



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina visits 'Bangladesh Trade Centre' in Port of Spain, the capital of Trinidad and Tobago, on Monday.

Awareness campaign on traffic rules launched

Drivers warned of fines, suspension of licences

MUKHLESUR RAHMAN

The Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) yesterday launched a weeklong awareness campaign on traffic rules and lane system, with a warning that drivers violating traffic rules will face heavy fines and suspension of their driving licences with effect from December 8.

However, the authorities are yet to install traffic signal lights at many points in the city and start marking lanes on major roads.

"During the awareness campaign, which will continue up to December 7, we will try to make the people aware of traffic rules so that they can follow traffic signal lights and lanes while driving," DMP Commissioner AKM Shahidul Haque said.

"In the second phase, beginning on December 8, we will fine the drivers violating traffic rules Tk 1000 and their driving licences will be suspended for three months," he

said at a discussion with the leaders of transport owners and workers' association in his office yesterday.

The DMP commissioner said they will seek the cooperation of the print and electronic media and cable TV operators in making their campaign effective and also distribute leaflets and posters.

Twelve teams of traffic police have been assigned to monitor the traffic situation and each team will be headed by a deputy commissioner of police.

On November 22, the DMP switched to traffic light signals and announced that major roads of the city will be divided into three lanes for different modes of vehicles in a bid to ease traffic jam.

There are traffic signal lights at 59 points in the city, but the authorities are yet to fix the number of more intersections where traffic signal light will be installed, sources at the Joint Commissioner of Traffic office said.

In a drive from August 9 to November 25, the traffic police seized 9,407 vehicles, including buses and minibuses, on various charges. Many of them are worn-out vehicles and others did not have road permits.

But the owners got back 8332 vehicles after paying fines and 445 others were returned on condition that these vehicles will not go back on the city streets. Now only 730 vehicles are lying at the DMP custody.

Many city dwellers observed that return of these vehicles to their owners will only add to the nagging traffic jams.

When asked, the DMP commissioner said the vehicles were returned due to lack of space.

The city dwellers also observed that the authorities concerned are issuing registration to a huge number of private cars without considering the capacity of roads.

According to Joint commissioner office sources, a

total of 4,70,507 motor vehicles were registered during the period between 2003 and 2008, and 1,29,629 of them are private cars.

Executive Director of Dhaka Transport Co-ordination Board (DTCB) AMB Shahjahan said over 10.6 lakh motor vehicles ply the city streets and 8000 of them are buses and minibuses.

There are about 2100 km roads in the city, but only 250 km roads are fit for public transport, he added.

Quamrul Hassan's 88th anniversary of birth today

METRO DESK

Today is the 88th birth anniversary of renowned artist Quamrul Hassan, says a press release.

On the occasion, Patua Quamrul Hassan Art School, a school named after the artist, will place wreaths at his grave remembering his endeavours and contribution he made for the nation.

Patua Quamrul Hassan Art School has been conducting training programme on art for the kids since 2006.

Obituary

METRO DESK

MA Sabet, former deputy chief engineer of the Public Works Department, passed away due to a cardiac arrest on Monday at the age of 83, says a press release.

He was buried at the Martyred Intellectuals' Graveyard at Mirpur in the city.

He is survived by his wife, two sons, three daughters, grandchildren and a host of relatives and well-wishers.

His quikhwani will be held at his residence at 3/16, Block G, Lalmaia after Maghrib prayers on Friday.

He was a life member of Shibpur Old Boys' Association and honorary member of Dhaka Club.

His family has requested all to join the quikhwani.

Quikhwani

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Quikhwani of Md Siddiqur Rahman, former official of Department of Geology Survey of Bangladesh and father of cardiologist Dr Md Mizanur Rahman, will be held at his village home at Citkipara village in Comilla today, says a press release.

He passed away at his residence at East Bashabo in the city on October 27 at the age of 73.

Relatives, friends and admirers are requested to attend the programme.

COP15 needs to provide help for vulnerable states

Says Danish minister

UNB, Dhaka

Danish Minister for the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen Connie Hedegaard has said the Copenhagen deal on climate change should involve binding medium and long-term greenhouse gas reduction goals for developed countries.

It should also put the big developing economies on a cleaner and greener path to prosperity, she said in a statement yesterday, according to a Danish embassy press release.

As Copenhagen hosts the crucial summit COP15, Hedegaard said that it needs to provide assistance for the vulnerable countries - those who are hit hardest and hit first.

"The deal must bring new and truly additional finance on the table - some of which needs to fund adaptation in developing countries - and an agreement needs to be reached on how we can work together to disseminate and develop technology and knowledge. These are the four cornerstones in Copenhagen that we must deliver on."

She said the Danish government is working for an ambitious, global agreement that reduces greenhouse gas emissions and delivers on adaptation, technology and

finance. Also, Copenhagen should include a deadline for when to close a legally binding agreement.

"Time is of the essence. For each day we wait the price increases and the potentially catastrophic consequences of climate change increase," the Danish minister said.

She said that according to the International Energy Agency, every year lost to inaction will cost 500 billion dollars.

"We must make the pressure pay and use the political momentum to make the leaders of the world live up to their responsibility and act swiftly on climate change."

