

Allotment flawed

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over the ownership of the abandoned house at NED-3 on road 196 in Gulshan to Khaleda, provide Zia's family with Tk 10 lakh, bear educational expenses of Zia's two sons in Bangladesh or abroad, a monthly allowance of Tk 1,500 until the two turns 25, a government car, a driver and fuel.

Besides, the government would also pay for house security, phone bill, medical expenses for Zia's family members in Bangladesh or abroad, a personal assistant, two servants, a cook, a gardener, and a cleaner.

The government also pays gas, electricity and water bills of the Gulshan house.

However, Khaleda and her sons never lived in the Gulshan house. They have been using the cantonment residence where Ziaur Rahman lived.

On June 10, 1981 the M&Q Directorate, QMG branch, proposed to hand over house 6 on Shaheed Mainul Road in Dhaka Cantonment. The house sits on 2.72 acres of land (main building on 2.08 acres, guest house on .34 acres and guard house on .30 acres). Its price was fixed at Tk 8.16 lakh (Tk 3 lakh per acre).

Administrative approval was given on June 24 to hand over the property to the Military Estate Office (MEO). On July 8, its registration in Khaleda's name was completed.

Sources said defence ministry memo 2/245 on July 8, 2001 said Khaleda had been allotted the Gulshan house following government orders.

But the decision of allotting the Dhaka Cantonment house to Khaleda was made unilaterally by the president in violation of government rule. Besides, the lease conditions were not met, said the memo.

As per rule 10 of the Cantonment Land and Administration Rules, 1937, a lessee must apply for lease mutation that should be done by the Dhaka Cantonment MEO. But Khaleda never applied for it.

The lease mutation was done by the Teigaon Circle assistant commissioner (land), violating the rules, which state the land provider should do it.

According to the rules, if the lease mutation is flawed, Khaleda has no legal rights over the land.

Condition 1(4) of the lease documents states that the design and condition of a leased building cannot be changed without permission of the Cantonment MEO. But Khaleda violated the condition.

Both her sons mentioned

BDR reveals

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names of three deputy assistant directors, two subedars, one naib subedar, 13 havildars, 12 nayaks, 10 lance nayaks, 148 sepoys and 13 civil staff, BDR sources said.

Earlier on Tuesday, the government declared Tk 50,000 bounty on a single BDR member. Around 950 jawans still remain absconding, sources said.

Houses of BDR men raided. Army, Rab, CID and police personnel yesterday jointly raided the abandoned houses of six fugitive BDR members in the city's Lalbagh area and talked to people residing around Pilkhana.

Around 125 members of those forces conducted the raids for more than four hours but failed to recover any arms or ammunition. No one was arrested.

Meantime, a Dhaka court yesterday placed two rickshaw-pullers on a five-day remand while sent six others to jail in a connection with the BDR incidents.

Sources said army personnel engaged in their departmental investigation mainly led the raids while the Rab, CID and police aided them.

A CID official said they also talked to a number of people during the raid to gather information about what they know regarding the mutiny.

Reshuffle

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Meanwhile, Col Mahmud-ul Alam has been deputed to Ansar and VDP as director by withdrawing Col Md Obaidul Haq, Director general of BTRC. Col Md Saiful Islam has been sent back to army.

Lt Col Mahmud-ul Nabi has been deputed to land record and survey as director by withdrawing Lt Col Ahmedul Kabir. Besides, Maj Sheikh Md Moniruzzaman has been appointed deputy director of NSI by withdrawing Maj Afzal Tarek.

the Dhaka Cantonment house as their business addresses, which is also a violation of the rules.

The memo also mentions that taxes on the house remain unpaid.

Lalu threat to Varun's life, says Maneka Gandhi

IANs, Lucknow

Alleging that Railways Minister Lalu Prasad poses a threat to her son Varun Gandhi's life, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MP from Pilibhit Maneka Gandhi on Wednesday complained to the police.

Her written complaint was submitted to the senior superintendent of police, Badaun district, N Ravindran. Badaun borders the Aonla constituency from where Maneka Gandhi is now contesting.

"She has complained to the SSP that Lalu has used objectionable remarks against Varun and also threatened to kill him," Badaun district BJP chief Rajiv Kumar said.

At a rally in Bihar on Monday, the RJD chief had said that if he were the home minister he would have run a "roller" over Varun Gandhi who has been jailed in Uttar Pradesh for his reported hate speeches against Muslims.

