



PHOTO: STAR
Communist Party of Bangladesh stages a demonstration at Paltan in Dhaka yesterday to press its demand for the removal of election commissioners and reconstitution of the Election Commission.

Peace deal means little for hills people

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auspices of PCJSS and Bangladesh Adiwasī Forum (BAF), a committee for ethnic minorities, with processions, discussion meetings and news conferences.

Leaders of two main political parties – AL and BNP, leaders of the left leaning parties, renowned intellectuals, cultural personalities, professionals and civil society members are expected to address the events in the capital, sources from PCJSS said.

Eminent lawyer Dr Kamal Hossain is expected to address the central event as chief guest, which will be chaired by President of PCJSS Santu Larma, who is also the chairman of CHT Regional Council.

PCJSS alleged that the immediate past government was not sincere enough to implement the agreement during its five-year tenure. No step was taken to implement the accord by the four-party alliance government during its regime. Rather, it violated the accord in various ways including by appointing Wadud Bhuiyan, an erstwhile member of parliament, to the post of the chairman of CHT Development Board, who is well known for his communal and anti-indigenous disposition, PCJSS alleged.

The indigenous organisation also alleged that Wadud Bhuiyan always used to provoke Samo Odhikar Andolan (SOA), a political platform of Bangalee settlers in CHT, to wage movements against PCJSS and accordingly SOA repeatedly in the last five years announced programmes countering previously announced PCJSS programmes. The practice led to repeated clashes leaving many indigenous people dead and many more injured.

An attack on the indigenous community by Bangalee settlers took place in Mohalchhari of Khagrachhari district on August 26, 2003 leaving an elderly man, Binod Bihari Khisa dead, about sixty people injured and ten indigenous women raped by the attackers. About 300 houses of fourteen indigenous villages were burnt to ashes, four temples and a primary school were also burnt during the attack, PCJSS alleged.

It also alleged that the attack by the settlers took place in presence of military personnel and Wadud, who was the main conspirator behind the attack.

The vital clauses of the treaty include activating a Land Commission, rehabilitation of Jummo refugees, withdrawal of all temporary camps of the army, BDR, APBn

(Armed Police Battalion), police, Ansar and VDP (Village Defend Party) from CHT, and formation of a CHT based indigenous police force, all of which are yet to be implemented.

According to the peace pact, the government has to hand over the control of the three Hill District Councils (HDCs) to the CHT Regional Council (CHTRC). But the government has yet to do that. Till today none of the HDCs consulted the CHTRC in taking any decision, so those organisations turned into a hub of corruption and lost the people's confidence, PCJSS alleged.

Moreover, a vested quarter in the government are setting up additional military camps and settling refugees from the plain land in CHT as part of a conspiracy to turn the size of the ethnic communities smaller in comparison to the size of the Bagalee community there, PCJSS added.

The main problem of CHT is the land problem. Although, the Land Commission (LC) was formed to solve chronic land disputes, it still remains dysfunctional. And the problem is turning into a more complicated one day by day, asserted PCJSS.

Misunderstandings and tension between the indigenous and Bangalee people are mounting by the day.

"The CHT situation will become more volatile in the coming days if the peace accord is not implemented properly," Santu Larma, chief of PCJSS said, adding that the accord will not be executed fully until a non-communal, democratic and progressive political party comes to power.

Larma expressing his disappointment about non-execution of the peace accord in the last nine years said other political parties and organisations, which support the agreement should come forward in support of the Jummo people to realize the people's demand for implementing the accord.

Larma said the unity of the indigenous population should be strengthened and they should launch a strong movement to materialise 'the dream of the CHT people'.

PCJSS Secretary Satyabir Dewan told The Daily Star that things have gone awry as two successive governments did not take any step for full implementation of the accord since signing of it.

Ushatan Talukder, student and youth affairs secretary of PCJSS, said a solution to the ongoing crisis should be found immediately for the interest of the people of CHT, and every body irrespective of nation, caste and creed should come forward to solve the

problem.

In Rangamati, a rally will be held on the premises of the gymnasium at Rajbari in the town today. PCJSS Senior Vice-President Laxmi Pasa Chakma will address the rally as chief guest and its District Unit President Gunendu Bikash Chakma will preside over the event.

Rallies will also be held separately at Chengi Square in Khagrachhari and on Rajbari ground in Bandarban where PCJSS's Student and Youth Secretary Ushatan Talukder and its Joint Secretary KS Mong Marma will address the crowd as chief guests.

Bangalee settlers, who settled in different hilly areas in the CHT region some twenty one years back and who have been waging a movement led by SOA for scrapping of the accord and

removal of Santu Larma from the post of the chairman of CHT Regional Council, also announced holding of a protest rally at 11:00am on the premises of the municipality office in Rangamati today.

Jatiya Ganatantrik Forum President Saiful Alam Pradhan is scheduled to address the rally as chief guest and SOA President Mostafai Ahmed Chowdhury is to chair the rally.

SOA, which was allegedly formed by former BNP lawmaker from Khagrachhari, Wadud Bhuiyan, terms the accord as a 'black and discriminatory agreement'.

"We will hold a peaceful protest rally. So, we have taken a decision not to bring out any procession in the town to avert any unpleasant incident as we may fail to control our activists during a

procession. And we have strictly directed our party leaders and activists not to resort to violence," Md Yunus, joint secretary of SOA, told this correspondent yesterday.

The accord virtually divided the indigenous people also in two groups. A very small number of indigenous people are also opposing the accord while the majority is still hoping that it will soon be implemented fully. Anti-peace accord, United Peoples Democratic Front (UPDF), demands full autonomy for CHT.

Since the signing of the treaty approximately 400 leaders and activists of both PCJSS and UPDF died, about 1300 were injured and many more were abducted in a fratricidal war over the last nine years in the region, different intelligence sources said.