

## Withdraw remaining security camps, CHT leaders demand

NURUL ALAM, Chittagong

The process of packing up over 400 temporary security camps from the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) has remained stalled for over two and a half years after their partial withdrawal.

Indigenous leaders in the CHT say this shows civil administration is yet to be established in the region.

Security officials however said the camps were not removed just to ensure public security in the CHT against the backdrop of fresh flare up of unrest.

They mentioned that more than 70 camps were withdrawn as per orders from the higher authorities to honour the peace accord signed between the government and the Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) on December 2, 1997.

About 6,000 security personnel were pulled out of the camps till 2000 following the accord ending two decades of insurgency in the region.

All temporary camps of army, Ansar and Village Defence Party (VDP) in the CHT were supposed to be withdrawn in phases, sources said.

The peace accord provides for permanent cantonments at the headquarters of the three CHT districts -- Rangamati, Khagra-chhari and Bandarban.

Meanwhile, indigenous leaders including PCJSS chief Jyotirindra Bodhipriya Larma alias Shantu Larma continue to press for withdrawal of the

camps to implement of the peace accord.

Larma, also chairman of the CHT Regional Council, renewed his call for withdrawal of the camps when the general officer commanding (GOC), Chittagong, made a courtesy call on him at his office recently, official sources said.

"As per our estimates, 31 camps were withdrawn during the Awami League rule. So far as we know, no camps packed up after the BNP-led alliance took over... Rather, the government has increased the number of camps," the PCJSS chief told this correspondent.

Another indigenous leader, Upendra Lal Chakma, said "We signed peace accord to lead a normal life under civil administration but we still find domination of security forces over the CHT authorities."

Upendra, former chairman of the ethnic refugee welfare and rehabilitation association, went on, "We want immediate withdrawal of security camps from CHT to establish rule of the civil administration."

A section of the dominant Chakmas took up arms in mid-70s demanding autonomy and expulsion of Bangla-speaking settlers from the CHT.

The insurgency left at least 2500 dead till the accord was signed, an estimate said. However, some estimates put the number higher.

## Anti-corruption

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only up to five workdays.

The parliamentary standing committee on the law, justice and parliamentary affairs ministry is likely to hold its meeting on November 16 to recommend an amendment to the bill.

"It needs several sittings to scrutinise the amendment and the bill is passed in parliament two days after the parliamentary committee submits its report with recommendations. So the possibility of the bill being passed in the upcoming session is slim, but we are trying all out to finish it soon," the minister said.

The amendment proposal includes expansion of the commission's jurisdiction with incorporation of the Foreign Exchange Act, 1947, the Passport Act and the Customs Act to empower the body to deal with corruption covered by the three acts.

An inter-ministerial meeting is likely at the finance ministry today to thrash out the embodiment of the acts in the bill, sources said.

Formation of an independent anti-corruption commission was high on agenda of the ruling BNP's pre-poll pledges. Two years on, uncertainty still clouds an early implementation of the pledge.

Although the parliamentary committee took up the bill for scrutiny, it could not proceed much because of the ministry's indecision over modifications of the bill.

Parliament rules say each standing committee must meet at least once a month, but it did not sit for over one and a half months now.

Speaker Jamir Uddin Sircar did not intervene either to hasten holding of committee meetings.



PHOTO: STAR

Residents of Lalbagh, Hazaribagh and Kamrangirchar agitate near the High Court yesterday, demanding trial of the killers of 22-year-old Mohammad Ripon, who was beaten dead on October 31.

## 20 ministries

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tees to look into the anomalies. Abdul Alim, chairman of the committee, observed that irregularities and corruption were rampant in the sector.

The committee found irregularities in implementation of different projects under the energy, power and mineral resources ministry and fake billing by the Power Development Board and Dhaka Electric Supply Authority. The committee on this ministry also observed similar irregularities.

The Public Accounts Committee raised allegations against the Roads and Highways Department under the communication ministry. Besides, the parliamentary standing committee on communication ministry raised allegations of irregularities at the Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation under the ministry.

