

# Self-reliance thru' goat farming

ZAHANGIR SHAH with ANDREW EAGLE

The other village women of Panjonkhara in Gorapara union of Manikganj sadar upazila are taking a keen interest in the activities of fifty-year-old Selina Begum. Selina has carved out a financially better future for herself through rearing goats.

"I've just sold two goats," she says, "for about Tk 20,000. I'm hoping to sell more very soon. Starting two years ago with a single goat, Selina currently has fourteen, worth around Tk 1.4 lakhs.

Selina found her entrepreneurial spirit in part through loneliness. Her 23-year-old son Badhon died some years ago and her only daughter Soma married last year. With husband Mosharraf Hossain employed at the Bangla Academy in Dhaka she often found herself in a quiet household, shared only with her mother-in-law Halima Begum.

"To start with I took a Tk 70,000 loan from NGO Muslim Aid Bangladesh," she recalls. "With that I bought a piece of land and a goat. I take care of my livestock as well as I can, feeding them at home every day." Selina says her success in building a flock from one goat has brought her great satisfaction.

Moreover, other ladies in the village

are taking note. "I took an NGO loan two months ago to buy two goats of my own," says neighbour Manowara Begum. "I am trying to look after them well, hoping within a year I can also have a goat farm. I have seen how goat husbandry can bring about a bright future."

"I hope to take an NGO loan to buy two or three goats soon," says another neighbour Nurnahar Begum. "I'm really interested in goat farming as a way to achieve economic self-reliance."

According to district livestock officer Dr Md Forhadul Alam, goat husbandry is profitable in particular because goats give birth twice a year. "Goat milk is also very nutritious," he says. "Skins are in good demand, even from abroad where goat skins are often used to make vanity bags. Goats are indeed a good way for a villager to become self-reliant. With proper animal care high profits can be expected."

"We encourage women in particular to achieve economic autonomy through goat and cow rearing," says Muslim Aid Bangladesh upazila branch manager Zahedul Islam. "We provide the loans and also advice on how to use the money wisely." He notes that many women from Panjonkhara have expressed interest in loans to start goat husbandry projects.



Selina Begum feeds her goats at her village home in Manikganj. The 50-year-old rears goats to build a better future for herself. She has become an inspiration to many village women. The photo was taken last month.

PHOTO: STAR

## Realise your rights

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journey to eliminate poverty," she said.

Mentioning that half of the country's population is women, the PM said their development is a must for the country's development. "If women don't make progress in education and other sectors, this society would never be built properly. Everybody should understand that there is no chance to neglect them."

Children and women affairs ministry organised the programme, with State Minister for Women and Children Affairs Meher Afroze Chumki in the chair.

The then government in 1995 had introduced the award after the name

of Begum Rokeya Shakhawat Hossain, a pioneer of women's rights in the Subcontinent.

Hasina said the government created opportunities for women's education through providing stipends at primary and secondary levels and scholarships for higher education.

She paid deep respect to the memory of Begum Rokeya.

Recalling women's great contributions during the Liberation War in 1971, she said Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had taken steps for women's emancipation and their political, social and economic development.

She noted that Bangladesh's PM, deputy leader of the House, opposi-

tion leader, Speaker and a number of ministers are women, which is rare in the world.

Women in Bangladesh are now working in every level of the administration. They are in the armed forces, law enforcement agencies, judiciary, local government bodies, Jatiya Sangsad and also in UN peace-keeping missions, she added.

The premier said women's role in mass media as well as sports is also very commendable. The government would pick more women for the administration as they are doing well, Hasina told her audience.

She hoped the government would be able to turn Bangladesh into a middle-income country by 2021 and a developed one by 2041.

## Bangladeshi women in ME poorly paid

Says Human Rights Watch

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladeshi female domestic workers in the Middle East get one of the lowest wages, and are more exposed to exploitation, Human Rights Watch said in a statement yesterday.

"The embassies of other countries of origin require employers to agree to monthly minimum salaries, but Bangladesh has one of the lowest at about 16,000 BDT (\$200), while the Philippines insists on the highest of

\$400," HRW said.

The statement comes a day before the three-day conference of Global Forum on Migration and Development, a meeting of governments to share best practices and collaborate on migration policy, beginning in Dhaka today.

"Bangladesh is hosting an important global conference on migration, yet has an abysmal record protecting its own citizens," said Rothna Begum,

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## Missing madrasa student found in capital

STAR REPORT

The madrasa student, who went missing from Barisal and texted his mother not to worry about him, was working at a restaurant in the capital's Dayaganj.

Upset at his father's refusal to give him money, Niamatullah, 16, left his madrasa in Barisal's Agailjhara on November 30 and came to the capital, said Mizanur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Gendaria Police Station.

Restaurant owner Amirul Islam contacted police after he came to know about Niamatulla's going missing from a TV report, the OC said.

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## South Korean MPs vote

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whether to ratify the decision and permanently remove the president from office.

A ruling could take up to six months, during which time Park will remain in the presidential Blue House -- a leader in name only.

