

Resolve CHT issues thru' political means

Speakers tell discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) issues should be resolved through political means, speakers at a discussion said yesterday.

The Bangalees and hill people should put in joint efforts to solve the problems, they said.

Some indigenous people at the meeting alleged that hundreds of acres of their lands are being acquired in the name of development activities.

The discussion titled 'Present situation of CHT and the responsibility of citizens' was held under

the banner of 'Worried Citizens' at Mukti Bhaban auditorium in the city, with Prof Akmol Hossain in the chair.

Rashed Khan Menon, president of Workers Party of Bangladesh, said the problems in Chittagong Hill Tracts are absolutely political problems. Therefore, the issues should be resolved through political means, he added.

He also said the CHT regional council is not functioning properly.

Prof Anu Muhammad of Jahangirnagar University called for giving constitutional recognition to the indigenous people.

Comrade Khalequzzaman of Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal said the local administration is acquiring hundreds of acres of land in CHT in the name of development.

Advocate Gyan Jyoti Chakma said the situation in CHT has worsened after the caretaker government took over.

He also accused the local administration of remaining indifferent to the suffering of indigenous people.

Ruhin Hossain Prince of Communist Party of Bangladesh and Samir Kanti Dewan, a resident of CHT, also spoke.



Dhaka Union of Journalists (DUJ) observes a token hunger strike at the National Press Club in the city yesterday demanding reinstatement of terminated journalists and implementation of 7th Wage Board Award in all newspapers and news agencies. (Story on Page 3)

7 Pak troops killed in ambush

AFP, Peshawar

Suspected Taliban militants ambushed a Pakistani paramilitary convoy yesterday in a restive north-western town, killing at least seven soldiers and wounding dozens more, officials said.

The convoy was heading to a fort outside Hangu district near the border with Afghanistan when the rebels attacked with rocket-propelled grenades and assault rifles, local police officer Shakirullah Jan told AFP.

He did not however confirm the death toll.

A senior security official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said seven soldiers were killed and 25 wounded in the attack in the neighbourhood of Zargari, outside Hangu.

Security forces responded by attacking Taliban positions using gunship helicopters and artillery fire in the mountainous region.

"We have reports three militants were killed and 10 wounded in retaliatory fire," the security official said.

Hangu district, which has a history of violence between minority Shiite and majority Sunni sects, is close to tribal areas bordering Afghanistan, where pro-Taliban militants are active.

Pakistan's new government is facing growing unrest just five months after defeating US-backed President Pervez Musharraf's allies in elections, with Islamist violence on the rise and political fissures opening up.

Saturday's attack on security forces was the latest incident in a bloody week in the country, including several bombings.

A suicide attack killed 19 people near a protest marking the anniversary of a bloody government-backed raid on the radical Red Mosque in Islamabad six days ago. Although there was no immediate claim of responsibility officials said they were examining a range of

possible culprits, including the mosque's former students and Taliban militants based near the border with Afghanistan.

That bombing was followed the next day by a string of six blasts in Pakistan's populous southern port city of Karachi, which saw one person killed and 37 injured.

Pakistani forces launched an operation two weeks ago against Islamic radicals near the north-western city of Peshawar but the government has yet to convince its foreign backers it is serious about combating militancy.

Afghanistan has repeatedly accused Pakistan's intelligence agencies of supporting the Taliban. Islamabad backed the hardline regime during its 1996-2001 rule but denies any current links to the militia.

premier Benazir Bhutto, who was assassinated in December last year, and the grouping of ex-prime minister Nawaz Sharif.

Kabul has also put pressure on Islamabad to tackle Taliban rebels based near the border, with a suicide car bomb attack on the Indian embassy in the Afghan capital on Monday leaving 41 dead and around 150 injured.

Afghanistan has repeatedly accused Pakistan's intelligence agencies of supporting the Taliban. Islamabad backed the hardline regime during its 1996-2001 rule but denies any current links to the militia.

They went on strike in the morning as the factory management offered to increase their wages by Tk 200.

"We'll continue to observe work abstention until our demand is met," the workers said.

Protest against manhandling of guardian at city school

UNB, Dhaka

Guardians yesterday demonstrated at a city school to protest alleged attacks on a guardian of a student who passed the SSC examination from there this year.

Jahirul Islam, father of Fouzia Islam who achieved GPA-5, went to AK School and College at Dhania to collect his daughter's testimonial.

The violence erupted as Jahirul was locked in an alteration after he refused to pay Tk 100 to the school authorities for the certificate.

At one stage, some employees of the school and college allegedly beat Jahirul.

As the news of manhandling spread, some guardians came onward and rescued him.

Later, the guardians demonstrated and demanded resignation of the Principal Selim Bhuiyan.

Police and Rab members were deployed on the school premises to avoid any further violence.

Members of the school managing committee held an emergency meeting in the afternoon.

AK School and College achieved 7th place in SSC examination this year.

RMG workers go on strike for pay hike at DEPZ

UNB, Savar

The workers of a garment factory in Dhaka EPZ area yesterday observed a daylong work abstention to press their demand for higher wages.

Sources said some 3,500 workers of Hopelone (BD) Limited, owned by a Swedish citizen, recently demanded a pay increase of Tk 500.

They went on strike in the morning as the factory management offered to increase their wages by Tk 200.

"We'll continue to observe work abstention until our demand is met," the workers said.

Two shopping malls fined

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Mina Bazar and Nandan shopping malls at Dhanmondi in the city were fined by a mobile court yesterday for selling foreign goods without permission from Bangladesh Standard and Testing Institution (BSTI).

