

'Love' for land knows no bounds

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Khalique (Bagerhat-3) made a lot of money from fisheries, according to their 2013 wealth statements.

MAHBUBUR
Former state minister for water resource Mahbubur Rahman Talukder had only 20 acres of agricultural land prior to his becoming a lawmaker in 2008. But in five years, he has come to own 2,865 acres of agricultural land, an astounding 143 times rise.

His land ownership beats even the biggest housing projects, which had resorted to illegal means to grab land or had filled up rivers and water bodies. The size of his land even dwarfs the country's largest 2,500-acre Korean EPZ.

In the affidavit, he claimed that his 2,865 acres of agricultural land was worth only Tk 70.14 lakh while independent sources with their most conservative estimates put the value around Tk 1,000 crore.

HASAN
Back in 2008, Forest and Environment Minister Hasan Mahmud had a total of 14.4 decimals of land in different places, including an eight-decimal plot of land in Purbachal in Dhaka.

In his wealth statement, he mentioned that he inherited 25 percent of 3.2 decimal of land (he did not mention where but it was likely to be in Chittagong). For the rest of the land, he did not specify anything beyond saying that that he had paid Tk 8.5 lakh as advance to buy a house.

But in the last five years, the minister got as "gifts or donations" a staggering 310 acres (31,032 decimal) of agricultural land and a building on 8.096 decimal of land. His 2013 wealth statement however did not mention the locations of the very unusual gifts he received.

But that was not all.
Hasan also owns 9.6 decimal of land in Chittagong's most expensive area, Khulshi, approximately 4.8 decimal at Balia, which Hasan inherited, and another 0.0334 decimal in Khulshi worth Tk 14.60 lakh, and a duplex house worth Tk 47.83 lakh.

Hasan's wife Nuran Fatema now owns a 4.8-decimal plot of land in Gazipur, where land prices are very high, 288 decimal of land in Rangunia, Chittagong, and two office spaces of, 6,000 square feet on Sonargoan Road, Dhaka.

ASLAM
Aslamul Haq Aslam had just over six acres of land five years ago. Now he owns 145 acres, according to his wealth statement. Aslam did not mention that he owns a couple of power plants, which are on his own land.

Independent sources said he owned much more land than he had mentioned in his wealth statement.

Aslam told The Daily Star that he bought land outside the capital after selling off his prized pieces of land in Dhaka.

BAHADUR
Back in 2008, Bir Bahadur had 45 acres of arable land, which have now become 99 acres. Apart from those, he also got a 0.245-acre (24.5 decimal) plot in the last five years.

Independent sources said Bahadur, also organising secretary of AL, owns vast tracts of land in Bandarban Sadar upazila, Rajbila, Kuhlalong and Tonkaboti unions and in Lama and Naikhangchhari upazilas.

HANIF
Hanif, joint general secretary of the Awami League, owns 70 acres of land bought in the last five years with about Tk 4.95 crore. At least 67 acres are located within 200 meters of the country's lone mangrove forest, the Sundarbans, in Mongla and three acres in Gazipur.

Hanif's wealth statement showed he earns Tk 3.27 crore a year from fish farms. Contacted, he said he has several fish farms in Khulna and Patuakhali from where he earns most of his annual income.

NAZRUL
AL lawmaker Nazrul Islam Babu had only 0.085 acres (8.5 decimal) of land back in 2008. Now he owns 7.08 acres (708 decimal) of land and a 3,238-square foot flat in the capital.

He claimed that the prices of the land and the flat were just over Tk 3.82 crore. He did not mention the locations of his pieces of land.

Sources claimed that Babu controls the sale and purchase of most pieces of land in his constituency (Araihazar-Rupganj) where land is rather costly.

MANNAN
Former state minister for housing and public works Mannan Khan and his wife had non-agricultural land worth Tk 2.45 lakh in 2008. Now they have land worth around Tk 1.96

crore.
Mannan, who had no flats, houses or buildings in 2008, now owns two flats and a building worth Tk 3.64 crore.

