

# CHT Accord: Let Peace Determine Progress

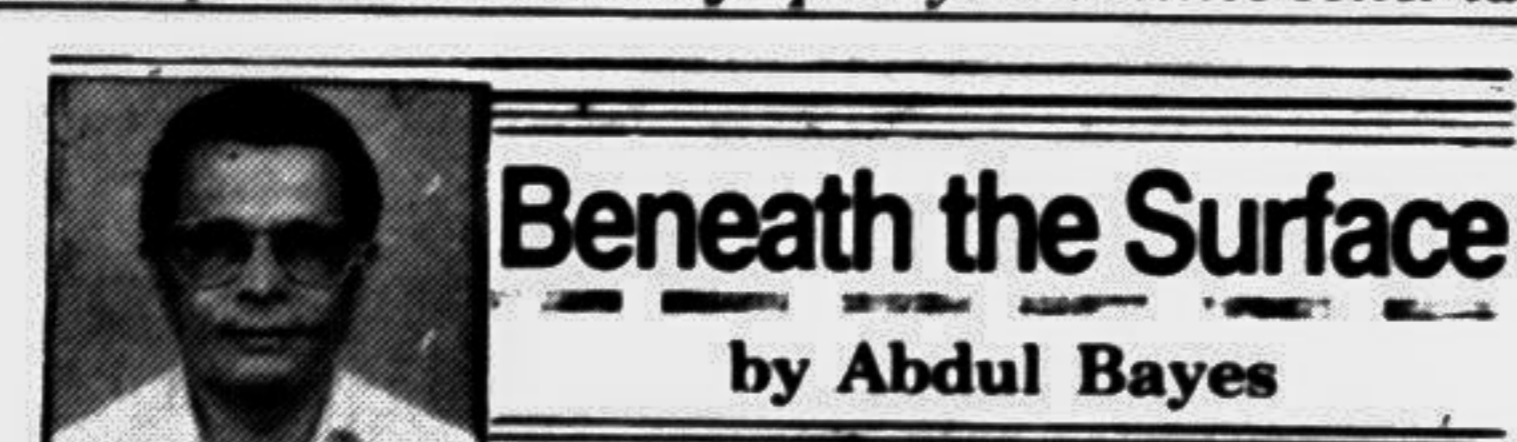
When one-tenth of a country's land area and almost half of its bushes are under fire, its sustainable development always remains to be in jeopardy. And hence better late than never.

DISPELLING all despair hovering around a possible solution to the decades-old insurgency in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) region, the landmark peace treaty finally came true. The 68-point accord signed by the government and NCCHT would, we hope, pave ways for the return of a normal civic life in an area so long stripped off by terrorist activities. The present government, especially the PM Sheikh Hasina, duly deserves congratulations for having thrown full commitment, courage, and co-operation in the pursuit and completion of this 'tricky' job.

The CHT constitutes about one-tenth of the land area of the country. Reportedly, it occupies about half of our forest resources. Unfortunately, this region that ravish with scenic beauty had been ravaged and torn apart by insurgency. All that fueled fire is deprivation. History tells us that the British in 1900 imposed CHT regulations — apparently to help hilly people — but in practice to bar easy entry into and exit from the region. People of that region continued to be captive in own

lands. The construction of the Kaptai Barrage hardly took into due cognizance the adverse impacts that it could impinge on those citizens. As a result, 54 thousands acres of agricultural land got inundated and 100 thousand Chakmas were turned into destitutes overnight. In fact, the seeds of a separatist movement were sown at that time. To add further fuel to the fire, the successive governments in Bangladesh brought in Bengalee settlers from all over Bangladesh and pushed them into the hilly region. Bengalee us Pahar discord flared up.

The hatred and anguish, so mounted, contributed to waging a war against establishments. Thousands flocked to India to take refuge and armed with its fight back. The region allegedly soon turned out to be a hot bed of international conspiracy where militants were trained to ignite separatism in the neighbouring country. The decades-old insurgency cost lot of human lives from both sides of the fence. Destabilisation gripped



**Beneath the Surface**  
by Abdul Bayes

the region to hinder socio-economic development. The military solution in the crisis that were nourished and nurtured by the erstwhile military and quasi-military rulers of Bangladesh over the last two decades or so, was replaced by a move for political solution in early 1990s. The then government in power (BNP) can, perhaps, justly claim a credit for its avowals of a political solution. Unfortunately the solution did not materialise during BNP rule. Bangladesh Awam League — the party in power now — took up the challenge and after few months of hectic political parleys, got the dice rolling and at last on shore.

When one-tenth of a country's land area and almost half of its bushes are under fire, its sustainable development always remains to be in jeopardy. And hence better late than never. We hope that members of Shantibahini would surrender their arms to words and thus embrace Bengalee settlers there to work in harmony.

We strongly feel that the titanic bureaucratic system of governance should give way to a more populist structure where people could decide their fate through participation. We mean that democratisation of administration should start from top to bottom. We hope that the recently concluded peace accord would be able to give a que in this respect.

## Stand Up and Be Counted

It isn't easy not to be a victim. Divorce was scary, uncharted, unpredictable and yes, heady stuff too. Liberation is all that and more. It is the ability to admit you are mortal. And still stand up and be counted. Just the way you are.

SOMETIMES, I joke about it. "Sorry," I say with a wry shrug. "I'm clean out of husbands."

## Coming Home...

Almas Zakiuddin

For dear life, until the day you die," she explains, patiently. "If you fall to do this, if he leaves you or dies or something, it's your fault. You shouldn't have let it happen."

## Letter from America

Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed writes from Princeton

When it comes to choosing sides, the West will always side with Israel, because they belong to the same "civilisation."

## What a Waste!

If ever space did not matter in conveying the gravity or the magnitude of a problem then this was it: a news item on Mymensingh's Agriculture University at a quiet corner in yesterday's issue of a leading Bengali daily. Session jam, an accepted if not appreciated phrase in our academic jargon has taken a kind of toll on students that even the most liberal would find hard to swallow.

## Don't Punish Iraq on Account of its "Civilisation"

The West did not make a distinction between Saddam Hussein and the Iraqi children. Not surprisingly, the West's policy towards Saddam and Iraq to-date has been all stick and no carrot.

In the summer of 1993, at the height of the holocaust of the Bosnian Muslims, Harvard's Professor of government and strategic studies, P. Huntington, published an explosive paper entitled, "Clash of Civilizations?" in the Foreign Affairs magazine.

## To the Editor...

BAU's residential problem

Sir, Residential problem of students of Bangladesh Agriculture University is acute at present. There are only nine halls of resident in which there reside more students than their capacity. For this crisis, many students have to stay outside the campus. As all courses are technical, their studies are being seriously harmed.

## Rickshaw-free Motijheel?

We don't really know what to do with rickshaws. This is confirmed one time too many by a decision of the city care-takers that Motijheel area would be made rickshaw-free. The Task Force on easing traffic jams in a fit of desperation to make a dent in a highly frustrating traffic non-system had recommended it to the city fathers.

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## DU library: A good dating place

Sir, In all probability, the library of Dhaka University is the largest one in this subcontinent because of its innumerable books, journals, magazines and newspapers. The library is very important for the students of this university and the researchers of home