



A homeless sex worker with her four-year-old son on the yard of a brothel, now closed down, in Madaripur. She is one of over 400 workers who have been evicted from the ages-old brothel recently.

PHOTO: ZYMA ISLAM

Greed, not piety

Land-grabbing behind brothel eviction in Madaripur

ZYMA ISLAM And SUBIR DAS

The eviction of around 400 sex workers from a Madaripur brothel by an Islamist organisation unravels a mystery of grabbing the land on the pretext of safeguarding the town from sins.

Hundreds of activists of Islamist organisation "Islahe Qoum Parishad" along with the influential quarters evicted the sex workers from the brothel on August 27 to purge the town of sins.

"The motive behind the eviction is to grab the nine-bigha land worth around Tk 70 crore," said Mamata Rani, one of the seven madams (leaders) who used to run the brothel, and supervise the sex workers inside.

The major portion of that land belongs to the seven madams, who claimed that they had inherited the 160-year-old place.

Situated in the middle of the town's business hub, the brothel is encompassed by the oldest market in the area.

Some of the leading members of the Islamist organisation own shops right across the brothel.

They had been hatching a conspiracy to grab the land for long, said the madams, who are currently staying inside the brothel.

They added that the vested quarters had been successful this time.

Jamal, one of the members of the organisation, himself owns a shop just a few steps away from the site of the brothel.

A sex worker, who is hiding in the town, identified Jamal as one of the attackers.

She lamented that the very people who had sought her company before snatched her only means in their own narrow interests.

Jamal, however, brushed aside the allegations brought against him while talking to The Daily Star correspondents.

Islahe Qoum, which means "purification of soul", was formed one and a half years back to evict the sex workers, said Monir Uddin, an activist of the organisation.

Sharif Mujibul Haque, a self-proclaimed pir (spiritual leader) at Shah Madar mazar, has

been leading the organisation.

Interestingly, the pir, who wants to cleanse the soil of Madaripur from sins, has a previous record of land grabbing.

He had built his own house on a piece of land grabbed from a Pal family before the Liberation War in 1971, said a close relative of the pir on condition of anonymity.

Locals, therefore, call him "Pal Hujur" to refer to his previous misdeeds.

Besides, allegations run rife that different political forces also played a significant role behind this eviction.

Shipping Minister Mohammad Shahjahan Khan, at a programme at Madaripur circuit house on August 16, asked the organisations working for the rights of the sex workers to stop their activities, according to a rights activist of PIACT Bangladesh.

Contacted, the minister justified his stance, and said different projects run by the human rights groups would further limit the sex workers' world to the brothel instead of rehabilitating them.

"The sex workers are gone. Allah has saved us all," Shahjahan added.

The madams said they could not become hopeful about getting any help from the police. They claimed that the law enforcers had delayed reaching the spot on the day of eviction.

"It takes just 10 minutes to come here from the police station ... they did not arrive until the damage was done," said a madam.

Khondoker Faridul Islam, superintendent of police of Madaripur, however, claimed that law enforcers had been deployed as soon as they came to know about the incident.

Earlier, Islahe Qoum gave an ultimatum to the brothel insiders to vacate the land by August 31.

The High Court issued an order on July 22 asking the law enforcers to let the sex workers continue their occupation for a year.

Meanwhile, the sex workers came under attack four days before the ultimatum expired.

(Madaripur correspondent contributed to this report.)

Nasheed leads

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Television Maldives tweeted that it could "predict a run-off round of elections based on current election results".

Mohamed Aslam, a senior member of Nasheed's Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) and a former minister of housing and environment, said his party was "preparing for a second round".

"We didn't get what we wanted from Male," he said. The capital is one of Nasheed's strongholds.

Nasheed was running against three rivals, including Waheed, who succeeded him as president.

Yameen is a half-brother of Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, who ruled for 30 years and was considered a dictator by opponents and

rights groups. "I hope to get through in the first round itself," Yameen told reporters before he cast his vote.

Also on the ballot was Gasim Ibrahim, a resort tycoon, media business owner and an ex-finance minister under Gayoom. Gasim and Wahid had 24 and 5 percent respectively of votes counted.

