

Land reform Each landless family can get 1.52 acres land

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An effective land reform could provide each landless family with around 1.52 acres of land.

Total identified Khas land in the country is 33 lakh acres, out of which 8 lakh acres are agricultural land, 17 lakh acres non-agricultural land and 8 lakh acres marshy land.

This was revealed in a research book titled 'Political Economy of Khas Land in Bangladesh' which was formally launched at a function in the city yesterday.

The book was written jointly by three teachers of the Economics Department of Dhaka University. They are Dr Abul Barkat, Dr Shafiq-uz-Zaman and Dr Selim Raihan.

The book revealed that huge khas lands remained unidentified and were not included in the government's estimate.

On the other hand, influential people had occupied a big chunk of the khas land which could not be recovered by previous governments.

Besides, the khas lands, distributed among the landless people, were immediately transferred to the influential people and around 88

percent of the land are now in their possession.

Only 12 percent of the distributed khas lands are now under the possession of landless people.

The book expressed doubt about the figure of distributed khas land although the government claimed that out of 8.03 lakh acres of land, 44 percent were distributed among the landless and distressed people.

Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Moudud Ahmed was the chief guest at the launching ceremony of the book held at the CIRDP auditorium.

"An effective land reform can expedite the development of the country", he said adding that "All previous governments tried to bring land reform in a cosmetic way which did not produce any positive result".

He said distribution of some khas lands among the poor is not the only objective of an effective land reform. There should be a sustainable policy which would keep a far reaching impact on the economy of the country.

"Land reform is a very difficult job in our country", said Moudud adding that "Even I do not know how much

khas land is there in Noakhali district although I am the president of district development committee".

State Minister for land Ukil Abdus Sattar, Executive Director of BRAC and former advisor of caretaker government Abdul Mueyed Chowdhury former secretary Foizullah, President of Bangladesh Economic Association Dr. Moinul Islam, Executive Director of Samata Abdul Kader and General Secretary of Khet Majur Samity Saiful Haq took part in the discussion.

The speakers said land reform was a popular slogan of all political parties but they never implemented it after going to power.

They also blamed the present government for not taking any firm decision on the issue although it was one of their election pledges.

Mueyed Chowdhury said there was always political involvement in the distribution process of khas land.

Dr. Moinul Islam said land reform is necessary for checking migration of rural people to urban areas.

Auto-rickshaw, tempo drivers clash with police at Sylhet, 20 injured

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Twenty people, including the Officer in Charge (OC) of Sylhet Kotwali police station were injured in a clash between police and auto-rickshaw and auto-tempo drivers and helpers in the city yesterday.

Police and witnesses said, the auto-rickshaw and auto-tempo drivers and helpers brought out a procession demanding a permanent stand for them in the city.

When the procession reached Zindabazar, some agitating auto-rickshaw and auto-tempo drivers and helpers started hurling bricks at the police on duty in the area. They beat up OC Ziaul Kabir in front of the Pilot Girls High School.

Police resorted to baton charge and fired five blank shots to disperse the auto-rickshaw and auto-tempo drivers and helpers.

Police arrested 18 people for their alleged involvement in the incident. The injured OC was admitted to the Sylhet M A G Osmani Medical College Hospital.

Saifur

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resources, he mentioned Bangladesh is not the poorest country in SAARC but its tax-GDP ratio is the lowest.

In his keynote speech, Prof. Rehman Sobhan said the SAARC countries have become more vulnerable due to the global recession and their export earnings have gone down significantly.

SAFA President Z U Ahmed and Chairman of the SAFA Conference Committee 2002 Chowdhury Hafizur Rahman, President of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Bangladesh MA Baree and President of the Institute of Cost and Management Accountants of Bangladesh Rafiq Ahmed also spoke on the occasion.

Focusing on 'Global Economic Recession - Challenges for South Asia Region', the two-day conference will hold three technical sessions on 'Fair Trade - an Instrument to Fight Recession', 'Resource Mobilisation - Need for Structural Reforms', and 'Information Technology as a Vehicle for Economic Development'.

Economists and expert professionals from India, Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka as well as Bangladesh are participating in the conference ending today.

Lake shrinks

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through hundreds of household sewerage outlets into the water body day and night. Even in the rainy season, the lake water looks highly polluted.

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh Fisheries Development Corporation (BFDC) is cultivating fishes in the polluted lake to supply those to city markets.

Implementation of the lake development project is also being delayed indefinitely for 'mysterious reasons'.

The chief of the Rajuk's town planning division, Quazi Golam Hafiz claims a letter has been sent to the Ministry of Housing and Public Works for steps to speed up implementation of the project. "We shall proceed only after getting clearance from the ministry," he says.

