

Home belongs

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Mohammad Ibrahim on charges of facilitating some criminals in grabbing the property.

ACC FINDINGS
According to the case statement, the 221 no house in Nawabpur is a vested property. The Dhaka DC office in 1975 leased out the property to Masuda Khanam, mother of martyred intellectual and former deputy commissioner of Cumilla Shamsul Haq Khan.

The property is now under the possession of Azharul Haque Khan, a member of the family, who has regularly been paying the lease money.

When the land is in Azharul's possession, Jaber made a fake deed of the land at Joydevpur Sub-registry office.

Jaber claimed that one Nani Gopal Bosak was the land owner, and after his death, his son Tapan Kumar Bosak became the owner in 1967.

Scrutinising the documents, the anti-graft body found the accused had manipulated the land records. "A discrepancy has been found in the writing and colour of ink used on page no 251 and 252 of the records," reads the FIR.

Later, Jaber had a case filed by Tapan for the return of the vested property with a court where they had submitted fake documents and a deed of the property.

Analysing evidence, it is also known that Jaber is the kingpin of a fraud syndicate and government land grabbers," reads the FIR.

On September 28 last year, some criminals, led by Jaber, grabbed the house, looted valuables and evicted the family.

A day after the incident when the victim's family went to Bangshal Police Station to file a case, the officer-in-charge informed Ibrahim, the then DC (Wari division), of the incident and recorded a theft case.

Later, the DMP initiated an enquiry after receiving a written complaint from the victim's family.

According to the probe report, some 30 to 35 armed criminals stormed the house, tied all the residents, and looted valuables worth Tk 5 crore.

Despite knowing that the land grabbers evicted the legal owner of the house, demolished a three-storey building and constructed a basement for a new building, Ibrahim did not take any legal action against the grabbers, showing utmost negligence in discharging his duty, the report added.

Police sources said he helped the grabbers in exchange for a huge amount of bribe.

In its case statement, the ACC said if they found Tapan's involvement in investigation, legal action would be taken against him.

Apart from Tapan, those who will be found involved in this incident would be made accused in the case, it added.

Forecast

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in Moulvibazar's Kamalganj upazila in the last two days allegedly due to health complications aggravated by the cold weather while several thousand others across the country sought medical attention for cold-related diseases.

The deceased are Rakhal Chasha, 46, and Dangama Kurmi, 60, Buleshwari Turia, 45, and Hariya Bin, 60, and Anjub Ali.

Kamalganj Upazila Nirbahi Officer Ashkel Haque confirmed the death incidents to The Daily Star.

"All of them died from severe cold as they had a lack of warm clothing," Sitaram Bin, UP member of Shamshernagar union told our Moulvibazar correspondent.

Meanwhile, the number of patients took treatment at the hospitals across the country yesterday dropped slightly to 4,254 from 4,556 a day before, according to the control room of the Directorate General of Health Services.

Of them, 720 were admitted for acute respiratory infection, 1,741 for diarrhoea, and 1,793 for other ailments, including fever, dysentery, and jaundice.

Belgian Africa museum in tour guide race row

AFP, Brussels

Belgium's Africa Museum launched an investigation Saturday into allegations that a guide made racist comments and defended the country's brutal colonial past during a tour with students.

The museum director told AFP the guide's comments, which apparently included downplaying the widespread mutilation of local workers in Belgian-ruled Congo, were unacceptable and "totally against the spirit of what we stand for".

The row comes just a year after the museum, once notorious for its uncritical celebration of Belgian colonial exploits in central Africa, reopened following a major refurbishment that sought to bring it up to date.

Belgian rule in the late 19th and early 20th century was notoriously brutal and exploitative. Run as a private royal estate by former king Leopold II, the African colonies covered lands now included in Rwanda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

SEZ in Tea Estate

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MARGINALISING THE MARGINALISED

The 512 acres of land of Chandpur tea estate at Chunarughat upazila in Habiganj is one of the 88 places where the Bangladesh Economic Zones Authority (Beza) plans to build SEZs.

According to its website, Beza, formed in 2010, "aims to establish economic zones in all potential areas in Bangladesh including backward and underdeveloped regions with a view to encouraging rapid economic development through increase and diversification of industry, employment, production and export."

In 2015, the government cancelled Duncan Brother's lease on the land in question and Beza acquired the 512 acres, where workers of Chandpur tea estate have been farming since the establishment of the tea garden in 1890.

When the tea labourers came to know about the government's decision, they started protesting it. For months, they guarded their rice farms and held demonstration and rallies, but the government remained firm in its decision.

"Recently, a number of people in expensive cars visited the land and asked about the cost of land filling in the area," said Nipen Paul, joint-secretary of Bangladesh Tea Labourer's Union Central Committee.