Officials at the Election Commission said turnout could be around 80 percent, compared with 85 percent in the 2008 vote.

"I've been waiting 19 months for this day. So I go here as early as I could. It's my way of standing up, against the coup," said voter Ismail Shiyaz, 39, a supporter of Nasheed.

Others, like Rooya Hussain, were less certain.

Hajj flights

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second flight which was supposed to carry another 312 passengers. This caused a backlog of passengers at the Shahjalal International Airport throughout the day.

At the end of the day, 701 passengers had to return to the Hajj Camp.

After completing immigration formalities, passengers of the first flight had been waiting to fly since 10:00am. After two and a half hours, it was announced that the Boeing-747 was not available.

Many passengers and their relatives expressed discontent with Biman's flight operations. Several elderly passengers fell ill as there was not enough food and seating arrangement inside the immigration area.

Apologising for the mismanagement, a Biman press release said according to the contract, Kabo Air was supposed to get the clearance from the Saudi authorities before delivering the aircraft to Biman.

The Boeing-747 is scheduled to operate to Jeddah from today after getting the clearance from the GACA, added the release.

Kabo did not get the clearance as it failed to obtain "no objection" and insurance certificates.

Hitler's deputy

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investigations, according to a newly-released police report.

Written two years after Hess's death in 1987, the classified document outlines a highly-sensitive inquiry into the claims of a British surgeon who had once treated Adolf Hitler's deputy that, rather than taking his own life, the elderly Nazi was killed on British orders to preserve wartime secrets.

Released under the Freedom of Information Act, the partially-redacted report by Detective Chief Superintendent Howard Jones revealed that the surgeon - Hugh Thomas - had supplied him with the names of two suspects provided by a "government employee" responsible for training secret agents.

Withheld for nearly 25 years, the report has been released by the Yard's counter-terrorism command following consultation with "other Government and foreign government departments".

The death of Hess in Berlin at the age of 93 after he apparently hung himself with a wire in a summer house in the grounds of Spandau has long been controversial with claims that he was too infirm to commit suicide and a farewell note to his family had in fact been written 20 years earlier.

The Yard was called in in 1989 after Thomas, an eminent former military surgeon previously based in Spandau, claimed in a book that "Hess" was in fact an impostor sent by the Nazis to Britain in 1941 and his murder was carried out by two British assassins disguised as American servicemen.

In his subsequent 11-page report, Mr Jones said the surgeon had "confidentially imparted" the names of two alleged suspects passed to him by an informant who was a

former member of the SAS and had since taken on a role "training people for undercover or spying operations".

Prior to his death, speculation had been growing that Hess might be released because a long-standing veto by the Soviet Union, which for decades had insisted on a severe regime for Hess, including forcing him to wash his hands in toilet bowl, might be reversed by Mikhail Gorbachev.

Jones wrote: "[Mr Thomas] had received information that two assassins had been ordered on behalf of the British Government to kill Hess in order that he should not be released and free to expose secrets concerning the plot to overthrow the Churchill government."

The officer found there was not "much substance" to Mr Thomas's claims of murder but suggested that efforts should be made to trace and interview the alleged killers along with other witnesses to ensure the matter could be "comprehensively adjudged" to have been fully investigated.

It is not known if the two suspects were tracked down after the report was submitted to the Crown Prosecution Service in May 1989.

But within six months the investigation was declared closed after the then Director of Public Prosecutions, Sir Allan Green QC, advised that further inquiries were not necessary.

In November 1989, Sir Nicholas Lyell, the solicitor general, told Parliament: "The inquiries carried out by Detective Chief Superintendent Jones have produced no cogent evidence to suggest that Rudolf Hess was murdered; nor, on the view of the Director of Public Prosecutions, is there any basis for further investi-

gation."

The unannounced arrival of Hess in Britain was one of the strangest incidents of the Second World War and remains the subject of extensive debate about its motivation, including whether it was an ill-judged attempt to unseat Winston Churchill by enlisting aristocrats with Nazi sympathies.

