari Zone).

Witnesses said workers chanted slogans like: "We want work, not alms. We want to live with our families. Open the factories."

Taslima Khatun, a worker, said, "We want back our jobs. They cannot close the factories leaving fifty thousand of us jobless."

The rally was concluded peacefully around 5:00pm.

Last year, Beximco laid off nearly 40,000 workers of 16 apparel units, citing a lack of export orders for its garment and textile factories. Layoff notices were issued on

December 15, 2024, taking effect the next day.

The layoffs affected over 57% of Beximco's workforce.

Labour Secretary AHM Shafiquzzaman stated on January 14 that the government is working to find jobs for the affected workers in factories under the Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority and Bangladesh Economic Zones Authority. He also mentioned efforts to attract foreign buyers for the factories.

On January 20, a state advisory council met at the Bangladesh Secretariat to discuss selling the 16 factories, preferably to foreign entrepreneurs, to repay Tk 50,000 crore in bank loans owed by Beximco.

Over half of these loans have become non-performing, according to Bangladesh Bank data from November 2024. However, the council deferred its decision, pending further scrutiny of the group's financial statements.

19 Rohingyas rescued, three traffickers held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, COX'S BAZAR

Nineteen Rohingya people were rescued and three alleged members of a human trafficking gang arrested in Kachhapia area of Cox's Bazar's Teknaf early yesterday.

A police team, led by Sub-Inspector of Teknaf Police Station Badiul Alam, carried out the operation around 3:00am.

All the arrestees -- Jafar Alam, 30, Mujib Ullah, 32, and Hamid Ullah, 32 -- are residents of East Kachhapia in Teknaf, said Mohammad Rahmat Ullah, superintendent of police in Cox's Bazar.

"A case has been filed under the Human Trafficking Prevention and Suppression Act with Teknaf Police Station," he said, adding that drives against traffickers will continue.

STUDENTS AGAINST DISCRIMINATION  
22 hurt in scuffle at its central office  
2 groups blame each other

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 22 people were injured in a scuffle between two groups of Students Against Discrimination at its central office in the capital's Bangla Motor.

Both groups blamed each other for the incident that took place around 4:00pm.

Some student activists from Jatrabari area alleged that they were "beaten up" by their leaders on the second floor of the Rupayan Trade Centre.

However, the central committee said a "misguided group" from Jatrabari "forcibly" closed the office gate and attacked the executive members, leaving central committee member Nayeem Abedin injured.

Al Amin, a Jatrabari unit activist, said they went to the central office "seeking justice" as they were beaten up by a group of the platform during a meeting in Jatrabari on Monday.

Yesterday's incident left at least 21 activists of the group from Jatrabari injured, and three of them are taking treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

The group of activists reached the central office at Bangla Motor around 3:00pm, and sat in front of Rupayan Trade Centre, demanding justice for the attack on them in Jatrabari. They also carried placards and chanted slogans.

"At about 4:00pm, some central leaders invited us to the office and as we went inside, they started beating us, closing the shutters of the office," said Al Amin, adding that female activists were also attacked.

SEE PAGE 5 COL 4

Ex-army man's wife murdered at home in Patuakhali

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

A retired army personnel's wife was murdered at his residence in Patuakhali's Kalapara upazila early yesterday.

The victim, Shahnaz Parvin Lucky, 50, was alone in the house when the incident took place during the early hours in Salimpur village of Nilganj union. Her husband, Abul Kalam Azad, was not present as he was visiting a relative.

Shah Alam, the victim's brother-in-law, said a gang of robbers slit her throat after gagging and tying her up. Later, they ransacked the house and looted valuables.

He said he found the back door of the house open around 8:00am. Upon entering, he discovered the scene -- Shahnaz's lifeless body was on the floor with her hands and feet tied up and her mouth gagged.

He informed police, who later recovered the body from the spot. "The body has been sent to Patuakhali Medical College Hospital for autopsy."

We are investigating the incident, and necessary legal actions are underway," said Jewel Islam, officer-in-charge of Kalapara Police Station.

IO testifies at court in Niko graft case

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The investigation officer yesterday gave a partial statement before a Dhaka court in Niko graft case filed against BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and seven others.

Judge Mohammad Abdullah Al Mamun of the Special Judge's Court-5 of Dhaka recorded the statement of Sahedur Rahman, the then deputy director of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), for over an hour.

The judge then fixed January 29 for the next hearing of the case. On that date, the court will record the rest of the statement of the IO.

In December 2007, the ACC filed the case, accusing Khaleda and several others of abusing power to award a gas exploration and extraction deal to Canadian company Niko when she was prime minister between 2001 and 2006.

