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Hope rises on hills

Land Commission decides to ask govt to end survey in 3 dists by October; Chakma raja terms it right step to bury long standing dispute

REAZ AHMAD

In a major development towards implementation of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Peace Accord, the CHT Land Commission yesterday decided to ask the government to complete land survey in the three hill districts by October this year.

After holding two meetings in a row in Khagrachari and Rangamati circuit houses yesterday, Chairman of the reconstituted CHT Land Commission Khademul Islam Chowdhury said the commission will ask the government to complete the long overdue land survey in the hills, paving the way for resolving land disputes between the local indigenous population and Bangalee settlers.

The meetings of the commission were the first since Awami League-led coalition came to power.

The decision to start the survey also came hard on the heels of the government's July 29 decision to withdraw a brigade of troops and 35 temporary security camps from the region by September this year.

The CHT Peace Accord, that put an end to the two-decade old insurgency in the hills, has clear provisions for land survey and for resolving land disputes in the three hill districts.

According to the peace accord, the government is supposed to start a land survey in CHT



as soon as possible following the signing of the agreement between the government and Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity.

Proper land ownerships are also supposed to be recorded after proper inquiries, following rehabilitation of indigenous refugees and internally displaced indigenous population.

In an instant reaction to yesterday's development, Chakma King Barrister Devashish Roy told The Daily Star that the move is towards the right direction. The main thrust of the move should be to resolve the longstanding land disputes in the hill districts, he added.

"I requested the Chittagong Hill Tracts Land Commission chairman to take decisions on the survey and land dispute issues after having a meeting of the full commission," the Chakma king said noting that the government has yet to appoint a secretary for the commission.

Chairman of the CHT Regional Council Jotirindra Bodhipriya Larma, popularly known as Santu Larma, was however not present in yesterday's meetings, and despite repeated attempts he could not be reached over the phone for comments.

CHT Land Commission Chairman Khademul Islam Chowdhury, a retired justice of the High Court Division of Bangladesh Supreme Court, said he will also direct the

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DU UNREST 2007
 3 teachers' conviction quashed

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday quashed the convictions of three Dhaka University teachers for breach of emergency power rules during the student unrest in August 2007.

The teachers cleared of the charges are former DU Teachers Association president Prof Sadruddin Amin, former DU general secretary Prof Anwar Hossain and the social science faculty's ex-dean Prof Harun-or-Rashid.

The court order comes close on the heels of a parliamentary body's decision to investigate the DU violence.

On January 22 last year, Third Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Golam Rabbani sentenced each of the three teachers to two years' rigorous imprisonment.

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19 officers promoted to secretary rank

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday promoted 19 additional secretaries to the rank of secretary and made them officer on special duty (OSD).

According to a gazette notification, 18 of the officers were serving as acting secretaries at different ministries. The rest one is Golam Mostakim, who was the managing director of BCS Administration Academy.

The other officers are Nasiruddin Ahmed, Md Habibullah Majumder, Dr Mihir Kanti Majumder, Samar Chandra Pal, Md Ataharul Islam, Md Moklesur Rahman, Illius Ahmed, Md Abdul Malek, Mohammad Shafiqul Alam, AKM Abdul Awal

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Ashraf for curtailed JS tenure

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Syed Ashraful Islam believes the five-year tenure of parliament and local government bodies is too long and should be reduced.

"I think the tenure of local government bodies should be three-year-long...The five-year duration of parliament is also long," Ashraf said yesterday, but he did not suggest any timeframe for parliament.

The minister also expressed his preference for a jury system over the existing judicial system.

He was talking to reporters after inaugurating a consultation workshop on selecting union parishes for the "Activating Village Courts in Bangladesh" project organised jointly by his ministry

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BSF kills 2 Bangladeshis

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
 Chapainawabganj

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) early yesterday shot two Bangladeshi cattle traders dead on Telkupi border under Shibganj upazila of the district.

The deceased Motiur Rahman, 25, son of Motif Uddin, and Subed Ali, 27, son of late Sukkur, were from Telkupi village.

Locals and Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) sources said Indian border guards of Gopalnagar camp in Maldah opened fire on a group of cattle traders around 3:00am when they reached the Telkupi border. Motiur and Subed died on the spot.

The BSF personnel, immediately after the incident, took

JS team sees no harm in Tipai

Delegation convinced with India's 'no damage' assurance

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

India would not launch any projects that would harm Bangladesh, said Abdur Razzaq, head of the parliamentary delegation that returned yesterday after a visit to the neighbouring Tipaimukh site because of inclement weather.

"We are convinced by India's assurance that they won't do anything that harms the interests of Bangladesh," Razzaq told newsmen at Zia International Airport upon their return from New Delhi.

The 10-member delegation left Dhaka on July 29 and met the Indian foreign and power ministers in New Delhi. The Indian officials provided the delegation with current hydrological data on the Tipaimukh project on the Barak river in Manipur.

Delegation member Jatiya Party lawmaker ABM Ruhul Amin Hawlader said India has not yet started construction at the Tipaimukh site

and the future of the project is still uncertain.

"The project is just at its initial stage. I don't think it could be implemented in my lifetime," he said, adding the delegation could not visit the Tipaimukh site because of inclement weather.

They however got to see photos of the Tipaimukh site by courtesy of a BBC journalist, who went to the site, Hawlader added.

Razzaq said both the Indian ministers assured that they have no plan to withdraw water from Fulertal or any other point upstream. Rather, in the hydroelectricity project there is a flood management component that will ensure more water flow in the Surma, Kushiya and the Meghna during lean season.

"They said they have conducted environmental impact assessment, and will do more. India will be the first to be affected, if any," said Razzaq, also chairman of the parliamentary

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First swine flu death in India

2 more cases found in Bangladesh

STAR REPORT

India recorded its first death from influenza A (H1N1) virus in the western Indian city of Pune Monday while two fresh cases of swine flu were detected in Bangladesh yesterday.

A 14-year-old girl, student of class IX, died in Pune Monday night after she was admitted to a private hospital and got the proper treatment "too late", Health Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad told a television news channel.

Referring to the death, Azad said she had fever and was taken to a doctor who treated her for normal flu. When her condition started deteriorating, she was taken to a private hospital and was treated for normal flu again for the first two days.

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