After flying solo to Scotland in 1941, Hitler's deputy fuhrer parachuted to the ground and, after being taken into custody at pitchfork-point by an astonished ploughman, declared his intention to negotiate a peace with Britain to form an alliance against Stalin's Soviet Union.

Hess was sentenced to life imprisonment as a war criminal at the Nuremberg Trials and incarcerated in Spandau along with other prominent Nazis including Albert Speer. From 1966 onwards, Hitler's deputy - whose Allied guards were required to only address him as Prisoner Seven - was the sole inmate in the 600-cell prison.

Further doubt was claimed to have been cast last year on the circumstances of Hess's suicide when photographs emerged of the summer house where he died, showing the short distance - some 5ft - between the cord from which he was found hanging and the floor.

His son, Wolf, had previously insisted that the height was insufficient for his father, crippled by arthritis, to hang himself and added to post mortem examination evidence suggesting a full noose had been placed around his neck.

In his report, Jones dismissed such concerns, saying expert advice showed Hess's injuries were consistent with an "unusual hanging situation".

Food production to double

PRESENT CROPPING INTENSITY

Total Cropped Area	Net Cropped Area	Single Cropped Area	Double Cropped Area	Triple Cropped Area	Quadruple Cropped Area
14.94	7.84	2.2	4.1	1.4	0.0093
(In million hectares)					

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Cropping intensity means the number of crops grown in a piece of land in a year. If one crop is grown in a year, cropping intensity is 100 percent.

Theoretically, if all cultivable lands come under quadruple cropping, the country's total cropped area would reach an astounding 31.56 million hectares. Even if all lands come under triple cropping, the total cropped area would be as high as 23.25 million hectares, said officials.

Bangladesh's cropping intensity has already reached 191 percent, making the country one of the most intensified cropping zone in the world. Now, introduction of the four-crop rotation, as planned by the government, would further increase the country's cropping intensity (up to 400 percent) and thereby increase the total farm output.

According to a 2009 Planning Commission report, Bangladesh loses over 80 thousand hectares of agricultural land each year, or in other words nearly one percent a year is being turned into non-agricultural land.

