

# CHT local bodies losing people's confidence

## No election in 14 years: Bodies run by govt-selected men

MONIRUL ISLAM MONU, *Bandarban*

The three hill district councils and the CHT Regional Council are gradually losing people's confidence as they are not elected. Election to the bodies are not held for 14 years though they are supposed to be public representatives' organisations, as per law.

The purpose for which those were created is also not being served, according to some former leaders of the local bodies.

This is also affecting administrations in Rangamati, Khagrachhari and Bandarban, which are being run virtually on ad-hoc basis, they observed.

Talking to this correspondent, Mong Kew Ching, former chairman of Bandarban Hill District Council, said, "Members of the local government bodies can not take any decision independently as they are not elected. On the other hand they have no commitment to people as they are selected by the government."

Another former chairman of Bandarban Hill District Council, Kew Shew Hla Marma, said, "As per the Constitution, all members of local governments have to be elected representatives of people. But the government is not holding elections. Instead,

the party in power selects its men to serve its purpose, not of people."

The organisations are virtually inactive as they are run as per interim arrangements, he said.

"They (the organisations) are losing their importance also to the government", Kew Shew Hla Marma said.

Those who occupy the positions by virtue of their parties in power should also realise this. Previously, the Chairmen of a Hill District Council enjoyed the status of a Deputy Minister. The government withdrew the facility in July this year, he noted.

This correspondent also talked to Ching Keu Roaza, former chairman of Rangamati Hill District Council and Jotindra Lal Tripura of Khagrachhari Hill District Council. They also demanded immediate election to the district councils so that they can regain their position and pride.

Stripping of the status of a deputy minister has annoyed the incumbent chairmen of the hill district councils.

Ma Mya Ching, Chairman of Bandarban Hill District Council, said this has further degraded the status of the council. She said she along with the chairmen of two other district councils held a meeting with the prime Minister and urged her to strengthen the councils by giving them more power. But she declined to make any comment when asked whether she demands election to the bodies.

The election is not held due to controversy over voter list. The law Ministry has said that as per provisions of the District Council Act, election should be held on the basis of a "separate voter list" based on local communities. The ministry also sent letters to the Election Commission (EC) to this effect in August this year.

But the EC says that election rules, formulated in line with the Constitution, does not permit preparation of "separate voter lists" for any particular geographical area or people.

The EC found the Law Ministry's suggestion "inconsistent" with constitutional provisions which provide for "a single voter list for any region irrespective of religion, race, caste of its citizens", the sources said.

Moreover, the local Bangalee communities oppose a separate voter list, sources said.

The councils were first introduced for a three-year term through a direct election, held on June 25, 1989. Since expiry of their tenure in 1992, the councils are run by government selected

bodies. The tenure of 1989 councils was extended thrice and they continued for nine years.

Subsequently, the councils were formed with people selected by the parties in power, which gave more importance to politics than development of their areas.

Now, the bodies are also losing accountability as their chairmen can change their members, often done through lobbying with high-ups in the government.

Talking to this correspondent, a good number of local elite in the three hill towns also said these "arbitrary things" must stop for improvement of government's relations with people of the three hill districts.

They said running of the councils with selected bodies also violates provisions of the landmark CHT Peace Agreement signed in 1997 during Awami League rule.

Termining the Chittagong Hill Tracts Regional Council as a great achievement towards establishing sustainable peace and development in the hills, they said even the Awami League government violated the provisions by not holding election.

As per the peace agreement, the Chairmen and members of CHT Regional Council will be elected by the chairman and members of the three hill district councils. The Regional Council comprises a chairman and 21 members.

If the present situation is not changed and co-ordination geared up, peace in the area will be disturbed and people will be deprived more, they said.

Talking to this correspondent some local lawyers said continuation of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Regulation 1900 promulgated during the British rule alongside the Chittagong Hill Tracts Local Government Council Act of 1989 also creates problems in administration in the hill districts. The CHT Regulation 1900 does not provide for any elected local government.

Besides, the Municipality Ordinance 1977, Upazila Parishad Rule 1998 and Local Government (Union Parishad) Ordinance 1983 are also in force, which only complicates things, they said.

Such divergent provisions only create misunderstanding between the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Affairs Ministry and other ministries and among the local bodies, which hamper implementation of government steps in political, social and administrative fields in the area, they said.

