



Fear forced Hindus to sell their land to ex-IGP Benazir

SHARIFUL ISLAM and EMRUL HASAN
BAPPI, back from Gopalganj

A cluster of shanty-like homes belonging to Hindus are accessible only by a makeshift bamboo bridge over a roadside canal at Patikelbari village of Gopalganj Sadar upazila. The rickety structures declare the financial constraint of the 100 or so Mitra family.

The current generations of the Mitras were never rich, but they were never this destitute either. They had over 27.5 acres of farmland, enough to support them "fairly well."

All that changed about four years ago – they were forced to sell all but five acres of their farmland to former police chief Benazir Ahmed.

"If I begin to tell my story, I would not be able to fight back my tears," said Swarup Maitra, 55, one of the Mitras who had to give in to Benazir's extraordinary power and great appetite for poor people's land.

The former top cop, now said to have left the country although there is no

official confirmation, is currently being investigated by the Anti-Corruption Commission for amassing huge wealth while in office.

Benazir, who faces a US sanction for his alleged involvement in extrajudicial killings when he was Rab chief, allegedly employed two tactics to acquire land: direct intimidation and indirect pressure.

The ACC has so far found that he and his family bought at least 613.41 bighas of land in different districts, including 605.77 bighas in Gopalganj and Madaripur that once belonged to Hindus, a religious minority.

He built most of his assets, including an eye-catching resort called Savanna Eco Resort and Natural Park in his hometown of Gopalganj, when he headed Rab (January 2015 to April 2020) and police force (April 2020 to September 2022).

In Gopalganj, Benazir engaged Taimur Islam, an inspector of a police station, to acquire the vast swath of over 600 bighas of farmland.



PHOTO: NAIMUR RAHMAN

An aerial shot of Savanna Eco Resort and Natural Park in Gopalganj. The property, owned by former inspector general of police Benazir Ahmed and his family, has been attached following a court order over graft allegations against the ex-top cop. The photo was taken last week.

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PM likely to visit India in September

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who returned from New Delhi on Monday after attending the oath taking ceremony of her Indian counterpart Narendra Modi, is likely to visit India again in September, according to sources.

According to sources in the Bangladesh High Commission in New Delhi, Hasina's trip to Delhi on June 21-22 was being talked about, but since she just returned from India, her next visit Delhi would be delayed.

Hasina had a meeting with Modi at the Rashtrapati Bhavan after his swearing in on June 9. She also invited Modi to visit Bangladesh.

Some Indian media indicated that Modi may visit Bangladesh by the end of this month. But sources in the Bangladesh High Commission said they were not aware of this.

Hasina is likely to visit Beijing on July 9-12.

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COMPLEX, TEDIOUS ADMISSION PROCESS

Gruelling 3 days for DU freshers

SIRAJUL ISLAM RUBEL

An excited Imran Hossain reached Dhaka University from Chattogram earlier this week to secure his admission to the prestigious institution.

But he had no idea about the tedious admission process he would have to go through. He said the guidance he received from the university authorities was inadequate and he spent two days waiting in queues and going from one building to another in the scorching heat.

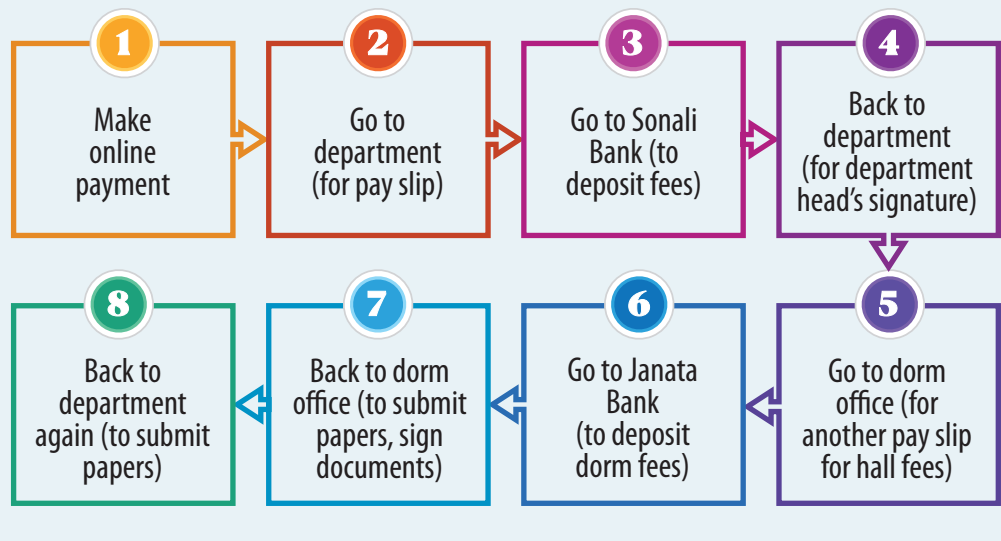


"The process is very complex and takes a lot of time and energy. I am exhausted," Imran told The Daily Star.

