

Set up land commission to protect rights of indigenous people

Demand speakers at seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a seminar yesterday demanded the government constitute a permanent land commission to protect the land rights of the indigenous people in Chittagong hill tracts and plainland areas.

They urged the political parties, willing to contest the next general polls, to make a public announcement for protecting the land and human rights of the indigenous people as well as to extend full support for them in the election manifestos.

The speakers made the call at the seminar on "Jhum cultivation and state policy: Context of land rights of the hill indigenous" organised by Association for Land Reform and Development

(ALRD) at YWCA auditorium in the city.

Presenting a written statement at the seminar, researcher Santosh Bikash Tripathy said the question of indigenous people's land rights is related to their jhum cultivation and the issue of controlling the farming and the state's economic and political rights are directly linked.

"Assurance of the indigenous people's rights to land and livelihoods are very urgent for solving the problems regarding the jhum cultivation," he said.

He informed that only 35 percent of the indigenous people are involved in or dependent on jhum cultivation.

The speakers said the misuse of the land law and state policies has

made them landless and marginal and its negative impacts have affected the livelihoods of jhum cultivators.

By rehabilitating the Bangalee landless people in the hill tracts, the indigenous landless people have been made marginal and, moreover, the jhum farming has been restricted, they added.

Economist Dr Abul Barkat called on the government to stop the eviction of the indigenous people of Chittagong hill tracts.

Presided over by woman leader Khushi Kabir, the seminar was addressed by Dr Ainun Nahar, Dr Ahsan Ali, Barendralal Tripathy, Goutam Chakma, Utpal Khisa and ALRD Executive Director Shamsul Huda.

Politics should be strong enough to avoid military intervention

Says Prof Emajuddin

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The political culture should be more healthy and the politics should be strong enough to avoid any further military intervention in the country, said eminent political scientist and vice-chancellor of University of Development Alternative Prof Emajuddin Ahmed in the city yesterday.

He said military forces should be loyal to the civil government and they must believe that the fire-power is not a substitute for people's mandate.

Dr Emajuddin was delivering a lecture on 'Democratic use of military power' at the Shaheed Colonel Jamil Ahmed Memorial Lecture 2008 organised by the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh at its auditorium.

Presided over by Dean of social science faculty of Dhaka University Prof Harun-or-Rashid, the lecture was attended by a number of eminent scholars.

"Military professionalism in a society is enhanced if and when the civilian government is deeply involved in democratic ethos," said Prof Emajuddin.

He said two conditions should be fulfilled for the democratic use of military power—one is the civilian control of the military and the other is the strong commitment of civilian rulers to democracy.

Dr Emajuddin said military interventions in the country took place after independence due to some lack of the politicians and high ambition of few generals.

Dr Harun said democratic use of military power should be ensured and the best instance of it is the preparation of the voter list with photographs by the members of the armed forces.

Direct hajj flights from Sylhet still uncertain

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet.

Direct hajj flights from Sylhet is still uncertain as Bangladesh Biman yet to finalise its flight schedules for 1500 intending pilgrims from this region.

The travel agents are in great trouble due to this uncertainty as they could not hire houses in Makka and Modina for the pilgrims.

In a petition to religious affairs ministry yesterday, the hajj agents demanded its immediate intervention to end the crisis.

Sylhet unit President of Hajj Association of Bangladesh Abdul Mukit Chowdhury said, "We are unable to hire houses in Makka and Modina as the authorities concerned have failed to finalise the flight schedules."

An official of Biman Sylhet office requesting anonymity said, "We have already informed the head office of our position, but we are yet to get any schedule from them."

He said the authorities have decided to operate the hajj flights by 747 aircrafts only.

"If it happens, then there is no possibility of operating direct hajj flights from Sylhet this year as Osmani International Airport is yet to be made ready to operate such crafts," he said.

On the other hand, it has been made mandatory for the pilgrims to take training at Dhaka hajj camp this year, sources added.

Eid reunion of BUETAA held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Eid reunion of the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology Alumni Association (BUETAA) was held at Buet auditorium on Friday.

On the occasion, BUETAA honoured the senior Buet alumni who graduated in 1958 or earlier, says a press release.

Vice Chancellor Dr AMM Safullah, former vice chancellors Dr Musharraf Husain Khan, Dr Abdul Matin Patwari and Dr Iqbal Mahmud and Dr Jamilur Reza Choudhury, vice chancellor of Brac University and the president of BUETAA, were present at the programme attended by about 200 alumni of Buet.

Dr AMM Safullah said that Buet should upgrade its laboratory and research facilities to cope with the modern world.

And Buet alumni could play a significant role to this end, he said.

Dr Jamilur Reza Choudhury said that the Buet alumni should come forward to support the various programmes of the university so that the university could gain global recognition as the home for world-class education and research.



Prof Muzaffer Ahmad speaks at a roundtable on 'Our responsibilities to prevent eve teasing' at the National Press Club in the city yesterday. Bangladesh Shishu Academy, National Girl Child Advocacy Forum and the Shaptahik 2000 jointly organised the programme.