## UN team begins 15-day CHT tour today

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Rangamati*

A joint team comprising specialists from UN agencies and government of Bangladesh today begins a 15-day visit to the Chittagong Hill Tracts to assess economic potentialities of the region.

An official programme detailing the team's work plan has been sent to the local administrations and departments concerned, sources in the Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Facility (CHTDF) said here yesterday. The CHTDF is promotional project assisted by the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme).

The team will be led by ILO Specialist Hans Christian Haan. It will include ILO's Youth Employment and Marketing Specialist Pushpa Mathema, FAO's Agro-processing Specialist Narin Tongshiri, Tourism Specialist Ramesh Chandra of World Trade Organization (WTO), five specialists from World Food Programme (WFP) and three others from International Centre for Mountain Development (ICIMOD).

From the home side, the team will include former FBCCI president Abdul Awal Mintu; private sector resource person Mohammed Mamunur Rashid; Imran Shaikat of JOBS, an NGO and Erika Hoffman-Kiess.

The team will examine growth prospects in different sectors, their needs and problems and assistance needed from donors and the government, the sources said.

The team, meantime, talked to Deputy Minister for CHT Affairs Moniswapon Dewan in Dhaka on November 9 and high officials of other ministries and government department concerned.

During the visit, they will exchange views with political leaders, officials, law enforcers, trade bodies, NGO officials and grassroots level people.

In Rangamati, the team will meet CHT Regional Council Chairman Jiotindra Bodhipriya alias Santu Lama, CHT Development Board Chairman and lawmaker Abdul Wadood Bhuiyan, Chakma Circle Chief Devashish Roy, Hill District Council Chairman (HDC) Maniklal Dewan and Deputy Commissioner Gazi Md. Zulhash.

After concluding the visit, the team will hold a workshop in Dhaka to present its report.

## Bomb found in Sirajganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Sirajganj*

Police recovered a bomb from the house of a cloth trader at Ruppur village in Shahzadpur upazila in the district yesterday morning.

According to the Shahzadpur police, the bomb was seen on the yard of Samad Ali's house at about 7 am.

On information, police rushed to the spot and recovered the bomb. It was rapped with black tape. Police dumped it into a water-filled bucket and took it to the thana.



The Barisal unit of Bangladesh Women Lawyers Association, joined by human rights activists and other organisations, formed a human chain and held a rally in front of Aswni Kumar Hall in the city on Thursday demanding punishment to the killers of Dilruba Huq Papiya (inset).

# 'Punish killers of Papiya'

## Rallies held, human chains formed in Barisal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Barisal*

Different socio-cultural, political and non-government organisations brought out processions in the city, formed two human chains in front of the Aswni Kumar Hall and held rallies there on Thursday demanding punishment to the killers of Dilruba Huq Papiya, a human rights activist.

The organisations also formed a Dabi Parishad to implement various agitation programmes for arrest and trial of the killers.

The rally was addressed by representatives of the different organisations.

They demanded immediate arrest of Papiya's husband hambub Morshed Tuhin, the alleged killer; and an impartial investigation into the incident.

They also demanded that Papiya's daughter Saptarshi be taken away from Tuhin's family and kept in a safe shelter, saying she could be the lone witness to the murder.

Earlier on the day, another human chain was formed and a protest rally held at the same venue jointly by Bangladesh Legal Aid Services Trust (BLAST), Mahila Parishad and National Women Lawyers Association.

They also brought out a procession in the city roads, followed by handover of memoranda to the Deputy Commission and the Police Superintendent demanding proper investigation into the incident and arrest of the killers.

Papiya's elder sister Mahbuba Huq Kumkum in a case alleged that

she was killed by her husband. Papiya had started living with their mother in Dhaka as Tuhin often tortured her, she alleged.

Papiya was killed at Tuhin's Barisal city house on November 3 and the body was buried without autopsy.

Barisal police on Tuesday exhumed the body from a graveyard in the city and sent to hospital morgue for autopsy. The autopsy was done at Barisal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital morgue on the same day but the report is not yet available. Police said it will be available in two weeks.

Witnesses present at the grave said the exhumed body bore injury marks on the face, eyes and neck.

Papiya's sister-in-law was also arrested on Tuesday.



PHOTO: STAR

Landless Mominur and his wife Lipiza of Dighirpar village will not pull expeller any more. They got a bullock donated by Kohinor Chemical Company after The Daily Star published a story on their plight.

