

Constitutional recognition of indigenous people demanded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a national consultation meeting yesterday demanded constitutional recognition of the indigenous people to establish their rights in the country.

They also called for the recognition of the traditional and common property law of the ethnic community.

Jatiya Adivasi Parishad and Bangladesh Adivasi Odhikar Andolon in association with Gram Bikash Kendra (GBK), Dinajpur organised the meeting at the National Press Club in the city as a follow-up to Adivasi Convention held on November 4, 2006.

Presenting a keynote paper, General Secretary of Jatiya Adivasi

Parashad Rabindranath Saren said development of indigenous people was supposed to take place side by side the development of the mainstream community, but they are still being tortured and forced to leave the country.

Officials of the forest department are destroying forests in Barendra areas and on the other hand, they are evicting indigenous people from their lands charging them with destroying forests, he said.

So far, ethnic people have been evicted from 6,500 acres of land in the northern region of the country, he said.

He also demanded a separate ministry for indigenous people and reserved seats for them in parlia-

ment.

Rashed Khan Menon, president of the Workers' Party of Bangladesh, said indigenous people are yet to be recognised by the state.

The major problem they are facing is that they do not enjoy the right to land, he said and called for immediate steps to protect their right to land.

Golam Mortuza, editor of Shaptak 2000, called on the leaders of indigenous community to specify their demands and approach the political parties to help realise those.

Mahmudur Rahman Manna, organising secretary of Awami League, called for a tough movement to ensure the rights of indigenous people.

Hasanul Haq Inu, president of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, called for incorporating their demands into the ongoing movement.

Prof Mesbah Kamal, general secretary of Bangladesh Adivasi Odhikar Andolon, presided over the meeting while freedom fighter and sculptor Ferdousi Priyobhashini was present as the chief guest.

Cultural personality Mamunur Rashid, Prof HKS Arefin, president of Bangladesh Adivasi Odhikar Andolon, Sanaullah Lavlu, chief news editor of Prothom Alo, Shuvrangs Chakrabarti, central organiser of Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal and Enos Saren, president of GBK, also spoke.

PHOTO: STAR

Prof HKS Arefin speaks at the national consultation meeting on the demands of indigenous people at the National Press Club in the city yesterday.

Gaza, where tragedy and news are never far away

REUTERS, Gaza

The sound of explosions boomed over Gaza City as Israel carried out another air strike against Palestinian militants behind rocket attacks and I expected a familiar sight as I hurried to the scene.

But after forcing my way through a crowd of onlookers, I was unprepared for what awaited me on June 13 last year.

Among the dead was a militant killed by a missile. But another missile had hit the nearby home of my cousin Ashraf, 29. Ashraf, his son Maher, 6, and another of my

Farmers blockade Benapole-Jessore road for diesel

UNB, Benapole

Outraged by severe disruption in diesel supply during the current Irrigation season, farmers of the area blockaded Benapole-Jessore road at Talasheri area for four hours yesterday morning.

Hundreds of vehicles got stranded on the road due to the blockade causing untold sufferings to the travelling people amid the biting cold.

The farmers also besieged the petrol pumps in the border areas in demand of uninterrupted fuel supply. Pump owners of those areas suspended selling of diesel to the farmers for the last one week.

Later, Sharsha upazila UNO and local police brought the situation under control.

New DU Alumni Assoc executive body takes over

Newly elected executive committee of Dhaka University Alumni Association (DUA) took over the charge of office from the outgoing committee at a joint meeting recently, says a press release.

Syed Manzur Elahi, former adviser to caretaker government, and Raquibuddin Ahmed, former secretary at Bangladesh Shipping Corporation, have been re-elected president and secretary general of the association.

Abbasuddin Ahmed, former MD of City Bank, was elected treasurer unopposed. The three elected vice-presidents are AF Shahed Ali, Selina Khaleda and Md Abdul Quayum.