The situation leaves South Korea facing an extended stretch of political anxiety and policy paralysis at a time of slowing economic growth, rising unemployment and elevated military tensions with nuclear-armed North Korea.

"I am so sorry for all South Koreans that I created this national chaos with my carelessness," Park said in a televised statement after the vote.

"But we should not let our guard down for a single minute, given the grave situation we face at home and abroad from our economy to the national defence.

"In this time of uncertainty, the lives of our people should never be disregarded," she said calling on the government to unite and minimise any fallout from the resulting power vacuum.

CELEBRATIONS

The motion to impeach was adopted by 234 votes to 56, easily securing the

required two-thirds majority in the 300-seat chamber and triggering wild celebrations among hundreds of anti-Park activists gathered outside the National Assembly.

"This is a great moment," said a beaming Kim Jun-Hweh, 21. "This is what we wanted, and we want her kicked out of the Blue House now."

It has been a startling fall from grace for a politician who had run for the Blue House as an incorruptible candidate, declaring herself beholden to nobody and "married to the nation".

After just under four years in power, she now faces the prospect of going down in history as the first democratically-elected South Korean president to be kicked out of office.

The impeachment motion had accused Park of constitutional and criminal violations ranging from a failure to protect people's lives to bribery and abuse of power.

Supported by all 171 opposition and independent lawmakers, its adoption was made possible by an anti-Park faction within the president's Saenuri party.

The result means Prime Minister Hwang Kyo-Ahn, a former prosecutor

who has never held elected office, suddenly finds himself in charge of Asia's fourth largest economy and supreme commander of its armed forces.

NATIONAL DEFENCE PLEDGE

In a televised address just hours after the vote, Hwang stressed that the country was primed to respond to any North Korean provocation.

"The government will maintain a watertight national defence posture," Hwang said, pledging to keep the country safe and prosperous.

"We will stabilise the financial and currency markets and make efforts to maintain South Korea's sovereign ratings," he said.

The push for impeachment was driven by massive protests that have seen millions take to the streets of Seoul and other cities in recent weeks, demanding Park's ouster.

"This has been an honourable civil revolution in which our people defeated an incompetent leader," the president of the main opposition Democratic Party said after the vote.

The scandal that felled Park focused on her friendship with long-time confidante Choi Soon-Sil.

## RIGHTS OF WORKERS FOR WC Labour activists join Fifa lawsuit

REUTERS, Dhaka

Bangladesh labour activists said yesterday they had joined a lawsuit in Switzerland against world soccer body Fifa for allegedly failing to use its influence to ensure people working on 2022 World Cup facilities in Qatar are treated fairly.

The suit, filed in Fifa's home city of Zurich with the backing of the largest labor union in the Netherlands, calls on Fifa to force Qatar to adopt "minimum labor standards" for migrant workers preparing for the tournament, including at least the right to quit a job or leave the country.

The Gulf state has faced criticism of its treatment of foreign workers from Amnesty International, the Building and Wood Workers' International organization and others.

Repon Chowdhury, secretary general of the Bangladesh Free Trade Union Congress, confirmed the orga-

nization had joined forces with Dutch union FNV in the suit on behalf of a Bangladeshi man who says he was harshly exploited in Qatar.

It joined the suit as co-petitioner after failing to get compensation from the man's employer, Qatar or Fifa, he said.

"We tried to settle the issue amicably, but all our efforts failed and ultimately we had to file a petition," Chowdhury said. "As the umbrella body of trade unions, we feel that his right as a human being has been denied and we strongly raised our voice against this violation of rights."

A Qatar government spokesman had no immediate comment. Doha has previously denied exploiting workers and says it is implementing labor reforms.

Under Qatar's "kafala" system, foreign workers must get their employer's consent to change jobs or

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## UN urges

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Malaysia has accused the army of "genocide", a charge Myanmar officials have vehemently denied.

Suu Kyi, a veteran democracy activist who came to power in March, has described the situation as "under control" and asked the international community to stop stoking the "fires of resentment".

In a statement released in New York on Thursday, UN special adviser on Myanmar Vijay Nambiar appealed directly to the peace icon to intervene.

"The adoption of a generally defensive rather than proactive approach to providing security to the local population (has) caused frustration locally and disappointment internationally," he said.

"I also appeal to Daw Suu to visit Maungdaw and Buthidaung and reassure the civilian population there that they will be protected," he added, referring to the locked down area in Rakhine.

Diplomats from the US and several European countries yesterday added their urgent calls for access to the region, saying they were "concerned by delays" in resuming aid deliveries.

"Tens of thousands of people who need humanitarian aid, including children with acute malnutrition, have been without it now for nearly two months," the diplomats said in a statement.

The bloodshed presents the biggest challenge to Suu Kyi since her party won Myanmar's first democratic elections in a generation last year.

It has galvanised Muslim nations around the region, with protesters decrying the crackdown as the culmination of years of discrimination and abuse suffered by the stateless Rohingya.

