



Triratna Mro Behar, a temple of the Mro community, and Mro houses, top left, occupied by the grabbers at Lulaing of Lama in Bandarban. The "Mokbul Ukil market", bottom left, built on the land of Mro people at Lulaing. An elephant being used to pull timbers in Lulaing.



PHOTO: SANJOY KUMAR BARUA

Mros at stake

Land grabbers, loggers driving the community out of their homes

SANJOY KUMAR BARUA

A gang of land grabbers and timber traders are gradually pushing the Mro community in Lama upazila of Bandarban to leave their homes.

The Mros, like other indigenous people in Bandarban, Rangamati and Khagrachhari districts, depend on Jhum cultivation on slopes of the hills for their livelihood. They clear pieces of land in the forests and cultivate the crops that can be grown there.

Mokbul Ahmad, known as Mokbul Ukil in the area, has been occupying these pieces of land and employing Rohingyas to grow crops there, local people said.

When indigenous people protest or ask for compensation, Mokbul, who is a lawyer by profession, threatens the Mros with filing false cases against them or having them face dire consequences.

Mro families have been there for decades but Mokbul has recently constructed wooden and bamboo structures and shops, grabbing their land, said Bashi Mro, head of Lulain Chahla Para of Lulain mouza, and Tanglai Mro who had already been dis-

lodged.

Mokbul sheltered Rohingyas in some portion of the illegally occupied land and rented out the structures he had constructed, they said.

He, however, refuted these allegations. He told The Daily Star he had purchased some pieces of land from indigenous people and that he was cultivating some other pieces of land through the approval of the headmen of the mouzas the land is part of.

But Mokbul failed to show any approval copy.

Kanfor Mro, chief of Lulain mouza, said he had given Mokbul permission to stay in the area but Mokbul had been extending his control over a bigger area without his authority.

Some 15 families in Kalbarpara of Padukhal and two families of Mongla Para and three families of Kachuchara area have already left their homes in the last two years and 250 others are living there in fear of being forced out, he added.

Mokbul lives in Chittagong and has links with Khorshed, Morshed and Nawshad — three brothers from Chittagong, who smug-

gle timber from the Lama forests, said Shakwa Mro of Palongmukh Para, Shingwa Mro of Kuichara Para and Mengchong Mro of Dheoa Para.

They let their 26 pet elephants loose to drag felled trees down the hills and through the brooks, said people from the Mros community, also known as Murongs, the second largest indigenous group in the district.

These elephants often go on the rampage and eat Jhum crops or destroy them. Moreover, they pollute the water of streams, on which indigenous people mostly depend for drinking, in the forests while carrying logs across them, local people said.

The trio also occupied forest land and began growing crops there.

The remaining Mro families will also leave the Lulain and Lemu Palang mouzas if the activities of timber smugglers and land grabbers continue, said Gachalia Union Parishad Chairman Bathoyasingh Marma.

The issue has been raised at various forums but there is still no visible action on this yet, he added.

On a spot visit to Lulainmukh and Lulainmukhbazar areas, 45 kilometres from

the Sadar upazila, this correspondent saw elephants moving around freely.

Mohammad Yasuf, an employee of the three brothers, said they were felling trees under a deal with the Lulain mouza chief and that they were not doing anything harmful to the local Mros.

"If they do, locals will be given compensation three times the damage."

Lulain mouza chief Kanfor Mro admitted reaching an agreement with Khorshed but said the deal had already been cancelled.

The brothers said they used to do business seven to eight years back with permission from the mouza heads but were no more involved in this. They even refused to have Yusuf as their employee any more.

Kanfor Mro said he had permitted them to fell some trees in the forests but the three had continued cutting logs in violation of the agreement.

The allegations of land grabbing and felling of trees may be true, said Lama Upazila Nirbahi Officer Helal Uddin, but "it is difficult for us to take action to stop these as the area is far from the locality."

It began with £5 online bet

FROM PAGE 16

boutique insurance broking firm in the City of London.

He drove a £30,000 Porsche while Emma had a black Mercedes. They holidayed in luxury villas in Italy and Spain, and frequently dined out with friends.