Other elected office-bearers are Dewan Rashidul Hasan, Selina Akhter Jahan, Shamsad Begum, Mesbahuddin Chowdhury, Imrul, Refa'at Hossain Fahim Chowdhury, Khan Md Babor Ashraful Haq, Dr Mustafizur Rahman and SMAzmal Hossain.

The executive committee members are ABM Rezaul Kabir Kawsar, AKM Shamsuddin, Abul Kashem Chowdhury, Asaf Khan, Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury, KM Shahidul Haque, KMSA Kaiser, Monwar Islam, Munira Khan, Muhammad Zamir, Monsur Ahmed Chowdhury, Mahbub-uz-Zaman, Morsshed Sanaullah Kayani, Dr Pravath Chandra Biswas, SM Obaidullah, Soraiya Alam, Dr Shahadot Ali, Dr Taslima Monsur and Zeenat Ara Bhuiya.

PHOTO: STAR

cousins, 14-year-old Hisham, were all killed.

Tears streamed down my cheeks as I telephoned my report to the Reuters bureau in Jerusalem and thought of the terrible losses suffered by people on both sides of this seemingly intractable conflict between Palestinians and Israelis.

Working in the Gaza Strip is like that.

In an instant, calm can give way to violence, chaos and heartache in this sliver of land on the shores of the Mediterranean.

When Israeli pulled troops and Jewish settlers out of Gaza in 2005, we had hoped that it might bring some peace.

But the violence did not stop. Militants continued rocket attacks on Israel, saying they were to avenge Israeli actions in the occupied West Bank. Israel struck back, saying it needed to protect itself. Internal Palestinian strife surged.

When I navigate Gaza's streets, I often think about who is driving in front of and behind me. Are they militants from Islamic Jihad, Hamas, Fatah or one of the other groups fighting Israel? Israeli air strikes often target gunmen in their cars. Sometimes they miss.

Sometimes I am too slow and the children rush into my room screaming, weeping and trembling.

What should I do? My job, or calm them? I try to do both.

Sometimes they miss.

PHOTO: STAR

Driving at night, I fear that gunmen will stop my car and steal it. Passing Palestinian police stations, I worry I will get caught in a gunfight between rival factions.

More than 300 Palestinians were killed in factional and clan fighting in 2006. Hundreds of cars have been stolen in the past few months alone.

Working from home presents another dilemma.

I have often have to call our Jerusalem bureau with news of air strikes. The explosions terrify my children.

My daughter Dalia, 10, wraps herself around my waist. My son Abdel-Rahman, 5, runs into my arms. My wife Shehara often sits silent in a chair.

On many occasions, I have raced into my children's bedrooms at night when Israeli planes have flown low over Gaza and set off sonic booms.

I want to get there before my children wake up in fright.

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PHOTO: STAR

Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) personnel fired eight rounds of bullets on smugglers and recovered 1,384 bottles of phenylid from them at Hadhkhola frontier in the district on Friday midnight.

BDR sources said some smugglers entered into Bangladesh territory with contraband goods in the night when they fired eight rounds of bullets.

Sensing danger, the smugglers fled from the scene leaving the phenylid bottles. None of the smugglers was injured.

Rains, mudslides kill 24 in Brazil

REUTERS, Rio de Janeiro

At least 24 people died in mudslides and more than 8,300 were left homeless this week following heavy rain in southeast Brazil, with the death toll likely to rise as the hunt for bodies goes on, the Civil Defence said on Friday. Most of the deaths occurred in Rio de Janeiro state when shacks built illegally on steep slopes surrounding mountainous towns were swept away.

"The number of victims could rise further. The Civil Defence is still on alert and we're still searching for missing people," said Cpl. Leonardo Franco at Civil Defence.

Marcos Sanches from the National Space Research Climate Studies Centre said that in the first five days of January the Mantiqueira mountains near Rio de Janeiro received half the usual average monthly rainfall, and further rains were likely this weekend.

He was also in charge of the first freedom fighters' camp of Agartala Congress Bhaban.

He left behind his wife, his only son and a host of admirers to mourn his death.

He was buried at his family graveyard at Ghatiar village in Brahmanbaria.