The Estimate Committee found gross irregularities in different organisations, including Rajuk, under the housing and public works ministry and formed two sub-committee to identify the irregularities.

The sub-committees are now investigating the alleged irregularities and corruption at Uttara Model Residential City, Purbachal, Nikunja, Hatirjhil, Jhilmil and construction of some roads including Kamapur to Sayedabad link road and Gulshan Square to Pragati Sarani linkroad.

Chairman of the committee Syed Mehedi Ahmed Rumi termed it a huge work and said the two sub-committees took an additional two months to complete their investigation.

The parliamentary standing committee on the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) affairs ministry observed that the ministry was performing poorly because of a lack of coordination among its top officials.

Even the deputy minister of the ministry raised allegations of corruption in the implementation of every project in the CHT and has already threatened to quit office.

The committee on the home ministry expressed satisfaction at the performance of the police administration and the law and order, but recently it put pressure on the police administration to improve law and order. The committee also criticised the alleged involvement of police officials in crimes.

The two parliamentary bodies on the commerce and food ministries expressed dissatisfaction at the performance of these ministries over the price upswing of essentials. They were also unhappy about the ministries' failure to control the market, saying some officials have teamed up with unscrupulous traders to manipulate the market.

The parliamentary body on the religious affairs ministry observed that because of the poor performance of the ministry, encroachers have occupied a large number of waqf estates.

The parliamentary standing committee on the land ministry also observed that encroachers have gobbled up acres of land across the country, especially in the metropolitan cities due to the irregularities in allocation of khas land. A section of officials of the ministry aided and abetted the encroachers in the act, it found.

The fisheries and livestock ministry could not present a paper before the parliamentary committee on it and the body blamed the low fish production on the inefficiency of the top ministry officials.

The committee also observed that most of the funds are being used to pay the consultants to different projects. Allegations have also been raised against

the ministry in the appointment of the consultants and purchases under the third fisheries project.

The information ministry has failed to restore credibility of Bangladesh Television and Radio Bangladesh as top officials are inefficient and irregular, observed the parliamentary standing committee on the ministry. The committee also questioned transparency in the works of different organisations under the ministry.

Allegations of corruption have been raised against the liberation war affairs ministry in the construction of Gulistan complex and Moon Cinema Hall. It formed a sub-committee to probe allegations of irregularities in rent collection from Rajdhani Super Market.

The Drug Administration under the health ministry has failed to rein in illegal pharmacies across the country due to corruption of the officials, observed the parliamentary standing committee on the ministry.

Different projects under the Water Development Board and the water ministry are not free from irregularities and corruption, the parliamentary body on the ministry made the observation while reviewing the ongoing projects.

The parliamentary body on the science and information and communication technology ministry alleged corruption in the implementation of Dhaka Navo Theatre Project.

The parliamentary body on the environment and forest ministry found poor performance of the ministry responsible for the unabated hill cutting.

Stern action against fake recruiting agencies is absent due to some corrupt officials of the expatriates welfare and overseas employment ministry, contended the parliamentary body on the ministry.

Moreover, there are allegations of irregularities in the non-formal education project under the primary and mass education ministry, allocation of food grains of TR and Kabikha projects under the relief and disaster management ministry, and promotion of government officials under the establishment ministry.

## Revolution Day

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independence and sovereignty and continue on the path of democracy for economic advancement, he added.

In a similar message, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia hoped that the people imbued with the spirit of November 7 would take a fresh vow to make the nation happy and prosperous.

Recalling the eventful day, Khaleda Zia said the armed forces and people in general saved the country from a perilous situation by foiling a deep-rooted conspiracy of the evil forces on November 7, 1975.

Earlier in the morning, President Iajuddin Ahmed and Prime Minister Khaleda Zia laid wreaths at the mazar of late president Ziaur Rahman.