10 extra years for repaying Chinese loans

FROM PAGE 1

Hossain requested Luo to ramp up concessional loans and grants and the number of projects China funds in Bangladesh. Luo responded positively and sought a list of priority projects from Bangladesh.

Luo said China may consider larger projects in Bangladesh, with some project funds extended as grants. As a result, the average interest rate of Chinese loans will go down, he said.

Both sides also discussed the financing of projects in metro rail and the Southern Infrastructure Development Initiative (SIDI) in Bangladesh.

Over at Hossain's bilateral meeting with the Chinese foreign minister, Beijing assured of continued duty-free and quota-free access to Bangladeshi products for

three years after graduation from the least-developed country bracket in 2026.

Wang also conveyed China's decision to designate three to four recognised hospitals in Kunming for treatment of Bangladeshi patients.

He also welcomed Bangladesh's proposal of setting up a specialised tertiary-level Chinese hospital in Dhaka as a gesture of goodwill on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of Bangladesh-China diplomatic relations.

Both sides conveyed their readiness to organise a host of activities to mark the occasion.

Wang requested Bangladesh to consider joining Chinese President Xi Jinping's three global initiatives: the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative

and the Global Civilisation Initiative.

In response, Bangladesh conveyed their intention to examine the proposals and to remain engaged with China in deliberations on the issues.

Wang reaffirmed that China respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bangladesh and reiterated continued Chinese support for the stability, reforms, democratic transition and development initiatives of Bangladesh.

Recognising Bangladesh's strategic position, the two sides emphasised continued cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative.

China wants to see Bangladesh's economic development in pace with their own development and assured China's continued

support for the projects conducive to the livelihood of the people of Bangladesh, Wang said.

The two sides expressed their willingness to work closely on proposed Chinese-funded projects: the Dasherbandi sewage treatment plant, the upgradation and modernisation of Mongla Port and the establishment of digital connectivity and 4G expansion.

The Chinese side was very positive about the request for lowering the interest rate and financial support, an official of the foreign adviser's delegation told the correspondent from Beijing.

"They have not insisted on their issues of GDI and GSI, but said they want us to be with them for inclusive development," he said.

Bangladesh sought

detailed information on China's plan to build a mega-hydropower dam across the Yarlung Tsangpo River in Tibet.

The Chinese side said they would not consume or withdraw any water and thus the lower riparian countries will not be affected, the official said, adding that there was no discussion on the Teesta river management project.

Both leaders discussed the Rohingya crisis and reaffirmed their shared commitment to work on a roadmap to finding a durable solution to the issue, according to the foreign ministry statement. Wang reassured China's continued engagement with Myanmar to address the situation and promote regional stability.

Hossain reiterated Bangladesh's firm

commitment to the 'One China Principle' and unwavering support for UNGA Resolution 2758.

The two countries signed the implementation plan for the memorandum of understanding on the exchange of hydrological information on the Yaluzangbu-Jamuna rivers.

Hossain also met with Liu Jianchao, the minister of the international department of the Chinese Communist Party, yesterday to discuss Chinese-funded development projects in Bangladesh.

Liu reaffirmed China's continued support for the interim government and peaceful transition to democracy through a free, fair and participatory election.

A judicial council to pick SC judges

FROM PAGE 1

Members of the appointment council are the most senior and a retired judge of the Appellate Division, two senior judges from the High Court Division, the attorney general and a professor of law or legal expert nominated by the chief justice.

The SC registrar general will act as the secretary of the council ex-officio. The registrar general's office must render necessary secretarial assistance for the council, according to the ordinance on which a gazette notification was issued yesterday.

Law Adviser Asif Nazrul yesterday told reporters that people for years wanted appointment of experienced, efficient, non-partisan and genuinely qualified individuals as judges through a transparent process.

"I hope that the judges will now be appointed to the Supreme Court through a transparent and accountable process," he said.

The council will collect the names of potential candidates, he said.

"At the same time, there is a system allowing any person, any lawyer, to apply [for the posts] or nominate someone. The council will conduct interviews after the initial scrutiny."

The law adviser hoped that the next appointments to the post of judges in the High Court will be given in this process.

Under the previous administration, he said, "there was no redress for people. The reason for this was that political governments appointed judges to the High Court... purely on partisan considerations. A former judge had commented... that the appointments of High Court judges had been catastrophic."

"If competent and impartial persons are not appointed as judges in a transparent process in the High Court, then the question of human rights of the country's 17 crore people remains unresolved."