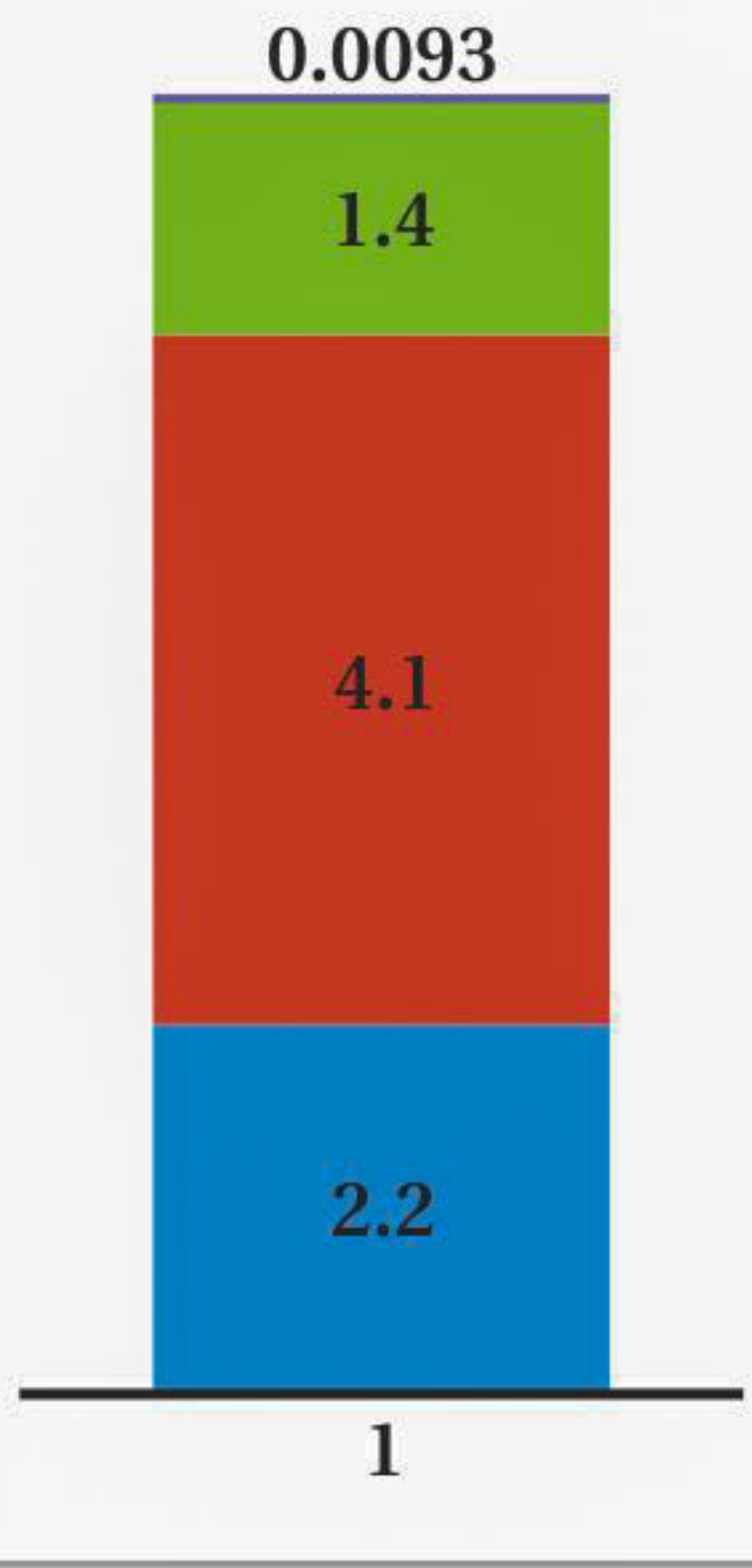
It is because of the farmland depletion that Bangladesh slips back, even after achieving rice self-sufficiency in 1999-2000, due to an annual population growth of 2.5 million. Thanks to releases of some high-yielding varieties in recent years and pragmatic policy support, this year the country again reached a self-sufficiency point as far as rice, the staple, is concerned.

Against this backdrop, the BARI is taking the four-crop model to farmers' plots on a limited scale from the present Aman season on successful completion of a two-year field trials in as many as 14 areas across the country, its Director General Dr Md Rafiqul Islam Mondal told The Daily Star.

He said that over the last two years, they had experimented with various combinations of crops in different

CROPPING INTENSITY

- Single cropped area
- Double cropped area
- Triple cropped area
- Quadruple cropped area



areas of the country so that the four-crop model is suited to diverse agro-ecological environments.

"In some regions, we'll promote 'Aman-mustard-Boro-Aus' pattern while in some other regions we'll suggest the combination of 'Aman-potato-Boro-Aus', and in other areas farmers can go for 'Aman-mustard-mung bean-Aus'. The choices of crops can vary from place to place but the

main target remains the same -- going for higher cropping intensity," explained Rafiqul, who heads the largest of all agro-research institutes in the country.

"Cultivable land is decreasing by one percent a year. There are two options to increase farm output from limited land resources -- one is increasing the yield of crops and the other is increased cropping intensity," he said.

The recent development of short-duration Aman and late-sowing Boro varieties, said Rafiqul, has come as a boon since this would further facilitate applying the four-crop pattern by allowing farmers to go for mass scale cultivation of pulses, mustard, potato and seasonal vegetables in between rice crops.

Talking to this correspondent recently, Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury said the government would promote the four-crop model since it would help grow more crops from less available farmland in the future.

"Even if we can succeed in helping farmers grow three crops a year in most farmlands (achieving 300 percent cropping intensity), the total farm output will significantly increase," she hoped.

The minister said since cultivation of irrigated-rice Boro gets taxing for an over-exploited groundwater reserve, "We want to discourage Boro in the uplands and rather want to give the farmers the option of growing two cereals (Aus, Aman), oilseeds and vegetables. In the South, farmers can go for sesame and burley too."