"Besides, a local lawmaker at a programme in Sylhet recently announced that the work of setting up the SEZ in Chunarughat will start soon," he said.

Fearing imminent eviction, the Chandpur tea estate workers started a one-hour daily strike from December 7, protesting the establishment of SEZ in their cropland.

THE QUESTION OF LAND RIGHTS

Nipen explained the custom in all tea-gardens was that workers will live in and cultivate the fallow land within the gardens.

The owners, in turn, deduct a certain percentage of the workers' daily ration for the use of each decimal of land. The deduction is almost like a payment of land tax, he claimed.

Both the accommodation and

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the cropland are passed down to the next generation along with the tea-labourer's job, he added.

The tea workers belong to various tribal groups, and were brought to the tea estates in Sylhet division as bonded labourers by the British around 200 years ago from different other parts of Indian subcontinent.

They are, however, not given any legal entitlement to the land.

Barrister Jotirmoy Barua, coordinator of Life and Nature Safeguard Platform (LNSP), pointed out that the rights of the tribal tea-workers over the land they use must be recognised because Bangladesh had ratified the International Labour Organisation Convention 107.

Article 11 of the convention asks governments to recognise the right of ownership of land traditionally occupied by underprivileged tribal groups.

Jotirmoy said Bangladesh did not enact any law in line with the convention.

AGRICULTURE VS INDUSTRY

Barrister Jotirmoy Barua also referred to a remark made by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the 10th council of the Krishak League at the Suhrawardy Udyan on November 6 this year, where she reiterated her stance on not allowing industries on arable land.

"BEZA is violating it in every step," he alleged.

President of the Begum Khan tea garden Panchayat Committee Chandra Karmakar complained that the district administration classified the 512 acres as "barren land" in the 2015 requisition document, although workers had been growing crops there for more than a century.

The tea estate is yet another where

workers stand to lose their land.

According to Upazila Agriculture officer of Chunarughat Jalal Uddin Sarkar, yearly production of paddy and other crops in the 512 acres of land are worth 80 lakh and 20 lakh taka.

Even Beza, in reply to an application filed by this correspondent under the Right to Information Act, mentioned that the land chosen for the SEZ in Chunarughat is unused cropland where a certain varieties of rice is grown, swamp and canal type.

Yet, Beza mentioned that the land was taken under Acquisition and Requisition of Immoveable Property Ordinance 1982 and Non-agriculture Khas Land Management and Settlement Policy 1995.

Eminent Supreme Court lawyer Hasnat Quaiyim told this correspondent that he had visited the spot and found it to be paddy land. "The local government office termed it barren land and this is false. This is punishable under articles 167 and 409 of the penal code," he added.

Shamsul Huda, executive director of Association of Land Reform and Development (ALRD) and a member of Life and Nature Safeguard Platform (LNSP), said, "The government should work to establish the land rights of the tea-workers, otherwise a large number of indigenous populations may face food scarcity in the near future."

Chairman of Bangladesh Tea Association Shah Alam also opposed the idea of setting up the SEZ on tea estate land.

"When Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was the chairman of the Tea Board, he announced that the land of tea estates would remain intact. He [Bangabandhu] made this remark keeping the workers' tradition and their poor condition in mind," he said.

Noting that agriculture sector is as important as the industry sector, Dr Hossain Zillur Rahman, former caretaker government adviser and executive chairperson of Power and Participation Research Centre said, "There is a tendency to take the lands of marginalised people without

workers stand to lose their land. It must be stopped."

ECONOMY OVER ENVIRONMENT? Meanwhile, activists and forest officials are concerned about the environmental impact of the proposed Chandpur tea estate SEZ on the Satchhari National Forest and Rema-Kalenga Wildlife Sanctuary and rivers of the area.

According to the forest department, Satchhari National Forest is only four kilometres away from the SEZ while Rema-Kalenga Wildlife Sanctuary is 19 kilometres away.

General Secretary of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (Bapa) Central Committee Sharif Jamil said, "Increased traffic to connect the economic zone through Satchhari will hamper the wildlife habitat and facilitate poaching. It will lead the forests to complete death. Death of this rainforest will severely impact the streams and rivers at the downstream".

"Rivers like Sonai, Bolobhadra will be affected by the ecological degradation. Especially, Sutang will be highly affected by this specific zone. These will pollute the Meghna river that has far widespread impacts," he warned.

He urged the government to conduct comprehensive and transparent assessment and review the plan of setting up a SEZ in Chunarughat.

Divisional Forest Officer of wild life management and nature conservation in Sylhet ANM Abdul Wadud told this correspondent that different species of birds, reptiles and apes in the Satchhari National Forest will be endangered if the SEZ is established.