The prime minister stood there in solemn silence and offered munajat. Ministers, MPs, chiefs of the three services and BNP leaders were present.

Speaker Barrister Muhammad Jamiruddin Sircar also placed wreaths at the mazar of Shaheed president Ziaur Rahman, and offered fateha. Whip Rezaul Bari Dina accompanied the Speaker.

Different political parties and socio-cultural organisations, including ruling BNP, its allies and front organisations, organised discussions, seminars, Milad Mahfil, symposiums and cultural functions to mark the day.

## Nirmal Sen might be flown to Singapore Monday

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ailing veteran journalist and politician Nirmal Sen is likely to be sent to Singapore for treatment on Monday instead of today.

"Due to some last-minute exigencies, it will not be possible to send Sen to Singapore's Mount Elizabeth Hospital on Saturday, but we hope to send him there Monday night," said Professor ABM Faruque of Dhaka University, who raised funds for and is coordinating Sen's treatment abroad.

Sen's nephew Kankan Sen, his party leader Mosaddek Hossain Swapon and Dr Trisha Mosaddek may go with him, Faruque said.

Nirmal Sen, chief of the left-leaning Sramik Krishak Samajbadi Dal, suffered a brain stroke on October 11 that left him partially paralysed.

He is now undergoing treatment at the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Hospital.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia donated Tk 5 lakh and Awami League General Secretary Abdul Jalil and some left-leaning politicians gave Tk 6 lakh on Thursday for Sen's treatment.

## Child addicts

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continue to drift into disaster.

"Such addiction of cannabis, seductive as well heroin by juveniles is now a common phenomenon," said an official of the Department of Narcotic Control.

"Although we do not have any specific figure or study, I'm sure many children are now picking up such habits without knowing the consequences."

At the Central Drug Addiction Treatment Centre about five per cent of its total admission, about 14 a week, are juveniles, used to heroin and cannabis.

Dr Mahboob Morshed, former rehabilitation officer of the centre, said: "It's quite alarming to note this, but there is no social awareness programme to stop the deadly practice."

Dr MA Zaman, medical officer of Mukti Clinic in Gulshan, said: "We have about 25 children who are under treatment for mostly cannabis and heroin addiction."

About 14 children undergo treatment at APON, another popular drug addiction correctional centre, in the city.

## Dengue

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At Holy Family Red Crescent Hospital, three suspected patients are receiving treatment. At Al-Raji and Nibedita Hospitals, four patients having symptoms of dengue fever were hospitalised.

Dengue is a mosquito-borne infection, which has become a major international concern over public health in recent years. Dengue is common predominantly to urban and semi-urban areas. In 2001, about 100 people died of the dreadful disease, while over 5,000 people were infected in the country.

## 100 drugged

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same day. Lokman, 32, two unknown men, aged about 34 and 35, were also admitted to the DMCH.

Mobarak Mollah, 70, his wife Rashida Begum, and Neela, 18, were found unconscious at their house at Shyamoli on the same day. Impersonating as guests, two men made their way into the house with fruit juice, drugged heavily, as an iftar item.

Posing as passengers, two young men hired an auto-rickshaw from Naya Paltan the same day and decamped with the vehicle.

As the driver, Ibrahim Khan, started the auto-rickshaw, one of his fares put a handkerchief on his nose making him unconscious.

An unidentified elderly man was found unconscious in a bus at Mirpur Zoo bus stand on November 2. Bus employees rushed him to the DMCH.

Two children -- Sharmeen Akhter, 5, and Belal Hossain, 3, -- were slipped into unconscious in front of a house at Block-A in Mirpur on November 3. They had two packs of mango juice in their hands.

An unknown rickshaw-puller, aged about 35, lost his sense when some people put sedatives on his face at 9:00pm the same day at Section 13 in Kafur.

Police rescued him, but the gang decamped with his rickshaw.

Black taxicab driver Miraz could read the motive of his fares, but could not escape sedation that landed him in the DMCH on November 2.