Mannan in his statement said he earned Tk 1.45 crore and his wife Tk 1.73 crore from fish farms and remittances. The couple had no fish farms before the 2008 election but this time they have shown that they own 10 fish farms inherited from their parents.

The AL lawmaker war recently ousted from the post of AL's office secretary. He was known as a pro-leftist politician in the party for his involvement in left-wing student politics.

NANAK
Five years ago, former state minister for LGRD and Cooperatives Jahangir Kabir Nanak had only 0.10 acre (10 decimal) of agriculture land. But now he and his wife own 3.56 acres of land (1.94 acres non-agriculture and 1.62 acres arable land).

In addition, he has shown in his wealth statement that he owns a building in Dhaka worth Tk 1.30 crore. In 2008, Nanak's wife had only a 1,874 square foot flat but no building.

DEDICATED TO FISH FARMING

TAPOSH
Among the AL lawmakers, Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh and his wife own two of the costliest fish farms, worth Tk 13.94 crore. The couple had no fish farms or flats in 2008, according to his statements.

Taposh also owns a 10-katha plot of land worth about Tk 2.47 crore and a flat worth around Tk 1.04 crore. His wife owns two plots

in Dhanmondi worth Tk 1.66 crore.

Since 2008, Taposh has also had 50 percent ownership of two bigas and 10.50 kathas of agricultural land, and a commercial building in Motijheel, and 75 percent ownership of a 10 katha non-agriculture land.

NUR-E-ALAM
Nur-e-Alam Chowdhury and his wife earn Tk 12.77 crore from fisheries and stock business yearly, according to his wealth statement.

He mentioned in the statement that they had investments worth Tk 13.19 crore in shrimp farms and stock business. They had no income from shrimps or stocks in 2008.

ILIAS
Ilias Mollah showed in his wealth statement that he earned Tk 5 crore from fisheries annually. According to his 2008 wealth statement he used to earn Tk 30 lakh annually. Mollah is the chairman of Majjal Fisheries based in Mirpur Beribandh.

THE CANDIDATES
Three Awami League-nominated candidates, ABM Fazle Karim Chowdhury (Chittagong-6), Didarul Alam (Chittagong-4) and Talukder Abdul Khaleque (Bagerhat-3) earn in total Tk 14 crore from fisheries annually.

In his wealth statement, Fazle Karim said he earned Tk 2.50 crore from fisheries in 2013. He had no income from the sector in 2008.

Didarul showed that he earned Tk 6.99 crore from fisheries. He has several ponds and fishing trawlers.

Talukder Abdul Khaleque, former Khulna City Corporation mayor, mentioned that he

Sudden ban kicks up an uproar

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in hurling petrol and homemade bombs.
A special notice, signed by BRTA Director (enforcement) Motiar Rahman, said the ban was imposed under section 88 of the Motorcycle Act, 1983, and it would remain effective until further notice.

When asked about the notice over the phone Tuesday evening, the BRTA director said, "The notice has already been published and there is nothing to say now...."

Asked why the ban against over three lakh bikers was in place when the people involved in the crimes concerned were so few, Communication Minister Obaidul Quader on Tuesday said he would yesterday ask the authorities not to enforce the ban.

Sources in the BRTA yesterday evening told The Daily Star that they had not received any instructions from the high-ups about withdrawing or relaxing the ban.

Mir Rezaul Alam, joint commissioner (Traffic) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, told

The Daily Star that the BRTA, an independent body, issued the order and they were only responsible for enforcing the ban.

However, policemen on the streets were seemingly not enforcing the ban.

The ban continues to trouble the law-abiding citizens but many bikers, even policemen, were ignoring it altogether or were oblivious to it.

At Farmgate around 7:00pm yesterday, two law enforcers were seen on a motorbike violating the ban. When approached by The Daily Star reporter, they went away in a hurry only saying that they were from the Special Branch of Police.