Even Raghunandan and Rema-Kalenga forests will be affected, he added.

The RTI application revealed that Beza has not done any feasibility study or Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for establishing the special economic zone yet.

Beza, itself, would not comment on the matter and has only responded when an RTI application is filed.

Poles help

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(3,450 miles).

Locals provided him with food and a roof over his head a few days after the vehicle broke down.

"I am very thankful to the great Polish nation for (their) hospitality," Kazemi said.

He was delivering raisins to Poland and was supposed to continue on to the Czech Republic to pick up goods to import to Iran, according to local media.

After his story hit the Internet, Polish lorry-drivers joined forces to help him repair the vehicle, and when that proved impossible, they decided to crowd-fund him a new one.

A replacement lorry was found on Thursday but its seller DAF Trucks -- a Dutch manufacturing company which is a division of US firm Paccar -- pulled out at the last minute for fear of being affected by US sanctions against Iran.

The organisers of the online appeal now hope to quickly find another vehicle for Kazemi, according to a video posted to Facebook.

BSF shoots

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when member of Phulbari BSF Camp opened fire on them, said Lt Col Samiunnabi Chowdhury, commanding officer of 50th BGB Battalion of Thakurgaon.

Rezabul sustained a bullet injury in his lower abdomen while his companions managed to flee the scene unhurt and bring the victim to their village, he added.

On information, BGB men rescued Rezabul and sent him to Thakurgaon Sadar Hospital around 8:00am where he succumbed to his injuries around 11:30am, the BGB official said.

Meanwhile, BSF and BGB sat on a flag meeting upon invitation from the later. In the meeting, BGB strongly protested the killing at the border whereas BSF denied any incident of firing.

An unnatural death case was filed with Thakurgaon Police Station in connection with the incident. The body was handed over to the victim's family members after conducting autopsy.

On this day

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will commence shortly, says CS Kahlon, rehabilitation secretary of India.

They will be given rations for two weeks, he added. He also says that 1,30,000 Bangladeshis has already returned on foot.

Sheikh Mujib was taken to Rawalpindi for discussion, Pakistan officials say.

"India will not keep its troops in Bangladesh for a single day, if not needed," Indian Foreign Minister Saran Singh tells his British counterpart Sir Alec Douglas Hug in London.

Pakistan president Bhutto fires six top Navy officers.

Ethiopia PM Abiy denounces religious strife

AFP, Addis Ababa

Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed on Saturday condemned religious violence following attacks on multiple mosques in the Amhara region, the latest unrest targeting religious institutions.

State-affiliated Fana Broadcasting Corporate reported Saturday a number of mosques had been attacked and that "other properties were destroyed" in Mota town, more than 350 kilometres (217 miles) north of the capital, Addis Ababa.

"Attempts by extremists to breakdown our rich history of religious tolerance and coexistence have no place in the new prosperity focused Ethiopia," said Abiy, this year's Nobel Peace Prize laureate, in a statement posted to his Facebook and Twitter accounts.

"I condemn such acts of cowardice and call upon all peace loving Ethiopians to draw upon our deep knowledge of coexistence and our reservoir of respect."

Fana also said one church was attacked.

It was not clear when exactly the violence occurred, what sparked it, who was behind it or whether it caused injuries or fatalities.

Security officials in Amhara could not be reached Saturday.

While ethnic violence has been a persistent problem under Abiy, recent unrest appears to have been at least partly motivated by religion.

During several days of violence in the Oromia region in October that killed more than 80 people, attacks on both mosques and Orthodox Christian churches were reported.

Yet analysts caution that conflicts that appear to be rooted in religion are often also shaped by disputes over land use, ethnicity and other issues.

Muslims make up about one-third of Ethiopia's population of 110 million, second only to Orthodox Christians at 40 percent, according to the last census which was conducted in 2007.

But Muslims are vastly outnumbered in Amhara, the country's second-most populous region where Orthodox Christians make up more than 80 percent of the total.

Macron says French forces 'neutralise' over 30 jihadists in Mali

AFP, Abidjan

troop presence has come under fire from critics questioning the military role of the former colonial power in the region as jihadist attacks have been on the rise.

Macron said in a speech to the French community in Ivory Coast that 33 "terrorists" had been "neutralised", a term a source close to the presidency said meant they had been killed.

French soldiers also released two Malian gendarmes being held by jihadists, he said.

"This considerable success shows the commitment of our forces, the support that we bring to Mali, to the region and to our own security," Macron said.

"We have had losses, we also have victories this morning thanks

to the commitment of our soldiers and Operation Barkhane," he said, referring to the France's military operation against Islamist militants in the Sahel.

Last month's crash was the biggest single-day loss for the French military in nearly four decades and raised fresh questions about the effectiveness of France's operation.