"If I were the country's home minister, and if Varun had said this, then I would have run a roller over his chest," Lalu Prasad said.

Maneka Gandhi, who has been making frequent visits to her new constituency Aonla in Bareilly district, submitted the complaint on her official letter head.

However, no first information report (FIR) has been registered yet.

"We have received the complaint but as the SSP is out of the city, we will not be able to comment on the further course of action," said an official of the SSP's office. The SSP could not be contacted.

A senior police officer said if a case was registered against Lalu, he was likely to be booked under Sections 504 (Intentional insult with intent to provoke breach of peace) and 506 (criminal intimidation if threat be to cause death or grievous hurt, etc.) of the Indian Penal Code.

Badaun is about 300 km from Lucknow.

Maneka Gandhi is contesting from Aonla as she has vacated her long-time Pilibhit constituency for Varun, who is in Etah jail for his reported inflammatory remarks.

Hazari cleared

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Karim, four separate cases were filed with Sonagazi Police Station. The names of Hazari and Mirza appeared as prime accused in all the cases.

The hearing against other accused in the cases will be held on April 15.

16-member body

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three months so that we can start the implementation work of the new education policy," Nahid said.

The minister said the government would introduce time-worthy and modern education system in Madrasas alongside lessons based on religion to make madrasa students competitive citizens.

National Academy for Educational Management Director Sheikh Ekramul Kabir has been made the member secretary of the committee.

The other members of the committee are: National University Vice-chancellor (VC) Prof Kazi Shahidullah, Noted educationist Prof Muhammad Zafar Iqbal, Bangladesh Economic Society President Quazi Kholiqzaman Ahmad, Dhaka University (DU) Sociology Department Professor Dr Sadika Halim, English Department Professor Fakhrul Alam, Education Research Institute Prof Siddiqur Rahman and Public Administration Prof Jarina Rahman Khan, newly appointed treasurer of National University Principal Kazi Farruque Ahmed, Director General of the Directorate of Technical Education Prof Nitai Chandra Sutradhar, former additional secretary Siraj Uddin Ahmed, Bangladesh Teachers Association President Principal MA Awal Siddiqui, Moulana Prof ABM Siddiqur Rahman, Barrister Nihad Kabir and Mohammad Abu Hafiz.

The minister also hoped that the recommendations of the committee would help formulate a modern education policy.

Replying to a question on the textbook crisis he said the crisis would be solved.

1,000 illegal

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69.35 in 2008. In Mohammadpur, it was 18.99 metres in 1991, 22.05 metres in 2000, at 37.58 metres in 2008. In Sabujbagh, it was 24.48 metres in 1991, 51.58 in 2001 and 61.88 metres in 2008. In Sutrapur it was 12.73 metres in 1991, 18.79 metres in 2000, 20.95 metres in 2008. In Dhaka Cantonment, it was 15.60 metres in 1991, 28.90 metres in 2000 and 29.74 metres in 2008.

Exploitation of underground water has its limits and depends on how much the underground water is replenished every year, experts said.

Without considering this, Wasa has been lifting water from underground. If this goes on, it will trigger disasters like subsiding of land, said a hydrologist of BWDB.

Eftekharul said underground water level drop rate was a foot a year in the early 80s. The rate rose to six feet a year in 2005.

Eftekharul suggested that rainwater on the roofs of each building in the city be harvested. He said the government should have a provision that only buildings with rain-water harvesting systems would be approved.

Eftekharul also suggested that the use of surface water instead of the underground water be increased since this would allow underground water to replenish naturally or artificially.

He said it is also very important to stop pollution of rivers around the capital, make industries install effluent treatment plants and set up waste treatment plants.

He said while preparing the underground water zone map of the city, the BADC in 2005 found Gulshan-Banani-Baridhara Lake recharging water but other water bodies, including Dhanmondi Lake, are not recharging due to silt at the bottom.

Amnesty Int'l

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Demands from civil society for the investigation into the crimes committed in 1971 have been gathering momentum in the past few years, according to yesterday's AI news item in the website.

The AI said past governments had taken no action to investigate or prosecute these crimes and no official commission had been established to provide a comprehensive account of the events of 1971.

It said the Bangladesh government is also reported to have asked Pakistan and the US, which supported Pakistan during the war, to provide Bangladesh with particular documents related to the war and evidence for the trial.

The exact number of people killed by the Pakistan army and their collaborators during the 1971 Bangladesh independence war is not known. Most estimates put the figure at around one million and a further eight to ten million people, both Hindus and Muslims, fled to India in search of safety, the AI news report added.