The cabby told The Daily Star that three men hired his vehicle on a trip to Mirpur from Uttara, but soon after he reached Section 10 of Mirpur, a passenger

put a wet handkerchief on his nose.

Aware of a wave of sedation-motivated robberies in town, Miraz sped his cab in front of a police patrol before relapsing into unconscious.

His passengers fled the scene before police could understand anything and send the driver to the DMCH.

Heavily intoxicated Abdul Manna, 42, Shikder, 40, Nurul Haque, 25 and MA Samad Chowdhury, 40, were admitted to the DMCH on November 3.

Also found themselves in hospital beds were Shilpi, 13, from Rampura, Rahmat, 23, from Dhanmondi, Aslam, 44, from Tophkana and Kuddus, 42, from Rampur.

Hospital sources said at least six people were admitted to the DMCH since November 3 after losing their cash and valuables to the drugging gangs.

## Monga spell

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frantic bid to survive.

In eight villages of Laxmitari union in Gangachhara upazila, Rangpur, many workers found themselves begging for survival, finding no alternative.

The Teesta river erosion hit seven of ten unions of Gangachhara upazila home to 2.5 lakh people, worsening the situation the destitute are living in.

Some 13,000 people on 27 shoals in and around the upazila were left with almost nothing to live on.

Gangachhara Upazila Nirbahi Officer Fazlul Haq said 12,000 VGF (vulnerable group feeding) cards were distributed among monga-affected people.

## Lanka: Emergency

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parliament closed we cannot take the peace process forward," he said.

He said the "whole peace process is at risk" because of the crisis sparked by the president.

"Therefore, I have to create an environment in which the peace process can go forward. Sri Lanka cannot be found to be at fault in stopping the peace process," the premier said.

He said he would start discussions with the US, Japan, European Union and the World Bank -- all key players in raising money for rebuilding Sri Lanka -- as well as peacebroker Norway and neighbouring India.

The premier said he was also keen to start talks with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) on the crisis in a bid to restore confidence in the government.

Kumaratunga's party has been in opposition in parliament since losing December 2001 elections to Wickremesinghe's coalition. But the president retains strong powers, including the right to dismiss any minister including the prime minister himself.

Analysts believe the showdown between the president and premier could be heading towards fresh parliamentary elections, but say the turmoil could hurt the economy which has recovered from recession and boomed since the ceasefire was signed with the rebels in February 2002.

Wickremesinghe's party has asked the parliament speaker to convene a meeting Friday of all party leaders to examine the possibility of defying the president and reopening parliament, government chief whip Mahinda Samarasinghe told AFP.

The emergency had been due to go into effect Thursday as troops stepped up their presence, setting up checkpoints on major Colombo streets and checking the identity papers of pedestrians and motorists.

But police officials had said they had been waiting for regulations of the new emergency to be published in the official gazette. The chief printer said revised guidelines would be printed later yesterday.

Sri Lanka was ruled under an emergency during the height of the 30-year Tamil separatist conflict, which has cost 60,000 lives.

## US cold-shoulders

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Processing Zones Authority (Bepza), and Abul Kalam Azad, economic minister of Bangladesh embassy in Washington, were the other members on the delegation.

A source close to the delegation said the government should make serious efforts to convince US officials that the three years' time is indeed necessary to impart special training to some 1.3 lakh workers of the six EPZs to safeguard rights of both workers and investors.

So far, some 13,000 workers at the six EPZs located in Dhaka, Chittagong, Syedpur, Ishwardi, Comilla and Mongla have been given the special training.

Washington has threatened to cancel the GSP unless TU activities are allowed in the EPZs by January next year. Under the GSP, Bangladesh exports to the US market currently fetch some \$40 million annually.

Delegation sources claimed they were able to convince the AFLCIO leaders about the need for more time to complete the workers' training programme, but the USTR officials were yet not convinced. This has led officials at the labour ministry to fear that the government might not be able to salvage the situation after all.