During the 18-party alliance's "March for Democracy" programme in December and yesterday, groups of motorcyclists from the ruling party were seen on city streets with one and sometimes two pillion passengers. On-duty policemen did not seem to care that they were violating the ban.

Jubo Dal leader shot dead

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There were no reports of any casualty.
Meanwhile, two traders and a truck driver suffered burns as blockaders threw petrol bombs at a truck at Kaliakoir in Gazipur around 11:00pm, said police.

The injured were taken to the burn unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital, said Omar Faruq, officer-in-charge of Kaliakoir Police Station.

In the capital, a woman was wounded as blockaders blasted crude bombs at Chankharpool last night.

Rehana Akhter Kajol, a housewife, was hit in the face by splinters of crude bombs while she was going to Kamrangirchar by a rickshaw around 9:15pm.

She was taken to the DMCH.
Opposition activists exploded crude bombs near the Matsya Bhaban, and in Paltan, Shahbagh and several other areas in the city last night.

In Chittagong, masked criminals attacked a campaign vehicle of a Workers Party candidate in the next parliamentary election while Jamaat-Shibir men threw a crude bomb at a microbus of private TV channel Somoy.

The start of the non-stop blockade coincided with the new year's day that ended on a rather sombre note amid tension arising from the present political situation.

Many businesses, offices and roadside shops were open and a large number of vehicles, including minibuses, auto-rickshaws and private cars, plied the streets in the capital.

Most long-distance buses didn't leave from or for Dhaka, forcing many to look for alternative means of transport.

Train and launch operations, however, were almost normal all over the country.

In Chandpur, blockaders attacked a BGB motorcade carrying a magistrate, as it reached Mahamaya in Sadar upazila around 5:15pm, according to police and witnesses.

In retaliation, Border Guard Bangladesh personnel opened fire on the blockaders, leaving

Jubo Dal activist Faruk Patwary, 35, and several others injured.

Faruk was whisked off to Chandpur Sadar Hospital where doctors declared him dead.

The BGB personnel opened fire on the attackers in self-defence, Magistrate Aminur Rahman, who was with the BGB team, told The Daily Star.

Meanwhile, masked criminals attacked a campaign vehicle of Abu Hanif, a Workers Party candidate from Chittagong-9 constituency, around 6:45pm in the port city.

Around 15 masked men vandalised the mini-truck being used for election campaign in front of Samador Community Centre near Kajir Dewri. They also exploded four to five crude bombs to create panic in the area.

"They vandalised my campaign truck and beat up my activists, leaving three of them injured," said Hanif.

Mirza Sayem Mahmud, assistant commissioner of Chittagong Metropolitan Police, Kotwali Zone, said they detained three youths in connection with the incident.

Shibir activists might have been behind the attack, said the AC.

In a separate incident, the driver of a microbus of TV channel Somoy was injured as Jamaat-Shibir men hurled a crude bomb at the vehicle in Chittagong city.

Jamaat-Shibir activists attacked the microbus parked in front of the TV channel's office in Asker Dighir Par area around 6:00pm, said Kamal Dey, senior reporter of the TV station.

Driver Abdul Hakim suffered splinter injuries and was immediately taken to Chittagong Medical College Hospital.

In Jhenidah, a fire broke out at an election office of Prof Nabi Newaj, an Awami League candidate in the next parliamentary polls, near Kotchandpur bus stand in the afternoon.



The body of Faruk at Chandpur Sadar Hospital. He died after sustaining bullet injuries during a clash between BNP's youth front Jubo Dal and joint forces yesterday at Mahamaya of Chandpur.

PHOTO: BANGLAR CHOKH

Local AL leaders blamed Jamaat-Shibir men for the incident.
However, opposition leaders claimed that none from the BNP-led 18-party alliance was involved in the incident.

Shahjahan Khan, officer-in-charge of Kotchandpur Police Station, said the fire might have been caused due to carelessness.