However, sources in the ministry claim all preparations including fresh drawing of the lake development project on the basis of satellite image of the original lake area have been completed. They blame the Rajuk authorities for employing 'bureaucratic tactics' to delay the project.

Minister for Housing and the Public Works Mirza Abbas has also expressed concern over the delay in this regard despite the prime minister's directive but said, "We will initiate implementation of the project for very soon."

More shady deals

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found that Mostafa is an employee of Mohammad Ali, a NCCBL director.

However, when contacted Mohammad Ali denied that he has any employee by the name of Mostafa. He also declined any involvement in any sort of shady transactions.

"Once I supplied dyes and chemicals to Ashok Kejriwal's Doel Group worth Tk 1.20 crore and received a pay order in my favour," Mohammad Ali told The Daily Star over telephone from his Chittagong office yesterday.

Of the shady accounts in the NCCBL Motijheel branch, the BB probe team found one was against the name of one Abul Kashem. The account number is 0140462-3. But the records show there was no approval from the branch manager to open the account or there was no introducer, which is mandatory for opening a bank account.

The other two account holders are Azizul Haq and Abu Taher and their account number is 01403973 and 0140430-5 respectively.

"These accounts look like ghost accounts, as the bank officials do not

know the account holders and the nature of their business," a BB official said.

The BB probe found that money came from the accounts of the said business people to these 'ghost accounts' and from there went to their accounts.

When contacted, Managing Director of Doel Group Ashok Kejriwal denied his or his group's involvement in any sort of dubious bank transactions.

"We are the biggest knit apparel exporter of the country. That's why we have to make transactions with many people and business enterprises. I have all the bank records which will prove that we are not involved in any sort of unfair practice," Kejriwal claimed.

Meantime, the BB served show-cause notices on the managing directors of four private banks Monday last in connection with the shady bank transactions and irregularities in loan sanctioning, asking them to reply within 15 days why they should not be held responsible.

Slogans for DU reopening

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DUSAA will hold a "grand" rally at the TSC on September 11 protesting the authorities' decision. Students will wear black badges on that day, it said.

They will also organise a 'taken class' in front of the arts building at 11am and send a 'postcard' to the VC requesting him to disclose the reasons behind the authorities' decision.

DUSAA also held a press conference at the Madhu's canteen on the campus in the afternoon to reiterate its demand.

Eight left-leaning student bodies under the banner of "Progressive Student Jote" brought out a procession and held a rally on the campus protesting the decision and demanding immediate reopening of DU.

Leaders of Awami League-backed Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) at a press conference at Madhu's canteen strongly criticised the authorities' "illogical" decision taken on "political grounds."

It will bring out a procession and hold a rally on the campus tomorrow, submit a memorandum to the VC on September 11 and lay a siege to his office on September 14 for reopening of the university.

The BCL leaders criticised the government for "directly interfering" in the university affairs. They claimed that the reopening date was cancelled only due to non-formation of new committees of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), student front of ruling BNP.

The BCL leaders also demanded expulsion of the three newly appointed DU Syndicate members - Prof Kamrul Hasan Chowdhury, Prof Aftab Ahmed and BNP lawmaker Khandaker Mahbub Uddin. They were appointed violating the university ordinance, they claimed.

BCL leaders Alak Bonik, Khan Moinul Islam Mustak, Delwar Hosain and Hemayet Uddin Himu addressed the press conference.

The university was closed on July 27 for an indefinite period in the face of student's protest against police atrocities on female students of Shamsunahar Hall in the early hours of July 24.

French President Jacques Chirac said it was up to the United Nations Security Council to decide what action to take if Baghdad rejected the return of UN weapons inspectors.

Blair also faces domestic concerns. A BBC survey found that 88 Labour members of parliament out of 100 respondents believed there were at present no grounds for war, and 86 thought there should be a parliamentary debate before any decision.

Blair, who has twice taken his nation to war in just five years and has pledged to be there "when the shooting starts," helped Bush rally world support for his "war on terror" in Afghanistan after September 11 and looks set to repeat the role.

But he said the search for international consensus through the United Nations could not be used as an excuse for inaction.

US to disarm Iraq

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Britain, Blair said.

"If these weapons are developed and used there is no way that any conflict Saddam initiated using these weapons would not have a direct implication on the interests of Britain," he added.

Blair, Washington's staunchest ally, this week raised the level of his rhetoric against Iraq and pledged his support for Bush who likewise urged the tempo of his search for a "regime change" in Baghdad.

"The resolve is there and it is shared jointly. It is an issue that cannot be ducked. It won't go away. It has to be dealt with," Blair said.

On Friday Blair met Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Saud al-Farab and talked by phone to the leaders of France and Russia, both of which have permanent seats on the UN Security Council.

