

Demands for the border villagers



On 25th March, 2021, the Indo-Bangladesh border villagers of Cooch Behar district under the banner of 'Amra Simantabasi' (We, the bordering populace), organized a peaceful mass demonstration and protest in front of the District Magistrate's office Cooch Behar. About 500 people from different border villages of Cooch Behar participated in the demonstration and later submitted a deputation on their issues to the District Magistrate.

The district of Cooch Behar shares around 550 kilometers of international border with Bangladesh and the residents living in these areas are regularly subjected to torture, extra-judicial killings, severe insult and molestation, illegitimate restrictions whimsically imposed by the Border Security Force (BSF) on agricultural activities and fishing and so on. Millions of hectares of cultivable land are situated beyond the fencing and unprotected from Bangladeshi intruders as the BSF is posted inside the villages and not in the actual border. For no particular reason, section 144 of CrPC is issued in the border villages throughout the year, even in normal situational circumstances, despite the Supreme Court's judgment against the practice (Anuradha Bhasin Vs Union of India, Writ Petition (Civil) No. 1031 of 2019), due to which, the villagers live under severe distress.



The Secretary of 'Amra Simantabasi', Cooch Behar district committee, Mr. Hazrat Ali along with other members of the committee raised these issues in the demonstration before the Cooch Behar District Magistrate's office and submitted a memorandum to the District Magistrate with the following demands:

• Continuously perpetuating Section 144 of the CrPC in border areas, which is illegal according to the Supreme Court's judgment, should be withdrawn with immediate effect.



- BSF should be posted in the actual borders and not inside villages.
- Illegitimate restrictions imposed by the BSF on agricultural activities and fishing activities in the border should be stopped immediately
- Incidents of extra-judicial killings and torture by the BSF should be brought under justice and safety and security of the villagers should be ensured.
- According to the Ministry of External Affairs of the Government of India, the states of Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh are friendly countries. But in two other countries except Bangladesh, there are no such allegations of killing, torture

and restrictions. Why there are such differences in the case of Bangladesh and not the other friendly countries?

- Border Area Development Programme (BADP) fund should be utilized in the border areas for development purpose and not elsewhere
- Educational, health, electricity, drinking water and other infrastructural facilities in border areas are insufficient.

The District Magistrate's office however didn't receive the memorandum citing the reason that Model Code of Conduct for West Bengal Assembly Election is in place due to which, the office cannot receive deputations. Hence, the 'Amra Simantabasi' committee decided to submit the deputation through registered post.