Law enforcers yesterday arrested 37 people in Sylhet, 10 opposition men in Jhenidah, 17 opposition activists in Chandpur, six in Satkhira and a BNP leader in Madaripur.

The home ministry said the BNP and Jamaat-Shibir activists carried out vandalism, arson attacks and subversive activities in several areas to create panic among people.

Law enforcers foiled opposition activists' attempts to create anarchy in several places, it said in a press release in the afternoon.

Our district correspondents reported that though Rangamati, Bandarban and Cox's Bazar see hundreds of tourists on the new year's day, all three tourist destinations looked almost deserted

Burn unit in tight spot

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"They do not get any wages; they just make do with the tips they get from patients. Therefore, they have no accountability, and I cannot penalise them either if they do not perform their duties."

Even those who get wages are paid once in three months, he added.

The burn unit is intended for a hundred patients, but it is currently treating over 350. "With so many patients and so little space, it becomes difficult for me to keep the hartal victims in isolation," Samanto observed.

The ICU needs at least fifty beds, whereas it currently has only ten, he said.

The unit had only one bed empty yesterday,

meaning that if the condition of two or more patients deteriorates, only one of them can be accommodated.

Many life-saving machines, some of which are needed for giving mechanical ventilation to critically injured patients, are missing in the ICU, where most of the deaths took place.

"The proposed budget for the ICU was Tk 8 crore, but we were given only Tk 1.5 crore. There are at least 14 different types of much-needed equipment that we do not have," said ICU in-charge Shah Alam.

Although the ICU has four ventilators that can give life support to the patients, it lacks monitoring equipment to make them work effectively.

AL wants to make it early

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The meeting was told that the main barrier to forming the government after the election was section-123 of the constitution, sources said.

According to section-123, candidates elected through a general election cannot assume office as lawmakers before the immediate past parliament's tenure expires.

The elections on January 5 are being boycotted by most of the political parties including the main opposition BNP. As many as 154 aspirants are set to be elected uncontested and formation

of the government by the AL is just a matter of time.

Hasina at a meeting of the AL's election steering committee held on December 19 discussed her plan to form the government. She suggested that the newly elected lawmakers take oath of office on January 25 and the new government starts its journey on January 27.

Insiders say a number of AL leaders are in favour of forming the government as soon as possible without waiting more than two weeks.

However, the constitutional provision says the AL has to wait until the ninth parliament expires on January 24 as it first went into session on January 25, 2009.

The sources said the meeting discussed the speaker post of the 10th parliament and that Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury was likely to continue for a second term.

Election to the reserved seats for women might be held within February 10, while the first parliamentary session might start on February 15-16, they added.

Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Rakibuddin Ahmad will lead the six-member delegation that includes four election commissioners and the secretary to the EC secretariat.
"It is a courtesy meeting. We will just inform the president about our preparation for the polls," the CEC told reporters at the EC secretariat yesterday.

When asked whether they would discuss postponement of the polls, an election commissioner, seeking anonymity, told The Daily Star, "It is not possible to defer the election. However, it may be deferred only if the main opposition announces its willingness to join the polls."

Campaign ends tomorrow morning

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The national election is scheduled to be held on January 5 in 147 constituencies out of 300 as 153 candidates are all set to be elected unopposed.

If anyone violates the ban, the person will be sentenced from two to seven years' imprisonment with fine, according to the circular.

Besides, the EC has also slapped a ban on vehicular movement in the electoral areas between 12:00 midnight and 11:59pm on January 5, the polls day.

No motorcycle movement will be allowed from the early hours of Saturday to the early hours of

Wednesday across the country.

However, candidates, law enforcers, administrative officials and EC-approved poll observers and polling agents will remain out of the purview of the ban. Observers and polling agents will have to use stickers provided by the EC for using their vehicles.

These restrictions would not be applicable on highways, the circular added.