The Kremlin said Russian President Vladimir Putin told Blair he had "deep doubts that there are grounds for the use of force in connection with Iraq."

Hadi-Zahid panel

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casting their votes.

The Hadi-Zahid panel has bagged 236 of the 238 posts of central councillors in 65 centres. Independent candidates won both the posts of president and secretary-general at Chandpur.

It also reported that not a single vote was cast in favour of the Ruhul-Kamrul panel at Bhola. Similarly at Netrokona, Habiganj and Manikganj the panel did not get as many votes as they had expected.

The margin was 77 to three at Netrokona, 64 to two at Habiganj and 65 to two at Manikganj.

In total, 20,283 members of the BMA were eligible for casting votes in 65 centres across the country.

The voters elect 14 office bearers, an 18-member executive committee and a 76-member central council.

TV package

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Bangladesh Television (BTV). Even packages made about three years back are still to be aired by the BTV since the one and a half hours of time allocated for package programme is insufficient, it said.

The speakers mentioned that the previous government banned 13 foreign drama serials dubbed in Bangla according to the demand of the Package Forum. However, the package regulation by the then government was protested by the forum as it was against their interest.

The present government has cancelled representation of the Package Forum in the preview committee of BTV, which was included by the caretaker government, they said expressing their frustration.

JCD activists

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Bangabandhu Sangskritik Jote and also reporter of a local daily Shahnama, and Rahat were admitted to a private clinic. Belayet might be sent to Dhaka, hospital sources said.

ETV newscaster Shamsuddin Haider Dalim, reporters JI Mamun, Kaosar Mahmud and Badal Mustafiz were also present there to attend the meeting.

Condemning the attack on journalists, Barisal Press Club called an emergency meeting at the press club auditorium at 7:00pm yesterday.

Barisal Reporters' Unity, Barisal Journalists' Union, Barisal units of AL and CPB, and different cultural organisations also issued press releases condemning the attack.

Meanwhile, whip of the treasury bench and district BNP chief Mujibur Rahman Sarwar went to the press club last night to express his regrets about the attack on journalists at the meeting, and promised stern action against those responsible for the attack.

Ebaidul Haq Chand, secretary, BNP Barisal district committee, visited a local clinic yesterday where Janakantha reporter Shawkat Milton is being treated for the injuries he received in the attack.

Shazneen case

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accused Shahidul Islam alias Shahid.

Judge Kazi Rahmat Ullah then adjourned the hearing till 12.30 pm today.

During the cross-examination, Latifur Rahman was asked about some 10 witnesses. He told the court some of them are known to him and some are not.

All the accused -- Shahid, Hasan, Badul, Shanir, Minu and Parvin -- are now in jail custody and all were produced in the court yesterday.

Shazneen Tasnim Rahman, 15, was the youngest daughter of Latifur Rahman, Chairman of Transcom. The incident of physical assault took place at their Gulshan residence on April 23, 1998.

Special public prosecutors (PP) - Arfan Uddin Khan, ABM Sharfuddin Khan Mukul and Mahbub Ahmed and Assistant PP Anisur Rahman appeared in the court on behalf of the state.

The Shazneen murder case, pending with the First Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka, was earlier stayed on an order of the High Court. The order will remain valid till disposal of the rape case.

Replying to a question, another teacher said he is ready to take classes if students attend.

4 to die for killing mother & her 3 children

A CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

First Additional District and Sessions Judge's Court here yesterday sentenced four people to death in the sensational four-murder case.

The convicts are Zahedur Rahman, 42, son of late Safir Uddin, Ashraf Ali Pintu, 48, his brother Shamsul Huq, 55, and their uncle Moslem Uddin. All the four hail from village Bhandarpaiker in Sadar upazila.

According to the prosecution, Zahedur Rahman with the help of three others strangled his sister-in-law Shahida Khatun, 32, her sons Mannan, 8, Manik, 6, and daughter Nilufa, 14, on the night of June 15, 1995, for grabbing their landed property.

Nurul Islam, elder brother of accused Zahedur Rahman, was not available in the house on the night of incident.

Sadar thana OC Faruk Ahmed filed the case himself as complainant on June 16. Later, the case was transferred to CID. After investigation, CID Inspector Josimul Islam submitted a chargesheet to the court on August 29, 1996 against the four.

Judge Tanzina Ismail, after examining witnesses and documents, delivered the judgement yesterday.

New president

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motorcade went to the Martyred Intellectuals Memorial at Mirpur.

He placed wreaths at the memorial and stood there in solemn silence for one minute to show respect to the memory of noted intellectuals of the country killed by the Pakistani occupation forces and their collaborators at the tag end of the Liberation War.