The sources also pointed out that

Washington's stiffness might have been fuelled by Dhaka's refusal to allow the Stevedoring Services of America (SSA) to set up a private port in Chittagong and also by the government's indecision about the gas export issue that the US has long been pressing for.

US officials are also reportedly annoyed because US investors hardly get any preferential treatment when it comes to investment in Bangladesh.

The previous Awami League government had assured Washington that trade unionism would be introduced in the EPZs by 2003. The US ambassador in Dhaka Harry K Thomas also expressed disappointment on several occasions at the government's failure to keep that commitment.

The sources observed that in addition to losing GSP facilities, Dhaka may also miss the opportunity to avail duty- and quota-free access of its goods to US markets if trade unionism at the EPZs is not allowed by January 2004.

On the other hand, foreign investors in the EPZs have been threatening to withdraw their investments if trade unionism is allowed without proper training of the workers. They fear losing their investments due to frequent strikes called by unruly workers.

## Tigers torn apart

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Bangladesh has grown a custom to flirting with disaster. But the freak-show on Friday must top the list. Four wickets fell with the score on 65. And obviously there was no way back from that point.

And then who could have expected burly England all-rounder Andrew Flintoff, who conceded 12 runs in his first over, would return as the hero of the match with a virtuoso performance.

Coming back from injury the giant from Lancashire sparked the amazing collapse to return with 4-19 in his 9.4 overs. The 25-year-old then knocked the stuffing out of Bangladesh's bowling with a power-packed 55 as England ran away with the contest in 25 overs.

But the morning was too good to be true as opener Hannan and one-down Habibul Bashar saw off the new ball after the early departure of crowd favourite Nafees Iqbal.

The home boy looked comfortable until making nine when he went for an expansive drive off James Anderson and was smartly taken by Marcus Trescothick in the slips.

Nafees' wicket hardly made a difference as Hannan and Bashar steadily but surely rebuilt the innings. But what followed after Bashar gloved one while attempting a pull off Flintoff was sheer irresponsibility on the part of the senior batsmen.

Bangladesh, who were looking relatively comfortable at 50-1, threw their hard work away in a 14-ball harakiri to the delight of Flintoff and left-arm spinner Ashley Giles.

The Bangladesh batsmen's ambitious attempts to pull and hook were the chief reasons for the self-destruction as the scoreboard slumped to a hopeless situation from a promising two for 65.

Opener Hannan top scored with 30 before he offered an identical catch to wicketkeeper Chris Read against the same bowler.

Bangladesh crossed the hundred mark thanks to a 34-run ninth wicket stand between debutants Manjarul Islam (18) and Jamal Uddin (18) and 36 for the last wicket between Jamal and Tapash Baisya (14).

The only excitement for the local boys during England's chase came when seamer Mushfiqur Rahman took two wickets in two balls to dismiss openers Vikram Solanki and Trescothick (28).

Manjarul joined the brief party by claiming England captain Michael Vaughan with his third ball in international cricket but the rest was a Flintoff story.

## Tandoor

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opposition Congress party, was said to have killed his wife because he suspected she was having an affair.

The grisly killing led to an eight-year trial, one of the longest murder trials in New Delhi.

Court officials said the judge also sentenced Keshav Kumar, who owned the restaurant, to seven years rigorous imprisonment for conspiring with Sharma to burn Sahni's body. Kumar has already served eight years in jail during the trial, so will be freed.

The tandoor murder haunts the Congress party and political foes are widely expected to turn the issue into an electoral plank to hit out at the party during a state election in New Delhi in December.

## Injections

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Latin America was not included in the study for lack of data.

"Overuse of injections and unsafe practices are still common in developing and transitional countries," according to the authors.

This combination "results in a major route of transmission for hepatitis B virus and hepatitis C virus. Other complications of unsafe injections include infection with HIV, abscesses, septicæmia, malaria and viral haemorrhagic fevers."

Lead author is Yvan Hutin, a medical officer at the WHO's Department of Blood Safety and Clinical Technology.