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) 1 and a Rab mobile court conducted the drive and fined Mina Bazar Tk 1 lakh and Nandan Tk 50,000.

Rab-1 officials said the mobile court found the shopping malls for selling foreign cosmetics, melamine goods and drinking water illegally.

Robbers injure 10 in Savar

UNB, Savar

After failing to plunder goods of a house, robbers in an attack injured 10 people, including eight inmates, at Dhamrai on late Friday night.

Police said about 25 robbers swooped on the house of businessman Abdur Rab at Kalampur Pachim Para. Neighbours rushed in to resist them as inmates raised hue and cry seeing the presence of the criminals.

Being angered over the alarm by inmates, the dacoits attacked with sharp weapons, leaving eight inmates and two neighbours injured.

Later the criminals fled away. House owner Abdur Rab and his wife Ratna Begum are among the injured.

The injured were admitted to local health complex.

DHAKA TODAY

Bids seminar

Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (Bids) organises a seminar on 'Bribery vs. extortion: Allowing the lesser of the two evils'. Venue: Bids conference room. Time: 11:00am.

Photo exhibition

The inaugural ceremony of a photo exhibition to celebrate 400 years of Dhaka will be held. Venue: Drik Gallery. Time: 4:00pm. The exhibition will remain open till July 22 from 3:00pm to 5:00pm.

Painting exhibition

The second solo painting exhibition of Farah Deeba Zaman will begin. Venue: Russian Centre of Science and Culture. Time: 12:00noon.

Luncheon meeting

The monthly luncheon meeting of Foreign Investors' Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FCCI) will be held. Venue: Sheraton Hotel. Time: 12:30pm.



Two-day science fair begins at Willes Little Flower School in the city yesterday.

N Korea agrees to disable nuclear facilities by Oct

AFP, Beijing

Korea keeps its word.

The parties agreed to a verification mechanism that would include experts from the six nations to visit facilities, review documents and interview technical personnel, Wu said.

The deal was announced as the latest round of six-nation disarmament talks concluded in Beijing, having restarted Thursday after a nine-month hiatus.

In return for Pyongyang deactivating its Yongbyon reactor, the other five parties guaranteed delivery of all heavy fuel oil promised in exchange by the end of the same month, a joint communiqué said.

"We'd like a protocol to be reached within 45 days and secondly to actually begin the verification within 45 days," Hill told reporters.

"We're anticipating that and don't see any obstacles," he said.

However, South Korea's chief envoy Kim Sook predicted that setting the rules for the verification

would be "a very tricky and difficult process".

"We maintain that whatever facilities should be inspected without any restrictions in order to completely verify the declaration, and several other countries share our view," he said.

The latest six-nation discussions were focused on reaching agreement on how to verify the declaration North Korea delivered last month on abandoning its nuclear programmes.

The six-nation talks -- which involve China as host, the two Koreas, the United States, Japan and Russia -- began in 2003 with the aim of persuading North Korea to abandon its nuclear programmes.

But they had not been held since October, as the other parties involved waited for North Korea to give an account of the nuclear programmes it had spent decades developing.

Mubarak, Sarkozy prepare Mediterranean summit

AFP, Paris

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak met French President Nicolas Sarkozy yesterday to prepare the founding summit of the Union for the Mediterranean, a new forum to bolster regional cooperation.

Mubarak and Sarkozy will co-chair the summit in Paris today to be attended by some 43 leaders from Europe, the Middle East including Israel, north Africa and the Balkans.

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad arrived earlier in Paris ahead of the summit and to hold talks with Sarkozy, making a comeback to the international stage after years of isolation.

He is also to meet with Lebanese President Michel Suleiman for the first time since his election in May, fueling speculation that the two leaders could announce the formal establishment of diplomatic relations.

Syria has yet to recognise Lebanon since both countries gained independence from France in 1943.

But Libyan leader Moamer Kadhafi is boycotting the new grouping while experts are skeptical about its potential to foster cooperation, given the hostilities between many of the member-states.

2 Taiwanese get Vietnam death sentence for drugs

AFP, Hanoi

A Vietnamese court has sentenced to death two Taiwanese men for trafficking more than 2.5 kilograms (5.5 pounds) of heroin, a court clerk in the southern Mekong delta said Friday.

Lee Chin Wen, 35, and Wei Chun Lung, 23, were arrested in May 2007, together with three Vietnamese women and another Taiwanese, said a court clerk from the An Giang province people's court, who identified herself only as Tam.

The three accomplices received jail sentences of up to 20 years imprisonment, the clerk told AFP after a two-day trial.

Iraq PM to visit invasion-critic Germany

AFP, Baghdad

Iraq announced that Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki will soon visit Berlin as German Economy Minister Michael Glos made an unannounced visit to Baghdad yesterday.

"I hope that my forthcoming visit to Germany will mark the beginning of a strengthening of relations in all fields, particularly the economic field, and will lead to the sealing of agreements which will serve the interests of the two countries," Maliki said in a statement released by his office.

Obituary

METRO DESK



Husne Ara Rahman, wife of late Golam Rahman, former chairman of Rajuk and CDA, passed away at her Uttara residence on July 11 at the age of 80, says a press release.

Her namaz-e-janaza will be held at Banani Jame Masjid after Asr prayers on July 14. She will be buried at Banani Graveyard. Her qulhwani will be held on July 15 after Asr prayers at her Uttara residence.



Convenor of Shahsi Muktijoddha Janata Oikya Parishad Maj (Retd) Ziauddin speaks at a press conference at the Dhaka Reporters' Unity auditorium in the city yesterday.