

Frame laws for CHT Land Commission

First meeting concludes without setting a date for the next round

MONIRUL ALAM, Khagrachhari

The Chittagong Hill Tracts Land Commission in its first meeting here yesterday underscored the need for enactment of necessary laws for its functioning to start.

"Only the commission has been formed. It would never start functioning unless necessary laws are enacted", its member Jyotirindriya Bodhipriya Larma alias Santu Larma told newsmen after the first closed-door meeting of the Commission, held at Khagrachhari Circuit House.

The meeting was held from 11:00 am to 12:30 pm.

Commission's Chairman Justice AM Mahmudur Rahman, a retired judge of the High Court, chaired the meeting.

Talking to newsmen briefly, Justice Rahman said, "The meeting was held in a cordial atmosphere. Discussions on sorting out the problems towards functioning of the commission figured prominently at the first meeting today."

"Parliament is responsible for bringing necessary amendments to the recommendations made by the CHT Regional Council, regarding enactment of laws of the commission", he added.

He however said, "It would be

more effective in mitigating long standing land dispute issues in the CHT if it is a 'tribunal' instead of a commission".

He avoided any comment on progress of the meeting and did not speculate on when the next meeting could be held.

The CHT Regional Council (CHTRC), the co-ordinating body of three hill districts in Rangamati, Khagrachhari and Bandarban, earlier proposed 19 draft laws and bylaws to the government to mitigate land disputes in the CHT.

The government and the CHTRC reached unanimity on 18 of the recommendations, it was gathered.

"The remaining one is vital for indigenous people's land rights", Santu Larma said.

Chittagong Divisional Commissioner Ashrafur Maqbul, chairmen of Rangamati and Khagrachhari Hill District Councils Manik Lal Dewan and Nakhtra Lal Dev Burman and Bandarban Hill District Council Chairman's representative Lushai Mong attended the meeting.

Chief of Chakma Circle Devashish Roy, Chief of Mong Circle Paila Prue Chowdhury and elder son of the Chief of Bomang Circle Chhla Prue Jhimi also attended the meeting.

The Land Commission was

formed on June 3, 1999 under the provisions of the CHT peace agreement signed in 1997 between the then Awami League government and the Parbatya Chatyagam Jono Sanghity Samity (PCJSS) led by its chief Santu Larma.

The gazette notification effecting formation of the Land Commission was published in July 2001.

An office for the commission has been set up beside the office of the Khagrachhari Deputy Commissioner.

11 BCL men sued for Bogra blast

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Bogra district unit president of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) Shuvavish Podder Liton and 11 other activists were sued for their alleged involvement in Sunday's bomb explosion in Satmatha area here.

Bogra Sadar police filed the case on Monday.

Jogesh Chandra, 55, a day labourer was killed when miscreants threw 4 to 5 cocktails on the spot. Later, they fled towards Altafunessa playground.

Earlier, police said Jogesh was killed in a road accident while trying to escape the bomb attack.

Police further said to journalists that opposition party activists also exploded some crackers before the bomb blast to create panic in the town.

Shariakandi police filed another case under Speedy Trial Act against a few Awami League (AL), Shechhashebak League and BCL leaders and activists including AL organising secretary Abdul Mannan on charge of their involvement in ransacking and setting fire to upazila BNP office.

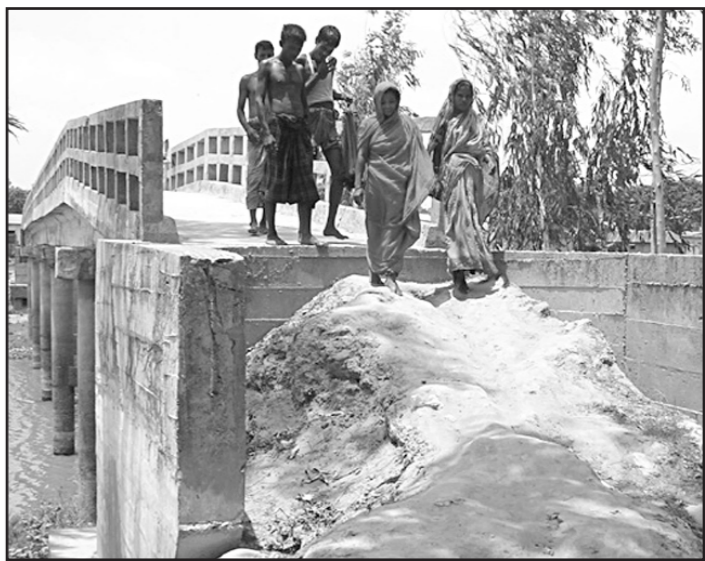


PHOTO: STAR

Chanmari bridge, one of the three constructed near Bogra town, unutilised for long due to lack of approach road.

Bridges built with no plan for approach roads!

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Three bridges constructed by the Road and Highways Department (R&HD) and the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) on Karotoa river at a cost of about Tk 3.56 crore is utilised for long for want of link roads on both sides.