Since then, things have unravelled spectacularly. Today, Justyn, 44, lives alone in a rented cottage in Shipbourne, Kent.

Emma, 39, remains 200 miles away in Ashbourne having moved in with her parents last year, taking Matthew, now five, and his younger brother Oscar, three, with her.

The Porsche is long gone, sold — along with most of Justyn's possessions — to service debts of almost £100,000.

The reason? A crippling addiction to online gambling which cost Justyn both his job and his family, and saw him squander £750,000.

In Justyn's case, the descent into addiction began with something as simple as a casual £5 bet on a rugby match, made one Saturday afternoon in September 2009.

"I can't even remember who was playing," he recalls. "I'd spotted an advert for Betfair and thought I'd look at its website. Perhaps I was bored and wanted a thrill."

Betfair is a gambling website which allows users to place bets on sports events and play simulated versions of traditional casino games such as roulette and blackjack.

Justyn put £5 on the winning team, at events, and doubled his money.

It wasn't long before things were spiralling out of control. Within a year, Justyn was betting thousands every weekend, driven by the urge to recreate the thrill of his early wins.

He lost £17,000 on a single tennis match, after backing the Belarusian

tennis player Victoria Azarenka, then World No 1, against an unknown.

He found excuses to spend more and more time online. He starting working from home, telling his company the six-hour round trip to his office in London was too time-consuming.

When he should have been on the phone to clients, he was betting on sport or playing roulette.

"I'd go into my study at 8:00am and tell Emma I was working and didn't want any interruptions until 4:00pm," he says.

She had no reason to suspect anything. When the couple's second son, Oscar, was born in May 2010, she gave up her job managing her family's hotel to look after the boys, cashing in her stake in the hotel for £70,000, which she gave to Justyn for safekeeping.

That summer, Justyn and Emma sold their home, intending to find somewhere bigger. They rented a cottage while they house-hunted.

Unbeknown to Emma, Justyn began to work his way through the £100,000 they had set aside for a deposit.

There was no disguising the family's tightening budget — foreign holidays became a thing of a past, and the Porsche was sold for £18,000.

But Justyn told his wife this was simply because their savings were tied up in investments, and said the missing silver was "being repaired".

Inevitably, his addiction took its toll on more than just his bank balance. He found himself becoming increasingly neglectful of his sons.

Matthew suffers from hemiplegia, a condition limiting his movement on the right-hand side, as well as autism and epilepsy. He needs to be closely monitored — yet, in the grip of his obsession, Justyn left him alone in the car for more

than two hours.

Then, last summer, Justyn, who had begun using his company credit card to fund his gambling, was confronted by the chief executive and resigned.

Not long after, Emma stumbled upon the truth after seeing one of Justyn's bank statements in his office.

"I was in the garden with the boys — she just came out and said: 'I know everything.'"

They spent the day phoning up debt counsellors, totting up Justyn's losses, and working out how to cope with their budgetary black hole with the help of one of Emma's friends, who works in financial services.

It was too little too late. Emma left soon afterwards, taking the boys and moving in with her parents. She has since filed for divorce.

Unemployed, virtually penniless, and parted from his beloved family, Justyn's life was in tatters. Yet still he gambled, even selling Emma's abandoned £6,500 diamond engagement ring for just £2,000.

When it came, intervention assumed an unlikely form. Two months after Emma had left, Justyn's 70-year-old mother, Jennifer, arrived at his front door.

Warned by Emma that Justyn was facing eviction, she had driven from her home in Maidstone, Kent, to give him an ultimatum.

She said: "You can either come home, or you can stay here alone and end up homeless."

So, 26 years after leaving home to join the Army, Justyn moved back in with his mum. He had nothing but a black bin liner of clothes and debts of £70,000 to his name.

Since then, he has been attending Gamblers Anonymous meetings, and is beginning to recover. He has installed software on his computer to block access to gambling websites, and says he isn't tempted to gamble.