President Ahmed then went to the Dhaka University campus and placed wreaths on the alter of the Central Shaheed Minar to pay respect to the memory of martyrs of the historic Language Movement of 1952 which marked the beginning of the struggle for independent Bangladesh.

He stood there in silence to show respect to the memory of the martyrs.

From there he returned to the Bangabhaban.

The President did not visit the mazar of late President Ziaur Rahman, founder of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) now in power.

Titas MD, GM

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instruction not to give in under pressure and sign any transfer order. I also assured him of police protection.

"However, he defied my instruction and had the transfer orders signed without even consulting me."

The minister said a managing director should have the ability to withstand pressure from trade union leaders. "Trade union leaders are there to put pressure on the management. But that does not mean the managing director has to give in to their whims."

Mosharraf also accused Anwaruzzaman of serving the purpose of the trade union leaders instead of protecting the interest of Titas.

"He toed the lines of the leaders who previously controlled the trade union and did the same when the two factions took over control of the union office."

The minister said the government would not tolerate any untoward incident at the Titas headquarters because of the cancellation of the transfer orders or removal of the managing director. "We will take drastic action anyone who tries to disrupt work at Titas. No one will be spared."

Anwaruzzaman told The Daily Star that he was a victim of circumstances.

"I have no complaint against either the ministry or Petrobangla. Rather I am grateful to them for rescuing me from the trade union leaders," he said.

Titas sources, meanwhile, expressed surprise at the government move.

"The trade union leaders should have also been punished, not only the managing director," said a top official of the state-run gas transmission and distribution company, "When will the government realise that the trade union leaders are actually running the Titas manage-

ment."

Since the government slapped a three-month moratorium on trade union activities at Titas since May this year, leaders have virtually put activities there to a standstill, sources said.

Meanwhile, Titas's systems loss has shot up to an all-time in recent times.

Sani's killer

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chamber of Metropolitan Magistrate Jagannath Das Khokon for recording his statements. After recording the statements, the magistrate ordered Khokon to the Dhaka Central Jail.

According to Khokon, at about 9:30pm on Thursday he picked up Sani from his house and took him to an under-construction building at Norda Sardarbari. He first pushed Sani's head into sand. Later, he strangled him and threw his body in a water tank.

When Sani's family started looking for the boy, Khokon told them that he had killed Sani and that neither his parents nor his family members were involved.

Khokon told the magistrate that he was in love with Shahinur, sister of the victim, for the last three years. "Shahinur also loved me."

According to the statement, Shahinur's mother Saleha got Khokon beaten up by some local youths few days ago after being informed of the affair by a local resident. Saleha further threatened Khokon not to meet her daughter again and confined her to the house.

But on Shahinur's insistence, Khokon started planning to elope together. But the family members of Shahinur and local people caught him and beat him up again. It was only then that Khokon decided to take revenge.

After the hearing, the court placed Khokon's mother and two sisters each on a one-day remand.

Khaleda: Corruption

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the people.

"We have to ensure the security of the people so that they can sleep and move without any fear. We have to work for self-reliance and take Bangladesh to a dignified position in the world by freeing it from the curse of subservient foreign policy," she added.

"The path to independence is tough but to maintain it tougher. We have lots of problems and our capacity is limited. Moreover, there is the continuous conspiracy against us by the defeated forces."

But we have to proceed forward despite all obstructions and conspiracies for the development of the country and the welfare of the people," she said.

The prime minister said she has been getting active support and cooperation from all since she joined politics and hoped that all will continue supporting her for the smooth running of the country.

"This government is not mine. It is our government. It is the BNP's government. It is the four party alliance government. All is involved with success and failures of the government," she said and reminded that the people had voted the alliance with lots of expectations and so they had to discharge the responsibility.

Turning to party affairs, the BNP Chairperson said that steps are being taken to enhance competence of the party leaders and activists and soon the party will arrange political training of its men.

She listed her government's various successes in the last 10 months, like the establishing of discipline in administration, reduction of the degree of corruption, violence, and anarchy in the economic sector, removal of environmental pollution in the city and expansion of education.

The inaugural session was also addressed by the BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan and Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman.

The BNP already held Chittagong divisional meeting on August 28 and Khulna-Barisal divisional meeting on September 4. The Dhaka divisional meeting will take place on September 11. However, the date for Sylhet divisional meeting has not yet been finalised.

3 new plants

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interest in the Meghnaghat project." After submitting a project proposal, Marubeni did not come forward and for this we have decided to float tender for the Meghnaghat 450 MW second phase project." Iqbal Hasan Mahmood said.

Sources said the government decision of not allowing any more Independent Power Producers (IPPs) has also made it going for floating of tender for the Meghnaghat project.