Among the dead, tens of thousands, possibly hundreds of thousands, were farmers, fishermen, villagers and factory workers. The forces also targeted intellectuals, Hindus and women. According to some reports, an estimated 200,000 women were raped during the conflict.

To date, no one has been brought to justice for these crimes.

"I hope that the initiative to seek UN assistance to address the 1971 war crimes marks the beginning of a process to heal the wounds of this war in the national psyche," said Irene Khan.

CNG

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stations on the Dhaka-Chittagong Highway, they note.

The fuel station owners also complain about gas pressure issues. Citing an example, they say a customer's CNG fuel tank, which can accommodate 12 cubic metres if there is 200 pressure square-inches (PSI) gas, is practically being filled with 10 cubic metres or less due to much lower pressure.

The unhappy and cheated customers blame the station owners, although they were not at fault, the owners say.

It was said at the meeting that the initial tariff was highly subsidised with a view to encouraging people to use CNG instead of conventional fuel. When the government increased the tariff later, it overlooked the filling station owners' perspective.

The adviser has decided to form a committee under the ministry with representatives from the association to scrutinise the tariff and recommend its adjustment, and also see if the stations should be allowed to be set up in different zones with certain limits.

Govt misled

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workers are also tempted that the money they spent (to go to Malaysia) could be realised from the manpower bureau, recruiting agency or brokers concerned," the letter said.

While the global economic meltdown made headlines in newspapers across the world, the labour wing's letter named a number of mega projects in Malaysia, saying that with the set up of these new industries, Malaysia was becoming a very potential labour market for Bangladeshi workers.

"But, to tap these potentials, the conspiracy to repatriate the workers must be stopped. Malaysian employers expect workers to complete their job contracts. Instigating workers to return home without any valid reason is affecting both the workers and the employers," the letter added.

The letter further added that when the employers are financially affected, it is not possible for them to pay the wages of the workers. "As a result, workers are falling into a vicious cycle. The employers might lose confidence in Bangladeshi workers which may result in restrictions on hiring Bangladeshis," it said.

The labour wing asked the government to take actions against NGOs in Bangladesh, which are working to 'bring back workers from Malaysia'.

The expatriates' welfare ministry forwarded the letter to the home ministry asking for a probe into the activities of IMA Research Foundation. SB police submitted its report to the government after a two-month probe.

One of the investigators said they checked all the documents of IMA Research Foundation. The voluntary organisation, set up by workers cheated in Malaysia, basically helps workers cheated by brokers or recruiters and helps them realise compensation.

"We did not find any conspiracy here," the investigator said.

Govt cancels lease

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a marshall law administrator.

Highly placed sources in the government however said Khaleda's activities and remarks following the February 25 mutiny and massacre in the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) headquarters are the main reasons behind the cancellation of the allotment.

The cancellation came a week after Hasina told the parliament that the 6 Shaheed Mainul Road house in Dhaka Cantonment was allotted to Khaleda violating Cantonment Board's rules, and her cabinet would decide about its fate.

"If Khaleda Zia returns the house, the government will construct apartment buildings on that 2.72 acre land, and will allot two apartments to each of the families of army officers killed in the BDR massacre," Hasina announced in the parliament.

The government already instructed Quarter Master General Lt Gen Jahangir Alam Chowdhury to take necessary measures to evacuate the house, highly placed sources said.

"A person can't get two government houses in the capital. So the allotment was an illegal step and we are just removing the anomaly," Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury told The Daily Star after the meeting.

She said rules were flouted in various ways regarding the allotment of the house. "If anybody violates the rules of a lease contract, you can straight up cancel the lease. She violated a number of conditions and there are many reasons for cancelling the allotment," she added.

Responding to a query about BNP's claim that the 1981 cabinet under the Ershad regime approved the allotment, Matia, also an Awami League (AL) presidium member, said they have scrutinised all relevant documents from that time, but did not get any such proof.

Earlier, AL lawmaker and former law minister Abdul Matin Khasru in the parliament drew the premier's attention to the allotment of the house for 99 years to Khaleda under some conditions including restrictions on carrying out political activities from there.

But, Khaleda violated the condition as she has been carrying out political activities from that house, and the head office of Dandy Dyeing is also set up there, Khasru claimed.

The AL lawmaker asked whether the government would cancel the allotment on grounds of violation of the lease agreement.