6TH SAF SCOUT FRIENDSHIP CAMP ENDS

Call to establish peace in Saarc region

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The week-long 6th SAF Scout Friendship Camp concluded yesterday with a call for Rover Scouts to help strengthen relationship among the Saarc nations through deepening friendship and establishing peace in the region.

A total of 390 Rover Scouts and leaders from the Saarc countries -- India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, the Maldives and Bangladesh -- took part in the camp held at the National Scout Training Centre at Mouchak in Gazipur.

The theme of this camp was 'Scouting for peace and friendship'.

Women and Children Affairs Adviser Rasheda K Chowdhury was present at the concluding session as the chief guest.

The Scouts are the future leaders of this region, the adviser said and called on them to use Scouting activities as the springboard for developing their leadership skills.

"Scouting helps young people become good citizens," said National Commissioner of Bangladesh Scouts Md Mozammel Haque Khan, who chaired the

closing session.

"SAF Scout Friendship Camp are being organised by the national Scout organisations of the Saarc countries since 2002 under the auspices of the South Asian Foundation and in coordination with the World Scout Bureau of Asia Pacific Region," he added.

Executive Secretary of Bangladesh Scouts Md Nazrul Islam gave the vote of thanks.

The Scouts also presented a cultural show at the closing ceremony.

The Daily Star, Channel i and Radio Today were the media partners of the friendship camp.

People won't tolerate dismantling warship 'Akram'

Says Gen Ibrahim

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh Kalyan Party Chairman Maj Gen (ret'd) Syed Muhammad Ibrahim yesterday said the people wouldn't tolerate dismantling the warship 'Akram', an artifact of the country's liberation war.

Calling for making the historic warship into a floating museum, he said those who could not accept the nation's great liberation war are now hatching a "new conspiracy" to wreck the warship.

Gen Ibrahim, himself a freedom fighter, made the remarks at a meeting with leaders of party's Kafilur thana committee at the party's new DOHS secretariat.

He said the nation wants to know who gave the instruction for scrapping the Akram. "The nation will not tolerate any conspiracy to erase or destroy any remnants of the liberation war or freedom fighters," he said.

He urged the caretaker government to seek public opinion before taking any controversial decision on any national issue.

50 sacks of fertiliser seized

UNB, Benapole

Some 50 sacks of Indian banned fertiliser were seized in Sharsha upazila on Friday.

Acting on a tip-off, BDR personnel seized an engine-driven van along with 50 sacks of Indian MOP fertiliser from in front of Navaran Buruzbagam Madrasa in the evening.

Bring folklore department under social science faculty

Demand RU students

RU CORRESPONDENT

Students of Folklore Department of Rajshahi University (RU) yesterday submitted a memorandum to RU acting vice chancellor Prof Mamunul Keram demanding immediate inclusion of their department in the social science faculty.

They argued that as students of a department under the arts faculty they get few opportunities in the job market.

They threatened to go on a hunger strike if their demand is not met within seven days.

Earlier, the agitating students demonstrated on the department premises to press home their demand.

When contacted, Department Chair M Shahidur Rahman said, "We have already informed university authorities to take necessary steps to this end."

Dean of Social Science Faculty Prof Sadekul Islam said that if the curricula are same, there should not be any problem to include it under the social science faculty.

After the approval of the academic council, RU Syndicate will take the final decision after a discussion, he added.

Earlier, the agitating students boycotted their scheduled classes and examinations demanding the same.

Religious leaders urged to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The speakers at an inter-divisional dialogue here yesterday called on the religious leaders to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS and anti-social activities.

Regarded as the most trustworthy and respected persons, religious leaders and teachers have easy access to all classes of people in society, they said.

Slain teenage girl named, her daughter missing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The teenage girl whose body was found at Sat Tala slum in the city's Gulshan area on Friday was identified as Sharmin Akhter, wife of a garments accessories trader Sohail Ahmed, the police said yesterday.

Sharmin along with her one-and-a-half-year-old daughter Sabanette went out of their house at Banasree in Rampura on October 10 but did not return home. Officer-in-Charge of Khilgaon Police Station Syed Nazrul Islam said quoting local people.

Sharmin was found dead on Friday while her daughter still remains missing.

Meanwhile, Sharmin's brother Mobarak Hossain suspect that her husband might have a hand behind the murder of Sharmin.

The OC, however, said her husband denied the allegation.

Three killed in road accidents

METRO DESK

Three people were killed in separate road accidents in Jhenidah and Comilla yesterday.

Our correspondent in Jhenidah reports: A man was killed in a road accident at Halidhani Baradi village in Jhenidah.

The victim was identified as Rabiul Islam, 30.

The accident occurred at 1:00pm when a speeding truck knocked him down while he was returning home from Nagarathan Bazar.

The body was sent to Jhenidah Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy. UNB adds: Two motorcyclists were killed in a road accident on Comilla-Chandpur highway in Comilla.