R&H sources said the 64.28 meter long and 7.50 meter wide Madla bridge was completed about one and half years back at a cost of Tk 1.60 crore.

A Sub-Divisional Engineer (SDE) of R&H said, a proposal was sent to the Ministry of Land for land acquisition for link roads, but to no response yet.

Another bridge of about the same length and breath was constructed at Chandpara in the same area at a cost of about Tk 1.76 crore nine months back, but it is also unutilised for want of link roads.

Six years back, LGED constructed a 60-metre long foot bridge at Chainmari Ghat near Bogra town at a cost of Tk 16 lakh under a special project. The bridge can not serve any purpose for want of approach roads.

LGED sources however said Tk 30,000 was allocated last week for earth filling work on both sides of the bridge.

A senior official of R&H said they are still exchanging letters with the land ministry for land acquisition. But no body knows when the approach roads will be completed.

Bus owners raise fare in Comilla

A CORRESPONDENT, Comilla

The Comilla Paribahan Owners' Association has increased bus fares unilaterally on all the 40 routes from the district town.

Incidents of hot exchange of words and even scuffle between passengers and bus conductors are being reported everyday.

According to government's re-fixed rates, large buses should charge 72 paisa per kilometre in place of 62 paisa and minibuses 75 paisa in place of 65 paisa.

At this rate, bus fare from Comilla to Dhaka comes to around Tk 69. But buses plying the route are realising fares between Tk 75 and 80. Passengers are harassed to realise this fare, many of them alleged while talking to this correspondent yesterday.

The administration did not take any step to enforce the government fixed fare, said an irate Abdul Halim of the town, who came from Dhaka.

A representative of the bus owners association when contacted said rise in prices of fuel and spares compelled them realise more fare.

On the other hand, over 50 per cent of the buses plying different routes have no fitness certificate, it was gathered.

Workshop on HIV held in B'baria

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria

A day-long workshop and orientation programme on HIV/AIDS prevention, jointly organised by Brhmanbaria Press Club and Marie Stopes Clinic, Bangladesh, was held at Brhmanbaria Zila Parishad auditorium here yesterday.

The workshop was presided over by Press Club Vice-president Sayed Md. Mizanur Reza, also Editor of local daily Titas Kantha.

Family Health International (FHI) gave technical assistance for the programme.

Dr Reena Yeasmin, General Manager of Marie Stopes, was the chief guest. Its Project Manager Dr. Masudus Salehin presented the keynote paper.

Discussants at the workshop said creating awareness is the only way to prevent spread of AID in the country and the media has a special role in this regard.

The meeting was addressed by, among other, Brahmanbaria Press Club Vice-president Sheikh Md Shahidul Islam, Secretary Muhammad Arzoo, KHM Rashidul Islam, AKM Fazla Khuda, Samatat Barta Editor Md. Munzurul Alam, Weekly Maa Editor Md Nizamul Islam, Daily Samakal Correspondent Md. Abdun Noor, Daily Naya Diganta Correspondent Al Amin Shahin, Daily Bhurer Kagaj Correspondent Pijush Kanuti Acharjo, Daily Amar Desh reporter Md. Mafjur Rahman Limon and Daily Jugantar Correspondent Md. Monir Hossain.

Fifty-six participants including 36 newsmen representing different national and local dailies were present at the programme.

Sylhet town protection project shelved

IQBAL SIDDIQUEE, Sylhet

The Planning Commission has finally rejected the revised Tk 90 crore Sylhet town protection project after sitting on it for over a year, according to Water Development Board (WDB) sources here.

This has evoked criticism from the townspeople, including political leaders, who apprehend massive erosion by the Surma river in the coming monsoon season.

The revised project was submitted to the Planning Commission in last financial year (FY 2004-2005). The WDB took about two years for preparation of the revised project.

The WDB sources said they will now go ahead with the original project

with some modifications, which will raise the cost by Tk five crore.

The original project involving Tk 14.61 crore was taken up at the initiative of former lawmaker from the city, Humayun Rashid Chowdhury, during Awami League rule. It was prepared to renovate and protect the Surma riverbank at Kolapara, Darsha, Alampur, Kanishail and some other areas.

After some initial work, the authorities decided to revise the project and include new areas. Accordingly, the revised project was prepared to include more 9.7 kilometres on the right bank of Surma and 8.5 kilometres on its left bank. The revised project also includes remodeling work in several areas.

The WDB sources said, due to the indecision, concrete blocks and boulders procured for the bank protection work were left unused at places for about three years.

Meanwhile people gave representations and staged demonstrations for implementation of the project to save their lands and homesteads from erosion by the Surma.

Besides, due to waste of time without work, the main purpose of the project would not be served now and the public money would be simply 'misused', a number of residents in Jhalopara and Kanishail areas under the project said while talking to this correspondent yesterday.

The original project was designed

to renovate 12 kilometres of the river bank from the Mazar of Hazrat Gazi Burhanuddin (RA) in the east to Kanishail-Darsha in the west of the town by using concrete blocks and boulders.