## Small aid, big relief

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Nilphamari*

Landless Mominur and his wife Lipiza of Dighirpar village in Jaldhaka upazila have got a bullock to pull their indigenous mustard crushing wooden tool (ghani) to produce edible oil.

Failing to get any VGF card to tide over the munga, the couple had decided to crush mustard seeds. But that needs a bullock, which they did not have.

Without seeking any help, they started pulling the ghanai themselves and thus defeated the munga.

The Daily Star on Tuesday published a story on the undaunted couple and a photo which showed them pulling the ghanai.

Seeing the news and the photo, Managing Director (MD) of Kohinor Chemical Company of Dhaka, Rezaul Karim, decided to give them a bullock to save them from doing the job of an animal.

On Friday noon, the bullock was handed over to them in front of their cottage in a simple ceremony.

Mominur has to support a big family of six comprising his old mother, divorced sister, wife and his two children. He had approached Koiman Union Parishad chairman for a VGF (vulnerable group feeding) card to get rice, but was denied on the plea that he was young, he told this correspondent earlier.

Seeing the Daily Star report Rezaul Karim contacted with the Daily Star management in Dhaka on the same day (Tuesday) to give the couple a bullock.

The company's Regional Manager Enamul Haq Khan handed over the bullock to the couple on behalf of Rezaul Karim in remote Dighirpar village on the bank of Teesta river in presence of several hundred people including Jaldhaka Press Club President Golam Mostofa.

# Journo faces 'false' case in Patuakhali

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Patuakhali*

Kamruzzaman Bachchu, Bauful correspondent of the Daily Janakantha, faces a 'false' case filed by a close associate of a local lawmaker alleging abduction bid.

Abul Hossain Mintu, a man known to be close to ruling party MP, fled the case with Bauful thana on November 5.

It is alleged that Mintu sued Bachchu on behalf of the lawmaker. But the lawmaker denied this when contacted over cell phone yesterday.

According to the FIR, Bachchu assaulted Mintu and his niece and tried to abduct her on November 4 from Kagujiarpur area in the upazila headquarters when they were going to their relative's house in a rickshaw.

The lawmaker has records of bitter relations with local journalists. He assaulted local journalist Monjur

Morshed in August this year after some reports were published in different national dailies including the Janakantha about his alleged wrongdoings.

Five local journalists including Bachchu had filed GDs (general dairies) with Bauful thana on August 30 after they received threats.

Earlier, the lawmaker harassed another local journalist, Jetendra Nath, by filing a 'false' case for alleged extortion. The case was dismissed by court.

Patuakhali Awami League President Advocate Shahjahan Mia, former state minister AKM Jahangir Hossain, Mahbubur Rahman Talukder MP and former MP ASM Feroz in separate statements protested filing of the 'false' case against Kamruzzaman.

Nur Mohammad, Officer-in-Charge of Bauful thana, when contacted, said, "We are trying to arbitrate the matter".

## SUNDARBAN TEXTILE MILLS

# Opposition leaders protest anomaly in recruitment

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Satkhira*

Leaders of some opposition political parties at a rally yesterday threatened to call a hartal in Satkhira district on Sunday if action is not taken against the officials of Sundarbans Textile Mills who allegedly swindled 400 unemployed youths in the name of giving jobs in the mill.

They also demanded suspension of the on-going appointment process to announce a fresh date for selection so that the swindled youths can get the jobs they were promised.

Sources said that a section of the mill officials took Tk 10,000 to 15,000 from the youths, promising them to provide with jobs in different departments.

The rally, held at the mill gate with Satkhira district Jatiya Party Convenor Abdur Rahim in the chair, was addressed by, among others, Satkhira Poursava

Chairman Sheikh Ashrafal Haque, district Awami League General Secretary Md. Nazrul Islam, Workers Party Secretary Mustafa Lutfullah, JSD General Secretary Obaidus Sultan Bablu, Ashrafuzzaman Ashu, A. Ahmed, Sheikh Abu Nasim, SM Shawkat Hossain, Sudhangsu Sekhar Sarkar, Poursava commissioners Shafiq Uddowla Sagar, Anis Khan Chowdhury Bakul and Marzina Khattun. Some labour leaders of the mill were also present.

They alleged that a section of local leaders of ruling parties were involved in the scam.

The mill authorities are going to appoint 400 labourers and their selection was scheduled for November 12. Some sources claimed that the selection date has been shifted in view of allegation, but could not say what date has been fixed.

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