Qaeda up to breast bomb

FROM PAGE 16

authorities said

Security checks have been beefed up at UK's Heathrow airport after intelligence reports surfaced that al-Qaeda is plotting attacks on airlines flying out of London. Increased surveillance led to long queues at Heathrow on Friday.

The warning comes just days after the UK shut down some of its foreign missions following a warning from Interpol that a series of jailbreaks across nine countries in the past month, including in Iraq, Libya and Pakistan, could lead to new terror recruits.

With suspected al-Qaeda involvement in several of the breakouts which led to the escape of hundreds of terrorists and other criminals, the Interpol General Secretariat headquarters' global security alert "requests the organisation's 190 member countries' assistance in order to determine whether any of these recent events are coordinated or linked".

Britain's foreign office says there is a very high kidnap threat to its citizens from armed tribes, criminals and terrorists.

Britain's highest security body - the Intelligence and

Security Committee (ISC) of Parliament recently declared that the threat level to UK from international terrorism is "substantial" indicating that an attack is a strong possibility.

In a report tabled at parliament, ISC declared that the "threat to British interests from espionage remains high" and the UK is "a high-priority target for a number of foreign intelligence services". It said the commercial sector as well as government, technology, defence and security interests are at risk from both "traditional" espionage and hostile activity conducted in cyberspace.

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Britain's highest security body - the Intelligence and

Cairo mosque cleared

FROM PAGE 1

people have been killed since June 26, when Morsi supporters began protesting before mass demonstrations against the Islamist leader that prompted the military to end his single year of turbulent rule on July 3.

International criticism of the bloodshed mounted, with Germany and Qatar jointly condemning "the ongoing and brutal violence".

The standoff at Al-Fath mosque in central Ramses Square began on Friday, with security forces surrounding the building where Islamists were sheltering and trying to convince them to leave.

The Islamists had lined up the bodies of dozens of protesters who had been killed on Friday inside the mosque-turned-morgue.

By yesterday afternoon, the situation turned violent, with an AFP reporter on the scene saying gunmen inside the mosque were trading fire with police outside.

Police eventually dragged people from inside the mosque, firing in the air to hold back residents of the area who tried to attack the Islamists with sticks and iron bars.

Both outside the mosque and in several other parts of Cairo, residents targeted those

suspected of being Islamists, often for no more than wearing a beard or a veil.

On Friday, Morsi supporters had announced "Friday of anger" demonstrations, which quickly turned violent, with gunshots ringing out in Cairo.

The government said those clashes killed least 173 people across the country, including 95 in the capital and 25 in Alexandria.

Among those killed on Friday was a son of Mohamed Badie, chief of Morsi's Muslim Brotherhood movement.

The Anti-Coup Alliance of Morsi supporters announced it would end the protests shortly after a night-time curfew came into effect, but pledged daily demonstrations going forward.

It was not clear whether that call had been heeded, with no reports of demonstrations in Cairo yesterday.

The interior ministry said it had arrested 1,004 Brotherhood "elements", and yesterday security sources said the brother of al-Qaeda chief Ayman al-Zawahiri had been detained.

Egypt's interim army-backed government has defended its actions, with presidential adviser Mustafa Hegazy saying the country's forces had acted with "a huge

Egypt for legal ban

FROM PAGE 1

With anger rising on all sides, and no sign of a compromise in sight, Prime Minister Hazem el-Beblawi proposed the legal dissolution of the Brotherhood - a move that would force the group underground and could lead to a broad crackdown.

"It is being studied currently," said government spokesman Sherif Shawky.

The Brotherhood was officially dissolved by Egypt's military rulers in 1954, but registered itself as a non-governmental organisation in March in a response to a court case brought by opponents of the group who were contesting its legality.

Founded in 1928, the movement also has a legally registered political arm, the Freedom and Justice Party, which was set up in 2011 after the uprising that led to the downfall of veteran autocrat Hosni Mubarak.

"Reconciliation is there for those who hands are not sullied with blood," Shawky added.

The Brotherhood won all five elections that followed the toppling of Mubarak, and Morsi governed the country for a year until he was undermined by mammoth rallies called by critics who denounced his rule as incompetent and partisan.

