

# Big shots levelled vast terrain

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Bayezid Bostami, Sholoshahar, Sitakunda, Bhatiar, Hathazari and other places in the district over the last three decades using names of their relatives, friends, institutions, or in the name of other purposes.

Environmentalists believe that such destruction of hills—both complete and partial—is the main reason for massive landslides during torrential rain just like the latest tragedy on June 11 that claimed over 120 lives.

**MIR NASIR**

Former civil aviation minister Mir Nasir also owns 30 kathas of land worth Tk 50 crore, which was originally a hill, in Jalalabad area under the Khulshi PS.

There are allegations against Nasir, who is in jail now, that he used political power during the rule of the BNP-led government to save those involved in hill cutting.

Mosharraf Hossain Dipi, former president of Chittagong city Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal and loyal to Nasir, encroached on a hilly plot measuring 100 katha at Akbar Shah Colony near the Foy's Lake. Dipi, who is now in Dubai, built some tin-shed houses and rented those.

Jatiya Party (Ershad) City Convenor Solaiman Sheth, who emerged as a political character recently and is now in jail, is widely known for land grabbing. He also has a track record in other criminal activities and maintained a criminal gang to help materialise his ill plans, sources said.

Sheth is an accused in many criminal cases, including murder, hill cutting and land grabbing. He was sent to jail on May 30 by a court after he surrendered to it in a murder case.

Sources alleged that two-time minister Abdulla-Al Noman also owns a vast hilly area at south Khulshi and he too levelled the hills to construct apartments and sell plots.

Chittagong north district AL President and another former civil aviation minister Mosharraf Hossain also exercised his power and influence to grab hills to build commercial plots in the city's Polytechnic and Chandranagar areas in Nasirabad when AL was in power from 1996 to 2001.

**ABUL KHAIR GROUP**

The Abul Khair Group has also grabbed up hills in Hathazari area and built a brickfield there. The DoE served a notice on the group and later closed the brickfield in 2003.

No responsible person of the Abul Khair Group was available for comments.

**SALAM GROUP**

The S Alam Group allegedly bought 156 acres of hilly land near the cantonment from Baitush Sharif Foundation Ltd, which initially took lease of the land. The S Alam Group has been cutting the hills for "development work" for the last six months.

Abdus Samad Labu, vice-chairman of S Alam Group, however said they have only made a preliminary agreement with the Baitush Sharif-in-charge to buy the land.

He said the group does not have any real estate or brick kiln business, so the allegation of hill cutting is totally baseless. "Local land grabbers might be cutting the hill but nobody from our company or family," he said.

Another syndicate of four business men razed almost half of a large hill behind the Chittagong Press Club in Jamat Khan area under Kotwali PS recently. Two of them have been identified as Sarwar Alam and M Muniruzzaman.

DoE sources said the department lodged a case in this regard and the main culprit has been absconding abroad.

A CDA mobile court in a drive yesterday afternoon stopped the construction work of an apartment on the land and lodged a case against Sarwar and Muniruzzaman under the Building Construction Act 1952 with the Kotwali PS.

The DoE also stopped the razing of

appointed workers and one staff during a raid last month following a case filed by the DoE against the authority of the CCC-run Lake City Housing Society for hill cutting. The police are preparing to submit the charge sheet against the three soon.

The Chittagong mayor is in jail now.

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The DoE also stopped the razing of

hills in Forest Research Institute area in Sholoshahar and Sitakunda by some "influential" quarters. It also filed separate cases.

Sources said an association of some Bangladesh Bank staffs took lease of a hill at Chakresho Kanan in Bayezid Bostami area to develop housing plots there.

**BRICK KILN OWNERS' SYNDICATE**

A syndicate of around 100 brick kiln owners razed vast hills in Hathazari area and built brickfields. When the DoE filed a case to stop the destruction of the hills, the group appealed against it in the High Court.

The court issued a stay order on any activity on the land, but sources said the syndicate secretly continued their operation until recently.

Vast hills in and around Lebu Begari near the cantonment were reportedly leased out to some persons. A signboard posted at the place bears names of three people—Mannan Chowdhury, Osman Gani and Mahtab Chowdhury—declaring them as the owners of six acres of land at the place.

But DoE Director Mosharraf said the three men could not be traced.

Over 70 people were buried alive in the devastating landslide on June 11 here.

**DoE**

When contacted, DoE Chittagong Region Director Mosharraf Hossain cited shortage of manpower and lack of tough laws as the major barriers to taking action against such rampant plundering of hills.

"We have only one inspector against three posts. The inspector too was recently transferred and now junior chemist M Saiful is discharging additional duty as an inspector to cover 11 districts from Teknaf to Brahmanbaria under the Chittagong DoE," the DoE director said.

**WEAK LAWS**

The Environment Act has provisions for monetary penalty ranging from Tk 5,000 to Tk 50,000. There is also a provision for maximum penalty of Tk 10 lakh but it has never been applied against any one yet.