Meanwhile, following complaints filed by these cheated workers who were forced to return to the country, BMET investigated the issues and found the allegations to be true.

The expatriates' welfare ministry on February 3 wrote to the recruiting agency Ardent International -- through which the complainants had gone to Malaysia -- that the workers had not been recruited as per the contracts and that therefore the complainants were financially affected.

"As compensation, they should be paid Tk 6,00,000 (Tk120,000 each)," the letter signed by the ministry's Deputy Secretary Shafique Anwar, said.

Enamul Haque, one of the complainants, said during their 17-month stay in Malaysia, the workers had been in employment for only two to three months. Other than that, they had to live in a shelter house arranged by the Bangladesh High Commission, in different 'godowns' and even under a bridge.

"We had to accept the money to return home, because the way we were forced to survive in Malaysia was intolerable," said Enamul, who had spent Tk 2.3 lakh to go there.

"We went to Tenaganita only to get help when our work permits expired. Our high commission did not help us renew our work permits."

Sources concerned say recruiting agencies and brokers influenced the labour wing officials to write such letter because workers were returning home and realising compensation from the agencies through BMET.

IMA Research Foundation has become a target because it has come to the aid of helpless workers and also helps them get compensation, where no one else was coming forward to help them, a returnee said.

BNP declares

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standing committee members, vice presidents, joint secretary-generals, party lawmakers and other leaders, at BNP chairperson's Gulshan Office with Khaleda Zia in the chair.

Party office secretary Rizvi Ahmed announced the programme at a press briefing at the office.

"The decision [cancellation of allotment of the house] is nothing but a part of the conspiracy against nationalistic forces, which is a violation of human rights," he said, adding that the cabinet took the decision intentionally.

He said, "BNP and its front organisations will observe the programme to protest the conspiracy emerged to remove a 'helpless woman' from her house which was given after heinous killing of 'incorruptible president' Ziaur Rahman."

Meanwhile, BNP and its other wings brought out instant demonstrations in the city and different divisional and district headquarters yesterday protesting government's decision on cancellation of lease of Khaleda Zia's cantonment residence.

At a protest meeting held in front of party's central office, BNP leaders said the government's decision on the cantonment bungalow is a "political humiliation."

Juba Dal and Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal also brought out processions following the cabinet's decision.

Meanwhile, BNP leaders and activists staged demonstrations in the capital and elsewhere in the country protesting the government decision.

Jamaat-e-Islami, a component of BNP-led four-party alliance, also denounced the decision.

BNP leaders at a rally in front of party's central office at Naya Paltan threatened to go for a tough movement against the government unless it withdraws the decision.

Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) organised the rally where several hundred activists of BNP and its associate organisations chanted slogans against the government.

Mirza Abbas said Zia's name cannot be erased from people's mind by capturing Begum Zia's house.

An elected government cannot take such a conspiratorial decision, he said.

In a statement Jamaat Chief Motiur Rahman Nizami said, "The government decision of cancelling the allotment of the cantonment house of the former prime minister is unfair and motivated."

BNP leaders Goyeshwar Chandra Roy, Fazlul Huq Milan, Mohammad Shajahan, Rizvi Ahmed, Shahiduddin Chowdhury, Salahuddin Ahmed, Habibun Nabi Sohel, Nazimuddin Alam and ABM Mosharraf Hossain, JCD President Azizul Bari Helal and General Secretary Shafiqul Bari Babu, among others, spoke.

Villager

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'Committee' alleged that most arable land of the area subsidised by two to three feet but the BCMCL authority and the government were yet to response to their compensation.

The meeting also threatened for a greater agitation if the government does not fulfil their demand in next 7 days.

The speakers in the meeting criticised the government for not implementing its pledges made by advocate Mustafizur Rahman, state minister for environment and forest, while a team of affected villagers met with him two months ago.

The villagers alleged that they had met with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and State Minister for Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Shamsul Haque Tuku, and discussed over the issue.

They also urged the government to build new houses for the victims immediately.

Police raid DU

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department and outsider Hamadur Rahman Titu.

Of them, Imtiaz Russell was shown arrested in a case filed in connection with a factional clash of BCL in the hall last year. He was produced before a Dhaka court while others were kept in Shahbag police station, said police.

DU Proctor Dr Saiful Islam Khan told The Daily Star that Russell was arrested in a case filed against him while Titu for staying illegally as outsider and others detained for 'suspicious movement' on the rooftop of the hall.

OC of Shahbag police station Rezaul Karim said they started the two and a half hour long raid at about 2:30 am following a request of the university authorities.