On the other bank, protection work was to be done from Alampur to Mistori Masjid areas.

After the change of government in 2001, fate of the project became uncertain as things remained stalled for more than a year.

Later, Finance Minister Saifur Rahman, who is now the lawmaker from Sylhet city, asked for a revised project and inclusion of new areas.

He ordered that the project should cover areas from the east to the west part of the riverbank without any break.

A Tk 114 crore project was prepared, which included Sylhet City Corporation's contribution of Tk 24 crore for creating small parks on the banks. The rest Tk 90 crore was proposed to be financed by the government.

Every year during monsoon, erosion plays havoc in Sheikhghat, Tukerbazar, Ghopal, Jangail, Pirpur Chargaon, Haiderpur Sahebergaon, Kanishail, Broikandi, Anantapur, Darsha, Kamalganj, Technical Road and Alampur areas.

There has been no major dredging of the Surma for long. Only about two kilometre area from Dhanpur to Chandpur in Sadar upazila was dredged in 1978.

Mayor of Sylhet City Corporation Badar uddin Ahmed Kamran told The Daily Star the government should approve the project to protect the town.

"I urged the government again to approve the vital project to same vital installation in the city and its suburbs", he said.



STAR FILE PHOTO

Erosion affected Surma Residential Area in Sylhet city.

Extortionists occupy house, land for refusing to pay toll

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Netrakona

Madhob Bhattachariya and his family are on the run for life as some miscreants occupied their lands along with the homestead and threatened them with death for non-payment of toll.

Madhob left his Badaura village home in Atpara upazila and has taken shelter in Mohongonj municipal area in Natrakona district.

He submitted a written prayer to the Netrakona Police Superintendent on May 30 to save his family members and his property, he told this correspondent at his hideout in Mohongonj last week. The identity of his residence is not disclosed for security reasons.

In his prayer, Madhob said that

Mohammad Fazal Karim, Abdus sallar, Ferdous Mia, Mohammad Sa im u d d i n , M o h a m m a d Hasemuddin, Md. Mostafa Mia, Mohammad Kanchon Mia, Mohammad Mahfiz Mia, Md. Sonamuddin, Falan Mia, and Kium Mia, of the area forcibly grabbed his lands and homestead about one and half months back as he failed to give them Tk 30,000 as toll.

Madhob said that he filed a case with Atpara police station on April 30 after the miscreants demanded the toll. But police did not take any action.

On May 15, the miscreants forcibly took away about 150 maunds of Boro paddy from his two acre lands. In the same evening, they came to his house and threat-

ened him to leave the village within 24 hours. He left the house with his family and took shelter at Rautpara in Mohongonj municipal area.

When contacted, Netrakona Police Superintendent Abu Naser Mohammad Khaled said he received a complaint from Madhob on May 30 and sent it to the Officer-in-Charge of Atpara thana the same day to investigate and send a report. Action will be taken after investigation, he said.

Atpara thana OC Mohammad Shahjahan said Madhob's complaint is under investigation and a report will be sent to the SP soon.

'Robber' lynched in Bogra

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

A robber was beaten to death by mob and six villagers were wounded during an armed robbery committed at a bank cashier's house at Chhoto Akhira village in Adamdighi upazila on Monday night.

The robbers looted cash, gold ornaments and valuables worth about Tk one lakh.

The victim is Shahjahan Ali, 45, son of Mokbul Hossain of Paroil village in Joypurhat district.

Injured house owner and cashier of Santahar branch of Pubali Bank Abul Hossain, 52, his wife Sahara Banu, 42, mother Kulsum Bewa, 72, were admitted to Nagaon Sadar Hospital, while Mozammel Haque, 45, Zahangir Alam, 40 and Abdul Gafur, 43, took first aid treatment.

Horses' death raises questions

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Two out of 15 horses died at Sardah Police Academy within one week of their purchase from India.

Two other horses might die any moment following attack with fever, according to sources in the academy.

Old age and weakness were the reasons behind death of the horses, purchased at a cost of Tk 3 lakh each for training purpose at the academy, according to relevant sources.

Their death posed a question about their quality and physical fitness creating suspicion of irregularities during purchase of the horses.

The Dhaka bidder who was selected for tender of purchasing 50 horses, decided to bring the animals from India. A deputy inspector general (DIG) from police headquarters in Dhaka, an inspector from Rajarbagh Police Lines and the riding master of the police academy accompanied the

contractor to India. They were supposed to examine physical fitness and quality of the horses during their purchase.

The horses were brought to the academy on May 26.

Horse riding is compulsory at the police academy, set up in 1912.

Principal Chowdhury Quamrul Ahsan of the Academy told journalists the government did not incur any loss due to death of the horses during their quarantine period under supervision of the concerned contractor.

"The horses were just kept at the academy. The contractor himself will be responsible for their death as we are yet to take charge of the horses", he said.

He further said a committee was formed by the government to investigate into the cause of death of the horses while specialists would examine them before we take charge of them.

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