On June 9, he paid online the admission fee of Tk 7,830. The next day, he went to the business faculty around 10:30am with a printed copy of the receipt and started waiting for his turn.

When he submitted the receipt two hours later, the officials handed him a pay slip to deposit a development fee of Tk 5,000 to

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How could an IGP possess so much wealth?

Questions HC about Benazir
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A High Court bench yesterday expressed astonishment at the amassing of huge wealth by former IGP Benazir Ahmed.

"Irregularities and corruption of a government official are being discussed and criticised at home and abroad. How could an inspector general of police become the owner of so much wealth? We are stunned," the HC bench of Justice KM Kamrul Kader and Justice Khazir Hayat Lizu said during the hearing on a writ petition regarding the construction of eight bridges in Jashore.

Three government engineers, including the chief engineer of the Local Government and Engineering Department (LGED), appeared before the HC bench yesterday to explain their positions on the construction of the bridges as per its previous directive.

The HC told the engineers that they must work in the interest of the country and that the court would look into the irregularities if they committed any.

It also directed the authorities concerned to complete the construction of the bridges in next six months maintaining the appropriate height clearance in accordance with relevant rules, petitioner's lawyer M Shamsul Haque told The Daily Star.

Iqbal Kabir Zahid, an adviser to Bhairab River Reform Movement, filed the writ petition with the HC following a report run by Bangla daily Prothom Alo on June 11 last year under the headline "River Killing" due to low-height bridges in Jashore.

Following the petition, the HC on November 27 last year directed the officials concerned to maintain appropriate height clearance of the bridges as per the Inland Waterway and Embankment Construction Control Rules, and to submit a report to this court through an affidavit.

Lt Gen Waker-Uz-Zaman made new army chief



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Lieutenant General Waker-Uz-Zaman, chief of general staff of Bangladesh Army, has been promoted to general and appointed as the chief of army staff.

He will be serving as the army chief for three years from June 23, according to an ISPR press release.

Waker, who took over as chief of general staff (CGS) on January 1, 2024, will succeed General SM Shafiuddin Ahmed.

Waker was commissioned in the Corps of Infantry on December 20, 1985.

Having an illustrious career of more than three and a half decades, Waker brings with him a huge experience. His key staff appointments include staff officer at an infantry

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Hunter Biden found guilty on gun charges

REUTERS, Wilmington

US President Joe Biden's son Hunter Biden was convicted by a jury yesterday of lying about his drug use to illegally buy a gun, a verdict Democrats may seize upon to counter Donald Trump's claim of a justice system weaponized against him.

A jury in Wilmington, Delaware, federal court found him guilty on all three counts against him, making Hunter Biden the first child of a sitting US president to be convicted of a crime.

A verdict of the 12-member jury must be unanimous on each count.

The trial followed the May 30 criminal conviction of Trump, the first former US president to be found guilty of a felony and the Republican challenger to Joe Biden, a Democrat, in the November 5 election.

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Buses pick up and drop off passengers obstructing traffic on the Airport Road in the capital's Kuril area. This not only puts bus passengers at risk but also causes tailbacks. The photo was taken around 1:00pm yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

DISCARDED CYLINDER 1 dies, 40 fall ill after inhaling toxic gas

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A man was killed and at least 40 others became sick after being exposed to toxic gas in the capital's Adabar Beribadh area early yesterday.

The gas quickly spread across the neighbourhood after workers at a scrap metal shop broke open an old and discarded cylinder around 3:00am, police said.

According to victims, around 200 residents of 30 homes at Shyamoli Housing (2nd Project) rushed out onto the street after experiencing severe breathing difficulties during their sleep. Many were seen vomiting.

During a visit to the spot yesterday afternoon, this correspondent noticed partially burnt and dried-up tree leaves near the shop.

A senior fire service official said it was ammonia gas. Ammonia is a colourless highly irritating gas with a sharp odor.

The victims were taken to Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College and Hospital (SSMCH) and Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) for treatment.

One of them, Kabir Hossain, 45, from Lakshampur's Ramganj upazila, died at the DMCH.

According to the emergency unit staff at SSMCH, the first victim with breathing difficulties and eye irritation came in at 4:00am and within 15 minutes, over a hundred people with similar complaints arrived.

"Most of them needed oxygen support. Initially, we

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