

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 Bangladesh 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 Akmal 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 Iyoti 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.

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 altercation 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 on 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.



A two-day science fair begins at Wiles Little Flower School in the city yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

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 Dharmrai on late Friday night.

Police said about 25 robbers swooped on the house of businessman Abdur Rab at Kalampur Pacchim 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.

N Korea agrees to disable nuclear facilities by Oct

AFP, Beijing

North Korea agreed yesterday to completely disable its main nuclear facilities by the end of October and to allow thorough site inspections to verify that all necessary steps had been taken.

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.

North Korea "will work to complete the disablement of the Yongbyon nuclear facilities by the end of October 2008," the statement said.

The head of the Chinese delegation, Wu Dawei, read out the broad details of how to ensure that North

Korea keeps it 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.

He added the UN's nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency, could also be asked to assist in verification if necessary.

US nuclear envoy Christopher Hill said the technical details of the verification process were yet to be decided, but that Washington hoped it would be finalised by the end of next month.

"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 Sleiman 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 qukhwan will be held on July 15 after Asr prayers at her Uttara residence.



PHOTO: STAR

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 it 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 city.

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.

Pakistanis 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.

The government comprises the Pakistan People's Party of former

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 headline regime during its 1996-2001 rule but denies any current links to the militia.



Rain likely

UNB, Dhaka

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely at many places over all the six divisions in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Moderately heavy to heavy rainfalls are also likely at places during the period, Met Office said, predicting nearly unchanged day temperature over the country.

Highest temperature 33.0 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Mymensingh and lowest 23.6 degrees Celsius at Sandwip.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:49pm today and rises at 5:20am tomorrow.

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

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	32.8	26.6	83	93
Chittagong	30.6	25.1	75	80
Rajshahi	32.5	27.4	87	89
Khulna	29.5	27.0	81	89
Barisal	31.5	26.0	80	83
Sylhet	32.0	25.4	88	86
Cox's Bazar	30.2	24.6	84	83



PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

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



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: Drk 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 (FICCI) will be held. Venue: Sheraton Hotel. Time: 12:30pm.

AFP, Paris

Eastern Sumatra, the Irrawaddy delta in Myanmar and Cambodia's Tonle Sap lake are among areas in Southeast Asia facing a high risk of arsenic contamination in the water, according to a study published on Friday.

The researchers use innovative digitalised techniques, drawing on geology, geography and soil chemistry, to compile a "probability map" of naturally-occurring arsenic concentrations in five Southeast Asian countries and Bangladesh.

The map is intended as a useful pointer for health watchdogs, urban planners and water engineers worried about concentrations of this poison in groundwater supplies but lacking the funds to carry out wide-scale analysis of water samples.

Published online in the journal Nature Neuroscience, the Swiss-led study combined several methods to compile its probability model.

These included knowledge about sediments whose textures and chemical or bacterial properties could release arsenic from the local ore, thus contaminating

aquifers.

Also factored in were areas with flat, low-lying topography. Arsenic contamination is rarely found in places with slopes.

The benchmark for risk was the World Health Organisation (WHO) guideline of 0.01 milligrams of arsenic per litre in drinking water.

The study predicted that in Bangladesh -- which has the worst arsenic contamination in the world -- the risk of water breaching this guideline was highest in the south-centre of the country and in the northeastern Sylhet basin.

This prediction concurred with water samples previously taken and analysed from tube wells in Bangladesh.

High probabilities of arsenic contamination were also seen for the deltas of the Irrawaddy in Myanmar and the Red River in Bangladesh, for the Chao Praya basin in central Thailand and for the organic-rich sediments of the flood plain of Cambodia's Tonle Sap lake.

The computer model said an area of about 100,000 square kilometres (38,600 square miles) on the east coast of Indonesia's main island, Sumatra, was likewise

"prone to high risk" of contamination above the WHO benchmark.

This prediction was then borne out by samples taken from a zone in Sumatra deemed to have high-risk and low-risk aquifers.

However, many wells in this area are deep and draw water from below the water-bearing sediments which have the arsenic problem, the study says.

"The prediction map is a useful tool for identification of areas at risk of arsenic contamination, but... understanding the local geology as a function of depth is of vital importance for specific areas," it cautions.

In Bangladesh, tens of millions of people are potentially exposed to arsenic-tainted water, boosting the danger of skin lesions, respiratory illness and cancer.

The risk comes from so-called shallow tube wells which were drilled in the 1970s and 1980s, ironically in a bid to provide rural Bangladeshis with safe water. Millions of these pipes were installed.

The new study is lead-authored by Michael Berg of the Swiss Federal Institute of Aquatic Science and Technology in Dübendorf.