EC DELEGATION TO MEET PRESIDENT

An EC delegation is scheduled to meet President Abdul Hamid at 3:30pm today to apprise him of the commission's preparation for holding the January 5 polls.

democratic government is in power."

They become more important if there is an undemocratic and unconstitutional government, said Hasina, alerting people about those who want no good for the country and its people.

She said the government has tried everything to hold dialogue with BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia to solve the ongoing political impasse, but the opposition leader refused to take the opportunities.

The AL chief said the opposition leader boycotted the elections, as Jamaat-e-Islami could not take part in the polls following a High Court order that declared illegal its registration as a political party.

"The Awami League always acts on whatever people want, but the BNP always goes against their wishes," she

said. She added that the execution of war criminal Abdul Quader Mollah, which was a popular demand, has effaced the stigma of the nation.

Referring to the BNP-led alliance's ongoing movement, the premier said it is not a movement, but terrorism, as people are not involved in it. She alleged the BNP chairperson has resorted to killings through bombings and arson attacks by hired criminals.

Hasina remarked that her government has curbed terrorism and militancy while the BNP chairperson has harboured them.

She highlighted various developments made by her government in the last five years, and pledged to undertake many more development projects if voted

Sudden rise in arrests

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Usually, the DMP police stations detain around 90 to 120 people daily and produce most all of them before courts.

Waiting outside the Shahbag Police Station early Tuesday, Tanjil Sujan said police picked up his 55-year-old father, Mohammad Waliullah in front of the High Court around Sunday noon.

Waliullah was on his way home to Mirpur from his small garment factory in Bangshal when police detained him. Law enforcers even did not want to know his identity before picking him up.

"I came here in the evening soon after knowing about my father's detention, and have been waiting since then. But I've no idea whatsoever about the fate of my father," added Tanjil.

RAMNA, PALTAN POLICE STATIONS

The scenes at the Ramna and Paltan police stations were not different either on Sunday night as the lock-ups were overflowing with detainees.

Ramna police had 212 people in their custody, of which over 160 were picked up on Sunday alone.

A staff room of the Ramna Police Station was turned into a makeshift lock-up as there was no space left in two of its regular lock-ups.

Morzina Begum was one of the around 35 people, who had been waiting in the police station compound around 11:00pm on Sunday to contact with their detained relatives.

Police rounded up her day labourer brother, Dulal, 28, in the Matshya Bhaban area.

"We came to know his whereabouts in the evening and since then I have been waiting here," said Morzina.

Around the same time, Fatema Khatun was seen waiting with her relatives at Paltan Police Station to see if she could free her husband Jamshed Bhandari, 35, from police custody. Police picked up Jamshed earlier in the morning.

A resident of Nawabganj, Fatema said her husband has a small shoe business there. "I don't know why they picked up my husband. He has no connection with any political activities," she added.

Around 45 detainees were at the police station on Sunday night.

Confined or not?

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chief had been put under house arrest.

Mahmud was briefing reporters over the success of his ministry in the last five years.

He questioned how US Ambassador Dan Mozena and British High Commissioner Robert Gibson met Khaleda had she been under house arrest.

"It is her personal matter that she is not coming out of her residence," Mahmud told reporters.

Asked about the credibility of the January 5 polls, he said the BNP was responsible for this situation. "Fifteen parties are taking part in the polls. If any party does not participate in the elections, we have nothing to do."

Information Minister Hasanul Haq Inu said the government needed to issue a

notification if it wanted to keep anyone under house arrest. But no such notification had been issued.

Inu, also chief of ruling Awami League ally Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, was talking to reporters while unveiling his party's election manifesto at its Bangabandhu Avenue office.

Meanwhile, law enforcers for the fifth consecutive day did not allow any opposition men to meet Khaleda Zia at her Gulshan residence.

An additional number of law enforcers were still deployed around her residence while four sand-laden trucks were yet in place.

BNP Vice-chairman Selima Rahman at a press briefing at her Gulshan residence yesterday demanded that the government allow free movement of the BNP chief and let