Army chief Abdel Fattah al-Sisi says he removed

Morsi from office on July 3 to protect the country from possible civil war.

The interior ministry said that 1,004 Muslim Brotherhood "elements" had been arrested in the last 24 hours, accusing members of Morsi's movement of committing acts of terrorism.

The ministry also said that since Wednesday, 57 policemen were killed and 563 wounded in the violence.

More than 600 people died on Wednesday when police cleared out two Brotherhood sit-ins in Cairo. Despite the growing bloodshed, the Islamist group has urged its supporters to take to the streets everyday for the coming week.

Many Western allies have denounced the killings, including the United States, but Saudi Arabia threw its weight behind the army-backed government on Friday, accusing its old foe the Muslim Brotherhood of trying to destabilise Egypt.

Worryingly for the army, violence was reported across Egypt on Friday, suggesting it will struggle to impose control on the vast, largely desert state.

The government said 12 churches had been attacked and burned on Friday, blaming the Islamists for the destruction.

Onion relief

FROM PAGE 16

Furthermore, it will instruct the onion traders, in the meeting scheduled for today, to import immediately, said a high official of the ministry.

"The onion crisis will be over soon," Ahmed added.

Although the TCB quoted yesterday's market price of

onion to be Tk 70-72 per kg. The Daily Star found the vegetable to be selling at Tk 80 a kg, which is a record high. Only a week ago, it sold between Tk 44 and Tk 52 per kg.

The annual demand for onion in Bangladesh is nearly 20 lakh tonnes according to the commerce secretary.

Youth dies

FROM PAGE 16

Physician Nadim Hossain said severely beaten Shamim bled excessively and blood had clotted in some parts of his body.

Both the accused — Faisal and Johnny, a worker of Savar BCL unit — have been on the run, said Aminur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Savar Model Police Station.

The victim's family, however, complained that the two were not arrested as they had political affiliation.

Asked if the Awami



Shamim

League would ask the BCL to take any organisational action against Faisal, Savar AL general secretary Ali Haider said Faisal might be expelled from the BCL.

Daughter surrenders

FROM PAGE 1

had turned herself in to Paltan police yesterday afternoon.

"The gold ornaments missing from the house since the murder had been recovered from the two bags Oishee took with her when she left her home Thursday morning," said Monirul.

The decomposing bodies of Oishee's parents, Mahfuzur Rahman, 48, and his wife Swapna Rahman, 40, were recovered along with a blood-stained knife and a kitchen knife from Oishee's bathroom on Friday afternoon.

Mahfuzur's colleague said that he was unreachable since Wednesday night, after he went home from work.

They might have been killed on Wednesday night and recovered nearly 40 hours later, Monirul had told journalists before Oishee surrendered.

"The couple had been given sedatives with tea or coffee before they were killed," he told the press yesterday.

After her surrender yesterday, Oishee, who sat for her O levels around a month ago, was taken to Detective Branch's office on Mintoo Road around 3:30pm for interrogation.

According to the security guard of the Chamelibagh flat building, Oishee had gone out with her eight-year-old brother Ohidur Rahman

and house help Sumi on Thursday morning.

Later, she contacted her relatives and told them that her parents went to their village home in Rajshahi and she was staying with her friend Trisha in Kakrail.

On Friday, she sent her brother Ohidur home on a rickshaw. "He is with his relatives under police protection. Ohidur is traumatised," said Monirul Islam.

He said, "We do not want to disclose the motive of the murder for the sake of investigation." He, however, hoped to uncover the murder mystery by today.

He also said several people including the caretaker and security guard of the building and some relatives were picked up for quizzing.

Meanwhile, Prof Sohel Mahmud, assistant professor of the forensic department of Dhaka Medical College Hospital told reporters, "According to primary investigation, two or three persons might have been present at the spot during the killing."

"Mahfuzur's body bore two marks of stab injuries — one in the throat and the other in the belly, while Swapna's had 11 marks," he added.

Mahfuzur's brother Moshir Rahman yesterday filed a murder case against several unidentified people with Paltan Police Station.