The ordinance states that the qualifications of the candidates for the posts of SC judges will be considered by the council as their minimum qualifications have already been

mentioned in articles 95 and 98 of the constitution.

The council will consider the candidate's educational qualifications, professional skills, experience, publications and training; information relating to the conviction of a candidate in a criminal case; special knowledge and skills of the candidates in a particular area of law; overall knowledge, wisdom, honesty, reputation, respect for law and other relevant matters, according to the ordinance.

The council will consider the number of cases disposed of by an additional HC judge; his or her quality of judicial orders and decisions; court management capacity; overall efficiency; honesty; reputation and relevant matters as qualifications for his or her appointment of a permanent HC judge.

It will evaluate the seniority of an HC judge; number of cases disposed of by him or her; his or her quality of judicial orders and decisions; court management capacity; overall efficiency; honesty; reputation and relevant matters as a judge of

the Appellate Division, according to the provisions of the ordinance.

All meetings of the council will be held at the time and place fixed by its chairperson, the chief justice.

A meeting of the council will be convened at least two months before the expiry of the appointment of an additional judge of the HC.

The quorum for a meeting of the council will be formed in the presence of at least five members.

The council can convene applications from the candidates for the posts of additional judges of the HC through a public circular.

For the purpose of this ordinance, the government can in consultation with the council make rules.

The chief justice will forward the recommendations made by the council to the president in accordance with Article 95 (1) of the constitution.

The president will pick the judge from the individuals recommended by the council within 15 days.

If the president disagrees with the advice of the chief justice, he may refer the

matter to the chief justice for review, mentioning the relevant information and reasons, according to the ordinance.

On November 28 last year, the SC sent a proposal to the law ministry to incorporate the provision for constituting the council to select competent candidates for the judges' posts in the Appellate and High Court divisions.

The council, at the request of the president, will issue a public notice inviting applications from the candidates, according to the proposed ordinance. After receiving applications, the council will send recommendations to the president for the appointment of judges under articles 95 and 98 of the constitution, the SC said in the proposal.

On December 11 last year, the Judiciary Reform Commission submitted a preliminary report to the government suggesting to constitute a nine-member commission led by the chief justice for the appointment of SC judges to ensure the selection of duly qualified people.

WHAT CONSTITUTION SAYS

Article 95 (1) of the constitution states that the chief justice shall be appointed by the president, and the other judges shall be appointed by the president after consultation with the chief justice.

A person shall be qualified for appointment as a Supreme Court judge if he or she has "qualifications as may be prescribed by law", according to article 95(2) (c).

Article 98 states that the president may appoint one or more qualified persons as additional judges of a division of the SC. The tenure of these judges will not exceed two years as the president may specify.

Or, the president may require a judge of the High Court Division to sit in the Appellate Division for any temporary period.

"Provided that nothing in this article shall prevent a person appointed as an additional judge from being appointed as a judge under article 95 or as an additional judge for a further period under this article," article 98 adds.

Privacy still under threat

FROM PAGE 1

agencies, how the data will be used or processed, for how long, and where the data will be kept or moved.

Since 2021, the AL government had been drafting a data protection law. Each draft had consistently drawn flak for allowing law enforcers broad passes on flimsy grounds, stoking fears that the law would enable the government to gain access to and control the personal data of citizens.

Those fears remain as the new draft ordinance continues to allow unchecked powers to the government to gain access to citizens' personal data in matters pertaining to the sovereignty of Bangladesh, state security, protection of public order and security and Bangladesh's relations with other countries.

The draft ordinance states that there will be a board entrusted with supervising the state of data protection in the country and it would ensure that the protections afforded by this law are upheld.

But the draft also says that in case of the above-mentioned matters, the government can issue orders to the board and the board will be bound to comply with the instructions.

The draft also states that the board can grant exemption to any organisation

or body from having to follow this law, effectively excusing them from recognising a citizen's digital rights and right to privacy.

Law enforcement agencies do not have to follow this law when engaged in activities meant to prevent crime--but the nature of the crime for which this exemption is being granted is not defined. Someone being prosecuted under any law will not have the right to data protection.

All these sections are mirror reflections of previous drafts of the data protection laws created by the AL government, which too had exempted law enforcement from complying with the law, and allowed government intervention under similar vaguely outlined circumstances.

Critics had previously rung alarm bells over these provisions, stating that they open the door for misuse and abuse of the law by a political government attempting to use state agencies for their own benefit.

Amnesty International had said that previous drafts by the AL government were "aimed at usurping people's right to privacy in Bangladesh."

The draft ordinance is available on the information ministry's website, where it is open for feedback until January 28, 2025.