Police said the Comilla-bound bus from Chandpur rammed into the bike at Mogbari at about 1:30pm, killing the motorcyclists on the spot.

The dead were identified as Imam Hossain, 55, and Zihanuddin, 55.



A child patient inaugurates the Apollo Children's Centre at the Apollo Hospitals in the city yesterday by cutting a ribbon.



Dry weather likely

UNB, Dhaka

Weather may remain mainly dry with partly cloudy sky over the country having chances of light rain or thundershowers at one or two places over Rajshahi and Chittagong divisions and the regions of Tangail, Mymensingh and Sylhet in the next 12 hours as of 6:00pm today.

Day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country, Met Office said.

Yesterday's highest temperature of 35.7 degree Celsius was recorded at Sandwip and the lowest of 20.6 degrees at Srimongal.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:29pm today and rises at 5:58am tomorrow.

The 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	34.3	25.5	67	54
Chittagong	32.0	24.7	74	68
Rajshahi	33.4	23.0	75	72
Khulna	33.4	23.5	76	69
Barisal	34.5	22.7	69	96
Sylhet	34.0	22.9	61	64
Cox's Bazar	35.1	26.4	71	69

No shift from Dec 18 election fixture

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Some speakers said they found people of all walks of life including government officials murmuring their doubts about holding of the election on schedule.

They said corruption suspects have already been released and the government and EC have conceded too much to some political parties including Jamaat-e-Islami on different issues -- a development which erodes public confidence.

The CEC said his commission would cancel candidacies of the candidates convicted in criminal cases, had the appellate court not stayed their convictions following appeals.

The EC already completed all preparatory work related to holding of the election including preparing the voter list, amending the electoral rolls and the electoral code of conduct, appointments of electoral staff, and establishment of offices at upazila levels, Shamsul Huda added.

"The electronic data base of voters is a great achievement for the nation, and there is no problem with its security," he said.

He also said two consignments of transparent ballot boxes already reached the country, and the rest will arrive soon.

Three and a half lakh manpower for holding the national election and another five and a half lakh manpower for the upazila elections will be needed, The Election Commission has already

changed the Representation of the People Order 2008 enough times on request of the political parties, and it will not be changed anymore," he said adding that the EC will give registration certificates to Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and Jatiya Party (Manju), as they met the prerequisites for political parties' mandatory registration with the commission.

He hoped that all other political parties including BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami will also get registered with the commission soon.

He said the EC has already taken steps to ensure law and order during the election.

"We've a plan to hold the election keeping the striking forces in reserve, so no panic is created among voters," he said adding that candidacies will be cancelled if candidates violate the electoral code of conduct.

He said being inspired by different sections of the people, the commission had planned to hold the national and upazila elections simultaneously, but the political parties opposed holding of upazila elections right on the heels of the parliamentary poll.

"The government is now dealing with the political parties. The decision regarding holding of the upazila elections is now up to the government," he noted.

The CEC said magistrates will be assigned to monitor whether candidates are providing the required eight-point information to the EC during submission of nomination

papers, or applications for candidacies in cases of independent candidates.

Acting General Secretary of Awami League Syed Ashrafur Islam hoped that the national election will be held on December 18, and the emergency will be lifted during the poll period.

He, however, apprehended that candidates free of the stigma of corruption will be difficult to find in the upcoming elections as 'the world champions of corruption' have been released from jails.

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) Chairman Prof Muzaffer Ahmad said the election is a mean to restoring democracy, but the political parties have been treating it as an end.

"We expect the political parties to nominate competent and honest candidates to form an effective parliament, otherwise the rule of law will be violated in many different ways," he said.

He suggested formation of a review committee for scrapping of false cases against indicted political leaders, in order to maintain adherence to the rule of law.

Prof Muzaffer added that the government is duty-bound to ensure public security during elections.

President of Bangladesh Workers Party Rashed Khan Menon said the parliamentary election must be held on December 18, and any alternative will be very dangerous for the nation.

"If the election date is deferred,

that would mean the election will not be held in 2009," he said.

He also said elections amid the state of emergency will not be acceptable.

"Corrupt people have been getting treatment abroad after being released from jails while over eight crore voters are languishing under the state of emergency. This is not desired. I can't launch a political campaign due to the emergency. I don't know when the government will lift the emergency and when we can campaign," he said.

Candidates with criminal convictions should not be allowed to contest in elections until the courts overturn the convictions, he added.

Menon said his party wants increased participation of women in elections.

Former adviser to a caretaker government SM Shahjahan said the confusions over holding of the election must be removed.

"If the election is not held on December 18, anarchy will engulf the country," he warned.

Moderated by Editor of the Prothom Alo Matur Rahman, the roundtable was also addressed by Jatiya Party Presidium Member Ziauddin Ahmed Bablu, FBCCI President Anisul Huq, TIB Executive Director Dr Iftekheruzzaman, Prof Dilara Zaman, and legal expert Dr Shahdeen Malik, among others.