Earlier in March, about 15 sharp weapons were recovered from Mohsin Hall of the university.

US, allies to invite Iran for talks on nuclear row

AFP, London

The United States and five other key world powers are to invite Iran for direct talks on its nuclear plans and other issues, they said in a joint statement on yesterday.

EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana will be tasked with extending the invitation to Tehran, said the statement by the US, China, France, Germany, Russia, Britain and the European Union.

The United States' allies welcomed the new direction of US policy towards Iran under President Barack Obama, and its decision to "join in any future meetings with representatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran."

"We strongly urge Iran to take advantage of this opportunity to engage seriously with all of us in a spirit of mutual respect," they said after talks in London.

"To that end, we shall ask (Solana) to extend an invitation to the Iranian Government to meet representatives of the E3+3, so that together we may

7 new MPs

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reporters that he will make constructive criticism of the government and ready to cooperate if the government wants.

Replying to a question on formation of the committee to probe financial anomalies during his tenure, the former speaker said, "You all know the aim of formation of the committee. The committee was formed at the time of by-election."

"You will have to verify whether a committee can be formed against a speaker or not," he added.

Expressing his satisfaction Moudud Ahmed said parliament is his favourite place. The veteran lawmaker said he would speak on the issue of national interest in the parliament.

Rowshan Ershad said she would play her role to make the House effective.

Awami League won three seats including Kurigram 2, Jatiya Party stronghold, BNP got two and the Jatiya Party one in the by-poll held in April 2.

Roushan Ershad, wife of Jatiya Party chief HM Ershad, won his husband's Rangpur-3 constituency.

Nazmul Hasan Papon, son of president Md Zillur Rahman, won his father's Kishoreganj-6 seat.

Seats of Awami League-led grand alliance now stand at 305 out of 345 seats in the House while seats of the main opposition BNP and its allies Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami and Bangladesh Jatiya Party are now 33.

Chief Whip Abdus Shahid, Opposition Chief Whip Zainul Abidin Faroque, among others, were present at the oath-taking ceremony. Parliament Secretary Ashfaq Hamid conducted the ceremony.

5 militants

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belonged to Pakistan's banned Sunni extremist group, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LJ), which is accused of close links with the Taliban and is blamed for killing hundreds of Shiite Muslims since the early 1990s.

Police linked the same group to the killing of US journalist Daniel Pearl, who was kidnapped in Karachi in 2002 and two suicide car bomb attacks on French engineers and the US consulate the same year in the southern port city.

The suspects were arrested before dawn in Sohrab Goth, a down-at-heel neighbourhood on the eastern outskirts of Karachi, police said.

"These terrorists have also fought against our security forces in Pakistan's northwest and attacked trucks carrying supplies for NATO in Afghanistan," the Karachi police chief said.

"They had plans to launch major terror attacks in Karachi," Ahmed said, listing key government buildings, police stations, intelligence establishments and Shiite mosques as on their hit list.

"We have information that more terrorists are in Karachi who want to launch suicide bombings and other terror acts here."

"We are vigilant enough and trying to nip these terror plans in the bud," Ahmed said.

US President Barack Obama has put Pakistan at the centre of a new strategy to defeat Al-Qaeda and its extremist allies, but Pakistani authorities reject criticism they are not doing enough to clamp down on militants.

Much of the violence in Pakistan has been concentrated in the northwest, where Taliban hardliners and Al-Qaeda extremists fled after the 2001 US-led invasion of neighbouring Afghanistan.

Karachi has been rocked by a number of deadly attacks blamed on Islamist militant and political groups since Pakistan joined the US-led "war on terror".

The sprawling city of 12 million is riven with ethnic tensions between Pashtuns from the northwest and other groups.

find a diplomatic solution to this critical issue," they said.

They added: "We reaffirm our unity of purpose and collective determination through direct diplomacy to resolve our shared concerns about Iran's nuclear programme, in line with the package proposals for cooperation with Iran."

The six powers -- the five veto-wielding members of the UN Security Council plus Germany -- issued the statement after a meeting between their political directors, traditionally the third highest ranking foreign ministry official.

Last month the six declared they were ready to engage in direct dialogue with Iran, about its controversial nuclear programme. Iran has repeatedly denied that it intends to build a nuclear bomb.

But six years of probes by the International Atomic Energy Agency -- the United Nations' nuclear watchdog -- have been unable to confirm whether the programme is peaceful.