Qulkhani and doa mahfil will be held at his village home after Juma prayers on Friday to pray for the salvation of his departed soul.

PHOTO: STAR

WEATHER TODAY

Cold wave may continue

UNB, Dhaka

Dry weather will prevail over the country in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Moderate to thick fog may occur over the river basins, a Met Office forecast said.

It also said the prevailing mild cold wave may continue over Faridpur, Srimongal, Rajshahi, Ishwardi, Dinajpur, Satkhira, Jessor and Chuadanga regions in the next 12 hours.

Night temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country.

Highest temperature 28.2 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Teknaf and lowest 8.0 degree Celsius at Rajshahi.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:26pm today and rises at 6:43am tomorrow.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature		Humidity in celsius	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	22.1	12.8	91	81
Chittagong	27.2	12.6	95	73
Rajshahi	18.3	08.0	100	89
Khulna	22.0	10.2	100	77
Barisal	21.4	10.2	100	89
Sylhet	26.0	12.1	99	87
Cox's Bazar	28.0	14.7	95	77

Hasan Azizul Haque, Golam Murshid receive Prothom Alo Book award

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eminent authors Hasan Azizul Haque and Golam Murshid were awarded 'Prothom Alo Book of the Year: 1412' at a ceremony at a city hotel yesterday.

The major problem they are facing is that they do not enjoy the right to land, he said and called for immediate steps to protect their right to land.

Receiving the awards, the authors said it is very gratifying to receive awards, but frustrations creep in when humanity is disgraced and war criminals are rewarded.

Hasan Azizul Haque won the award for his novel 'Agumpakhi' (firebird) in creative category, while Golam Murshid was awarded for his book 'Hazar Bachharer Bangali Sangskriti' (Thousand years of Bangali culture) in intellectual category.

Instituted by the Protom Alo, the award carries a crest, a certificate and Tk 50,000.

Prof Anisuzzaman, chairman of the jury board, gave away the awards to the winners.

In a tone of despair, Golam Murshid said those who killed the intellectuals in this country only 35 years ago now get the opportunity to share state power.

The history of the nation changes with the change of the government, he added.

Sazzad Sharif, deputy editor of the Prothom Alo, moderated the programme. "The writers transform our experiences into a shape and keep our dreams alive," he said in his welcome address.

After placating Jatiya Party in the grand alliance, Awami League felt confident of their victory in the polls. But Ershad has been declared ineligible to contest the election by the court that convicted him for corruption.

Justice Muhammed Habibur Rahman, Zillur Rahman Siddiqui, Prof Muzaffar Ahmed, Dwijen Sharma, Qayyum Chowdhury, Mahbub Ul Alam Chowdhury, Inam Ahmed Chowdhury, Nawazesh Ahmed, Atiqul Haque Chowdhury, Serajul Islam, Mostafa Zaman Abbasi, Hasnat Abdul Hai, Shamsuzzaman Khan, Rafiq Azad, Asad Chowdhury, Rashid Haider, Ramendu Majumder, Mofazzal Karim, Asma Abbasi, Selina Hossain, Mala Begum, Syed Manzoorul Islam, Brig (Retd) M Shahkawat Hossain and Shaheen Akter were present at the programme held at the Sheraton Hotel.

PHOTO: STAR

CHAOS

Driving at night, I fear that gunmen will stop my car and steal it. Passing Palestinian police stations, I worry I will get caught in a gunfight between rival factions.

More than 300 Palestinians were killed in factional and clan fighting in 2006. Hundreds of cars have been stolen in the past few months alone.

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PHOTO: STAR

corruption. That is why AL has boycotted the election," Bhuiyan said.

They are opportunist, bereft of political ideology. Maulana Haq was told a public meeting at Madhabdi.

Khairul Kabir Khokan, who had

poised to contest Bhuiyan in the

upcoming polls but withdrew his

nomination paper later, presided

over the meeting.

Referring to the move to resist

election by the AL-led grand alliance, Bhuiyan said everyone has

the right to take