"None of the plunderers of hills could be placed behind bars either," said a DoE official.

The DoE has filed a total of 32 cases of which only 12 have so far been disposed.

## Biman staff

FROM PAGE 1

On June 5, Biman Bangladesh Airlines offered the VRS to its officials and employees in order to downsize its staff to 3,400 by axing about 1,500 current employees. The scheme is part of the government plan to turn Biman into a PLC and to make it a healthy and profitable commercial venture.

The process for turning the airlines into a PLC is nearly complete, Biman high officials said.

Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism has almost finalised the Memorandum of Association (rules and regulations of Biman), Articles of Association (terms and conditions) and ordinance, under which Bangladesh Biman Corporation would turn into Bangladesh Airlines Limited, sources said.

Many Biman officials and staffs are yet to decide about responding to the VRS.

"We will wait till the last date," a Biman official told The Daily Star last night.

The Biman has a workforce of 4,800 at present. According to the present organogram, approved manpower of Biman Bangladesh Airlines is 6,800.

## Anwar Hossain

FROM PAGE 1

a former lawmaker, owns wealth worth about Tk 17.78 crore.

Among his significant wealth, Monju has plots of land in six places, shares in 9 companies, 5 bank accounts, one BMW car worth about Tk 55 lakh, \$ 17,231 and cash Tk 17.46 lakh in hand.

Among her notable wealth, Tasmia has a four-storey building in Dhamondi on 33 decimals of land, plots of land in different places, shares in 20 companies, including Tk 8.54 crore and Tk 3.48 crore in two companies, 9 bank accounts, 11 fixed deposits, 3,433 US\$ and cash Tk 4.26 in hand.

Although Monju in the statement stated that his four daughters are not dependent on him anymore, he gave the details of wealth possessed by the four daughters.

Former chief conservator of forests Munju Anwarul Islam also submitted the accounts of his and family's wealth through representative.

Anwar, his wife, three sons and one daughter-in-law possess wealth worth about Tk 7.28 crore.

With the submission of asset accounts by the two corrupt suspects, the number of those of the 21 suspects who complied with the ACC directive stood at 18.

Those who are yet to come up with their asset accounts are former health minister Khanda Kader and Mosharraf Hossain, Awami League Joint General Secretary Obaidul Kader and AL leader Kamal Ahmed Majumder.

All of them are now in jail.

However, the statement of Kader was sent to the ACC secretary through prison authorities, but it was not received due to technical reasons.

"She [Khaleda Zia] must accept the proposals as the party leaders and workers want democracy and transparency in the party," a senior leader said.

The proposal to make the party constitution 'more democratic' and ensure 'democratic process' in running the party has already been finalised and the leaders, who are with Mannan Bhuiyan over the reform issue, will urge the party chairperson to accept the proposals including expulsion of all the corrupt people from the party, party sources said.

"We congratulate the caretaker government on the reform initiative. Muhammad Ashraf, M Abdur Rouf and Mahmudur Rahman and PSC Secretary Abdus Sattar should be changed before they are fully involved in the irregularities in all four exams during the BNP-Jamaat rule," Movement President Abu Tareq told The Daily Star.

**BACKGROUND OF RESIGNERS**

Prof Dr AKM Shahadat Hossain Mandal, former pro-vice chancellor of Rajshahi University (RU), was accused of graft in the controversial recruitment of 545 officials at the university. The BNP-led alliance government appointed him as a PSC member in June, 2005 after different national dailies had run reports on the

# Lobi, Munshi

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## MUNSHICASE

The ACC pressed charges against detained former BNP lawmaker from Comilla Manzurul Ahsan Munshi, his wife Mazeda Ahsan Munshi, two sons barrister Rizviul Ahsan Munshi and Rizwanul Ahsan Munshi.

ACC Deputy Director Akther Hossain, also the IO, submitted the charge sheet to the court of CMM showing 49 people as prosecution and 10 as defence.

On March 27, ACC DD Abu Sayeed filed the case against the former lawmaker, his wife and sons for submitting false wealth statement and earning huge sums through illegal ways.

**MOUDUD CASE**

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**DOE CASE**

Judge Mohammad Azizul Haq of the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court heard arguments from the prosecution and the defence.

In his remand prayer, the IO mentioned that the ACC had filed the case against the former lawmaker, his wife and sons for submitting false wealth statement and earning huge sums through illegal ways.

After hearing both the sides, the court fixed today to decide whether the charges would be framed against Moudud or not.

Moudud was present in the dock during the hearing of the case.

Mohamad Obaidul Haque, officer-in-charge of Gulshan Police Station, also the investigation officer (IO), submitted the charge sheet to the Court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Dhaka on May 28 showing 10 people as prosecution and 10 as defence.

The case was filed on March 17 with Pallabi Police Station in connection with evading tax during import of a luxury car by abusing duty-free car import privilege of an MP.

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