Apart from increasing farm production, BARI scientists said, crop rotation also mitigates the build-up of pathogens and pests that often occurs when one species is continuously cropped, and can also improve soil structure and fertility by alternating deep-rooted and shallow-rooted plants.

Travesty

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authority, will be followed. Justice will be delivered to those who are found guilty, noted the official.

On Friday, a special court in the Indian state of West Bengal ruled that lone accused Amiya Ghosh, a constable of Indian Border Security Force (BSF), was found not guilty of shooting Bangladeshi girl Felani Khatun.

The 15-year old girl was shot dead as her clothes got stuck in the barbed-wire fence at Anantapur border point in Phulbari upazila of Kurigram while she was crossing into Bangladesh from India on January 7, 2011.

Terminating the judgment "unexpected", NHRC chief Mizanur Rahman, also a law professor at Dhaka University, said the judgement has gone against justice and it was nothing but a "travesty."

"It [judgement] has created a wound in our heart... It has not only cheated Felani's soul or her family, but also the whole nation," he told newsmen after attending a discussion at the Liberation War Museum in the capital.

The foreign ministry should place the matter before the Indian government, he added. "I think it is necessary to inform India that we were shocked and didn't get justice."

The NHRC would request the Indian national human rights commission so that it took part in the process of challenging the verdict in an upper court, mentioned Mizanur.

Muhiuddin Khan Alamgir, while talking to journalists after laying the foundation stone of Nageshwari Police Station building in Nageshwari upazila, Kurigram, said the killing of Felani is a tragic incident, which is shameful for both Bangladesh and India.

The government will give its formal reaction to the verdict after receiving the relevant case documents, he added.

Talking to newsmen after attending a workshop at a city hotel, Law Minister Shafique Ahmed said the two neighbours must take effective steps to check border killings in the interest of bilateral relations, reports BSS.

BNP acting secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, while addressing a programme at the city's Institute of Engineers, Bangladesh, said the government was showing its subservient attitude towards India by not registering a strong protest with it against the verdict.

Gowher says sorry in hills

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Conference-2013" at the town hall auditorium in Khagrachhari yesterday.

It is taking more time to implement the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) accord in full, as the BNP-led government and the last caretaker government had halted the implementation process for seven years, said Rizvi.

He said the accord would be implemented within the tenure of the present Awami League-led government, as it

is committed to the accord.

The amendment to the CHT Land Dispute Resolution Commission Act would be passed in parliament soon, said Rizvi.

Speakers at the conference urged the government to increase the power of the traditional institutions in the CHT region.

Secretary of the CHT Affairs Ministry Naba Bikram Kishore Tripura inaugurated the conference.

Local lawmaker Jatindralal

Tripura, acting chairman of Khagrachhari Hill District Council Kujendra Lal Tripura, King of the Mong Circle Raja Saching Prue Chowdhury, Deputy Chief of CHT Development Facility of UNDP Prasenjit Chakma, and Adviser to the Headman Association Kangary Chowdhury, among others, spoke there.

A total of 121 headmen and 1,005 karbaris from different areas of the Mong circle attended the conference.

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This is the first such mission from the EU to Bangladesh which will meet with a wide range of people from the government, opposition,

former advisers of caretaker governments, civil society, media and think tank organisations to get first hand information about the preparations for the next general election, said a press release of the EU

mission in Dhaka.

Balthasar Benz of the European External Action Service is leading the mission.

"The purpose of the mission is to assess the feasibility, usefulness and advisability of and to help prepare for, a potential Election Observation Mission to Bangladesh, for an appointed period before, during and after the foreseen general election,"

mentioned the release.

Diplomatic sources said this is a very important mission as the EU will decide about its next course of action on the basis of the report of this mission.

Earlier, United Nations Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs Oscar Fernandez-Taranco had visited Bangladesh in December last year and also May this

year to foster dialogue and conducive conditions for the parliamentary election to be held any day between October 25 this year and January 24 next year.

Foreign ministry sources said this visit by the EU delegation was just the beginning of many more to follow from the United Nations, the Commonwealth and important friendly countries.