On Sunday, Malaysia's Prime Minister Najib Razak taunted Suu Kyi, who the former junta kept under house arrest for almost 20 years, before a crowd of some 5,000 protesters in Kuala Lumpur.

"What's the use of Aung San Suu Kyi having a Nobel prize?" he asked the protesters.

"The world cannot sit and watch genocide taking place."

Activists say Buddhist-majority Myanmar's stateless Muslim Rohingya minority are among the most persecuted in the world.

More than 120,000 have been trapped in squalid displacement camps since the last major outbreak of violence erupted in Rakhine in 2012.

## Fear, despair over disappearances

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Many could not be traced, while some fortunate ones returned.

Some victims, who had remained missing for long with their families worrying about their fate, were suddenly produced before the media as arrestees by law enforcers.

According to rights organisation Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK), the number of disappearance victims from January to November this year is at least 89 people. It was 55 last year, 88 in 2014 and 68 in 2013.

FADING HOPE

In the Rahmatullah abduction case, the authorities have changed the investigation officer (IO) twice. The third one is from the CID while previous two were from Kotwali police and DB.

Last month, the IO called in Baishakhi to ask her what Rahmatullah was wearing while being picked up on April 9, 2014.

"The officer said he would go through pictures of some unidentified dead bodies to see if Sentu is there," she told this newspaper.

"My hope of finding him alive has faded away after meeting the IO."

In a general diary (GD) lodged with the Kotwali police a month after the abduc-

tion, Baishakhi mentioned that people present there kept the microbus confined after her husband was pulled into it.

"A couple of minutes later, three to four men -- in Rab uniform and equipped with arms -- baton-charged the crowd to make way for the microbus."

The Rab members later left the place in two Rab vehicles, said the GD, filed on May 11, 2014.

The GD also read eight to 10 policemen on duty at the spot told her that the men in Rab uniform were members of Rapid Action Battalion-10.

She didn't make mention of Rab in the case statement, and the reason behind this, according to the GD, is that she was then not sure about Rab's involvement.

"Afterwards, learning from different people and inquiring at various places, I have become sure about the involvement of Rab members. The matter should be included in the case document," Baishakhi wrote in the GD.

'COMPLETELY UNACCEPTABLE' Executive director (acting) of ASK Nur Khan said enforced disappearance is "completely unacceptable" and judicial probe should be opened for each of such incidents.

Contacted, Home Minister

Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal said law enforcers never pick up people secretly. They make arrests openly and place the arrestees before the court as per the law.

He also said there were incidents in which criminals were caught posing as law enforcers and kidnapping people.

Former National Human Rights Commission chairman Prof Mizanur Rahman said, "If they [law enforcers] think that they have fulfilled their duties by saying there is no such thing like disappearance and some people are just hiding willingly, they live in a fool's paradise. No one is going to buy this anywhere in the world."

Ensuring security of the citizens is a fundamental responsibility of the state, he said.

"Even if we go by the home minister's recent comment that those who disappeared have willingly gone into hiding, we should remember that it is the primary responsibility of the state agencies to find them as it has become a public concern."

According to law, arrestees must be produced before a court within 24 hours of the arrest.

A number of law enforcement officials wishing anonymity said sometimes they

pick up suspects and keep them in custody for long to make them admit offences. Hardcore criminals or militants do not admit their offences during a short period of remand.

Mohammad Ashraful Alam, an associate professor of Department of Criminology and Police Science at Mawlana Bhashani Science and Technology University, termed the practice unnecessary.

"The police force has talented officers with foreign trainings and they are capable of making a thorough investigation without compromising human rights," he said.

Recently, the father of a government medical officer filed a writ petition with the High Court seeking necessary orders upon the authorities concerned to find his son.

AKM Nurul Alam said his son Muhammed Iqbal Mahmud was abducted from the capital's Science Lab area on October 15.

A CCTV clip shows seven to eight people forcibly taking Iqbal into a microbus soon after he had alighted from a bus at the intersection.

The microbus then speeds away and a pickup, seemingly belonging to police, is

seen following it.

A police official said they suspect Iqbal has involvement with militant group "Neo JMB".

On July 14, some people claiming to be law enforcers took away Yasin Mohammad Abdus Samad Talukder, a British citizen of Bangladeshi origin from Kakoli bus stop.

He was accused in a case filed with Shahbagh Police Station on February 9 with Gulshan café attacker Nibras Islam.

Yasin's mother Suriya Parveen Talukder, a retired government physician, said two days after the abduction, law enforcers searched her apartment and took away Yasin's laptop and computer. This made her strongly suspect that her son was taken by them.

Suriya said as no agency admitted picking up her son, she hired an informant of law enforcement agencies and gave him Tk 50 lakh in instalments for her son's release.

On September 29, physician Riyad Naser Chowdhury was dragged into a microbus from Purabi Cinema at Pallabi.

Riyad is lucky as he could return home. But he and his family members mysteriously kept mum about who abducted him and where he was kept.