

# Land rights lost in so many laws

Seminar stresses reforms

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Successive governments have made many land-related laws over the years but those have failed to establish people's land rights, speakers said at a seminar yesterday.

The country now has 146 land-related laws that are causing endless sufferings to people, as many of those are either too complex or contradictory to one another.

The governments at times took initiatives to reduce people's sufferings but they didn't succeed most of the time due to bureaucratic tangles, they said.

If the present government doesn't reform the laws with a people-oriented approach, it would not be possible to establish land rights of the vulnerable group that includes women, indigenous communities and marginal people, according to the speakers.

Prof Abul Barkat presented the keynote speech on "Land Laws of Bangladesh: A Right-based Analysis and Proposed

**146** land-related laws  
**80%** cases over land  
**25 lakh** cases pending  
**9.5 yrs** on average for disposal of a case  
**23.5 lakh** acres of land are disputed  
Annual household losses **Tk 11,520 crore**  
**Tk 24,860 crore** spent on land cases a yr

Changes" at the seminar organised by Manusher Jonno Foundation at The Daily Star Centre in the capital.

Around 59 percent of the country's population are landless. If the government fails to establish people's land rights, marginal people would not benefit from the country's economic growth, said Barkat.


Even if Bangladesh becomes a middle-income country, people wouldn't gain from it if their land rights are not established, he said.

Barkat led a team of researchers that analysed all 146 land-related laws dividing those in 20 categories. The team suggested that the government draft nine new laws and reforms 11 laws.

He said they proposed making a law that would not allow any individual to possess more than 40 bighas of agricultural land and 20 bighas of non-agricultural land.

The number of cases and complications over land issues

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**TOP QUOTE**

"It is very difficult for the poor to get justice in our existing judicial system. Litigation cost is high, and a case that should be disposed of in two-three years takes 10-25 years."

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR AT DHAKA UNIVERSITY  
**SHEIKH HAFIZUR RAHMAN**  
AT A MASS HEARING AT CIRDP IN THE CAPITAL

# Land gone, so is his kingdom

Urang King Rathindra now survives by selling milk of nine cows

MINTU DESHWARA, from Sylhet

Once their forefathers had ruled a fairly large territory; once they had a royal throne. But all those glories have faded into a distant past.

Still, members of the Urang community, a small ethnic group mainly based in the Sylhet region, treat them as "the royal family".

Raja Rathindra Urang, currently regarded as "a king", cannot afford to donate money for his people or to ensure justice for them anymore. Ironically enough, now he himself is a victim of gross injustice; now he him-



Raja Rathindra Urang

self has to work hard to make both ends meet.

During a recent visit to Rathindra's house in Chandantila area under Sylhet Sadar upazila, this correspondent found "the royal house" surrounded by green trees and shrubs, the entrance gate built with bamboo.

According to the Urang people living in the area, the king's temple, which once was within the "royal house compound", has already been grabbed. Stripped of much of his land, his only source of income is now selling milk from the nine cows he has.

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# Give refuge to Bangladeshi freethinkers in danger

8 HR bodies ask US

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

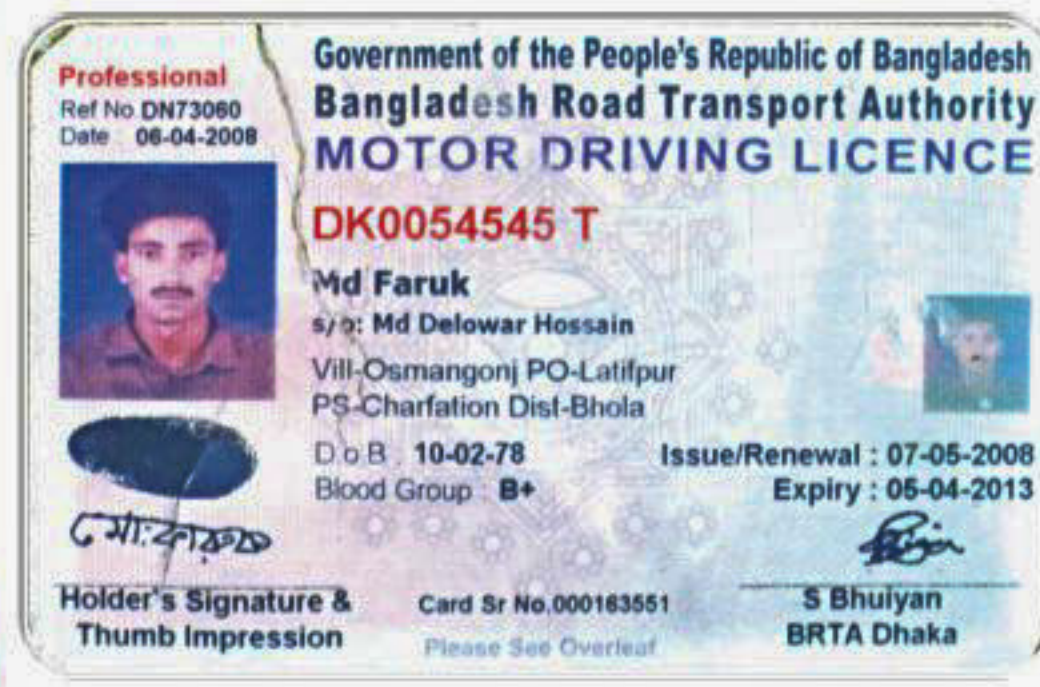
A group of human rights organisations has appealed to the US government to allow in Bangladeshi writers and publishers, targeted by Islamist extremists for their secular beliefs.

In a letter to Secretary of State John F Kerry, the rights bodies also asked for measures to arrange emergency relocation of those Bangladeshi writer-bloggers to other like-minded nations in case America is unable to take them all in.

They cited killing of four writer-bloggers and a publisher this year since February. Islamist extremist groups like Ansar al-Islam, Ansarullah Bangla Team and Al-Qaeda in the Indian subcontinent have claimed responsibility for these murders.

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# A murder in cold blood



Bus driver Abdul Majid; driving licence of victim Faruk.

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In an act of horrendous cruelty, a bus driver yesterday ran a man over and killed him in the capital following an argument.

The dead, Mohammad Faruk, 40, was a CNG-run auto-rickshaw driver. According to witnesses, a Tetulia Paribahan bus, which runs on Mohammadpur-Mirpur-Abdullahpur route, hit Faruk's auto-rickshaw from behind on Mymensingh Road near Jasim Uddin intersection around 11:40am.

Abdul Majid, who was driving the bus, drove on until he had to stop at

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# Khaleda draws flak for martyrs remark

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Freedom fighters, war crimes researchers, martyrs' family members, war crimes prosecutors and different pro-liberation organisations yesterday blasted BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia for her comment questioning the number of martyrs in the country's Liberation War.

Khaleda, through her comment, reiterated what Pakistan and anti-liberation Jamaat-e-Islami have been claiming about the 1971 martyrs, they said, demanding an apology from Khaleda.

They also urged the government to enact a law, like

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# JU proctor tried to 'incite campus unrest'

Hints 'leaked phone conversation'

SM NAJMUS SAKIB

A leaked telephone conversation revealed that Proctor Tapan Kumar Saha of Jahangirnagar University tried to incite Bangladesh Chhatra League men to create unrest on campus last Friday.

In the audio file, he

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থেকে  
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