

Announce roadmap to implement CHT agreement

Speakers urge govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a roundtable yesterday called on the government to announce a clear roadmap to implement the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Peace Accord quickly.

They also demanded immediate steps to settle land disputes before the land survey and to resume withdrawal of military camps from the hill districts.

They also called on the government to take immediate steps to prevent activities of Islamist militants in the hill districts. Groups linked to the militants are manipulating local politics, they said.

Kapaeng Foundation (KF) and Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) jointly organised the roundtable at the WVA auditorium in the city where the speakers also

stressed the need for constitutional recognition of the indigenous people.

Sultana Kamal, co-chair of the CHT Commission and former adviser to the caretaker government, said that 12 years have elapsed since the peace accord was signed. Meantime, the ratio of Bangalee to indigenous people has changed along with the political leadership. Indigenous people were removed from the decision-making level. The settlers have also invested and now have economic interests.

She also said the government must be careful to implement the CHT accord with a clear goal.

According to official statistics, there are 11 indigenous communities in CHT namely Chakma, Tanchangya, Tripura, Mro, Murong,

Marma, Bawm, Pankhua, Khayang, Chak and Lushai. Adivasi leaders, however, said the number would be higher.

The ratio of Adivasis to Bangalee settlers now stands at 49:51, which used to be the other way around. CHT covers about 10 percent of the total land of the country.

Rashed Khan Menon MP, chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on education ministry, said political inter- actions between Adivasi leaders and mainstream political parties is necessary to implement the accord.

He also said that Islamist militants are provoking the settlers in CHT using religious sentiments, which needs to be addressed immediately.

He added that steps should be taken to withdraw temporary military camps from the CHT, as there are six cantonments in the region.

Shaheen Anam, executive director of MJF, said the government must not forget the pledges made in the election manifesto.

She also called for following a clear roadmap to implement the peace accord.

Jatindra Lal Tripura MP, member of CHT Accord Implementation Committee, said the government is keen to implement the peace accord. However, it must do it before the end of its tenure and prioritise the issue of settlement of land dispute.

Sanjeeb Drong, general secretary of Bangladesh Adivasi Forum, Robayet Ferdous, associate professor of journalism department, Dhaka University, Gautam Kumar Chakma, member of CHT Regional Council, Saktipada Tripura of Parbatya Chattagram Janasanghati Samity, and Dwipayan Khisha, vice-chairperson of Kapaeng Foundation, also spoke.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina addresses the Formation Commanders of Bangladesh Army at Formation Commanders' Conference in the Army Headquarters Conference Room at Dhaka Cantonment yesterday. (Story on Page 1)

HUNGER STRIKE 10 nurses fall sick

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

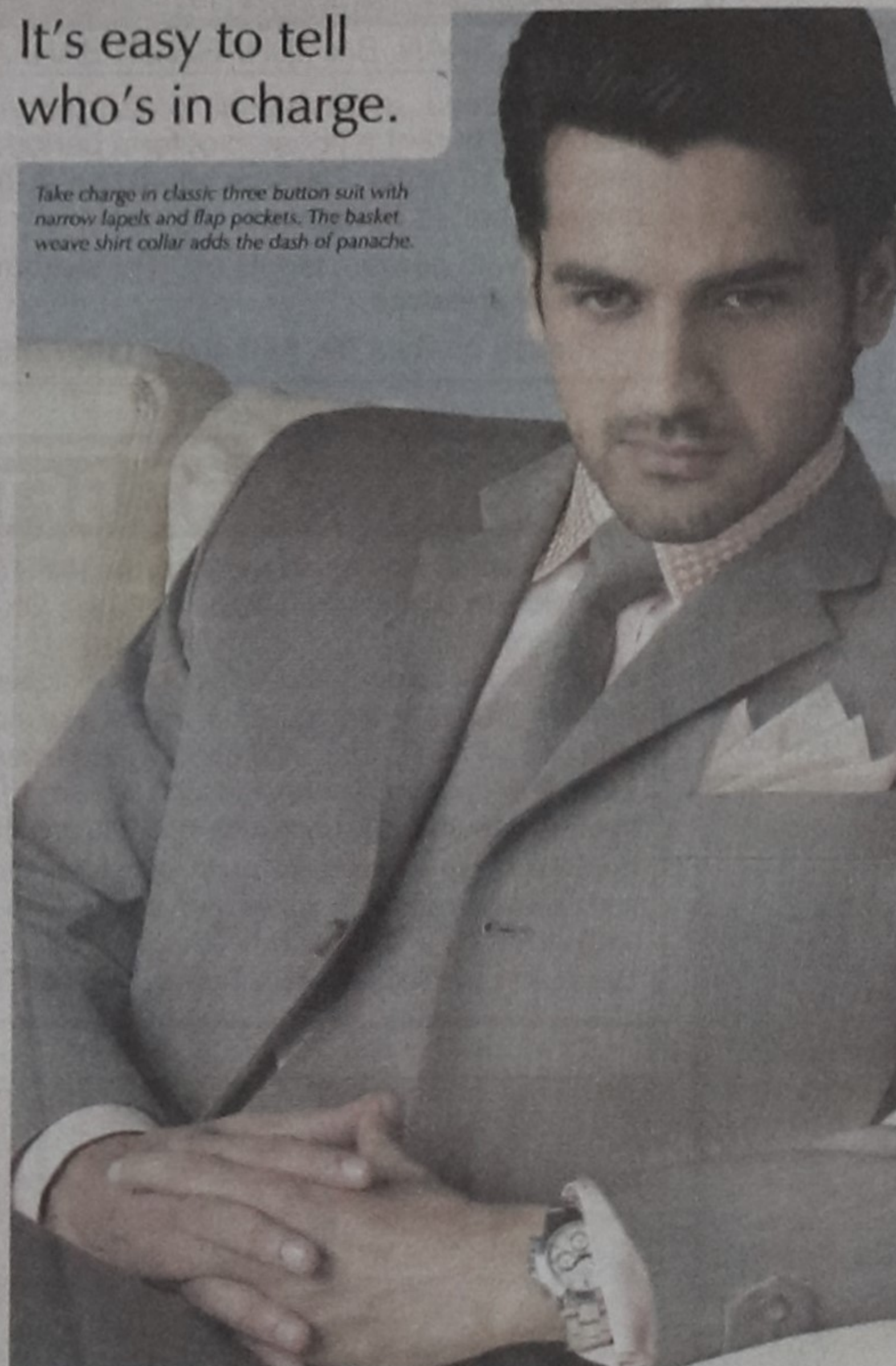
At least 10 nurses fell sick yesterday on the second consecutive day of the hunger strike of Bangladesh Diploma Unemployed Nurses' Association.

They are continuing the strike at the Central Shaheed Minar in the city to realise their demand for batch- and seniority-wise recruitment in the government health services.

As the condition of two nurses deteriorated, they were admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

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Rashed Khan Menon speaks at a roundtable at the WVA auditorium in the city yesterday. On his left are Shaheen Anam, Jatindra Lal Tripura and Sultana Kamal.

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