She added, "The Copenhagen deadline works. One by one, governments from all over the world are delivering before the climate conference."

Recently, concrete targets were seen from Brazil and South Korea and Russia improved its bid.

Hedegaard said President Obama has announced US targets, not only for 2020, but maybe more noticeable for 2025 and 2030. Four percent below 1990 might not be what the world has been hoping for, but the US seems to know that the price for coming late is that the pathway for reductions

after 2020 will be extra steep with 18% below 1990-levels in 2025 and 32 percent in 2030.

She said it is also new and very encouraging that China comes forward internationally. "We must analyse more carefully what the new Chinese announcement translates to when it comes to a percentage for deviation from business as usual."

The Danish minister noted it is a clear sign that the deadline of Copenhagen is working and world leaders are feeling the pressure of expectations from citizens, business and the rest of society. "Now is the time for these leaders to live up to the pledges to our planet and deliver results in Copenhagen."

She said Denmark didn't set the deadline to be this December 2009. With the Bali Action Plan from 2007 the world as a whole decided that COP15 in Copenhagen is a turning point in the campaign to put the world on a more sustainable path.

Some 192 countries signed up to this mandate, she said, adding, "We must not let that deadline slip out of our hands. Now is the time to act and now is the time to cash in on the political momentum."

Hedegaard said world leaders have promised the

citizens of the planet a solution. Now is the time to live up to that responsibility and come up with an ambitious, truly global climate agreement in Copenhagen.

Passengers charged extra fares at Mawa ghat

A CORRESPONDENT, Madaripur

Hundreds of passengers from different south-western districts of the country are facing suffering, as the authorities of Kaorakandi ferry ghat and launch terminal are allegedly charging additional fares from vehicles as well as the passengers.

The passengers headed towards the capital alleged that the authorities of BIWTA local counter and Zilla Parishad counter are playing key role in charging additional fares from the passengers.

Some illegal travellers are carrying passengers in exchange for Tk 30 to Tk 40 per head. There is no passenger security management system in those trawlers.

Review needed to remove weaknesses

FROM PAGE 1

and invested in various businesses. Considering these significant changes, a review of the accord is plausible."

"The review can help remove some of the major weaknesses of the accord," she said adding, "Time limit for withdrawal of military camps, which is one of the key components of the accord, is not mentioned in it."

"The accord lacks work plans for settling land disputes and implementing traditional community ownership of land," said Sultana Kamal who is also the executive director of Ain O Shalish Kendra.

"It also lacks legal protection for the CHT Regional Council and related laws.

There are no provisions for legal steps or compensation for those who were killed, tortured and discriminated against," she pointed out.

However, none of these would bring meaningful changes without constitutional recognition of the indigenous community of the country, she said.

The constitution of the country is based on Bengali nationalism, which alienates ethnic communities, continued Sultana Kamal.

Constitutional protection and positive discrimination to ethnic minorities can establish formal equality, she observed.

On land dispute she said the origin of all dire straits in

the hill Tracts is its vast land and resources. She observed that existing land disputes should be settled before the cadastral survey begins and it requires decisions on rehabilitating Bengali settlers.

About discontinuation of military-led Operation Uttaran and arguments on deterioration of law and order in the hills she said, "I see no security risks in bringing an end to Operation Uttaran. Besides, CHT saw a rise of Islamic militancy in the area even with the presence of the military camps."

She stressed the removal of temporary military camps from the hill districts saying that presence of military in a community obstructs democ-

racy as well as normal lives of people.

Sultana Kamal, former adviser to a caretaker government, recommended empowering the CHT Regional Council and Hill District Councils along with holding elections of the councils with alternative electoral methods and reviewing the voter list of the districts.

She said, "The CHT Peace Accord paved the way for peace in the region. The government has to be careful in restoring the accord and should take visible measures as promised in their election manifesto."

She also urged the opposition party to take a logical stand regarding the issue.

Govt on right track of accord implementation

FROM PAGE 1

agreement within its tenure as it is moving to that end.

He also pointed the major weakness of the accord saying it has no constitutional guarantee and the power of the CHT regional councils has not yet been clarified.

The president of Workers Party, a partner of the Awami League-led grand alliance government, said this while talking to The Daily Star at his party office on Topkhana Road in the capital.

On the army pullout from CHT, Menon said, "I undoubtedly support the move."

"Those who say law and order has been deteriorated since the army pullout are absolutely wrong and it has been proved already."

Menon also said withdrawal of army camps is not enough, the government will have to withdraw the "hidden rule of army" from the

hill tracts.

Explaining the "hidden rule", he said, "Though there was no military rule in hill tracts we all know that everything there was controlled by the army. It is called hidden rule of army and it has to be removed."

On the issue of concern about the "worsening" relations between Bangladesh and indigenous people after signing of the CHT accord, he said those who opposed the agreement are responsible for it.

"The fundamentalist elements led by Jamaat-e-Islami with the assistance of BNP, who opposed the CHT accord, created confusion and mistrust among the indigenous and Bangalees people," he added.

On the accord, he said 25 years of bloodshed and armed conflicts that wreaked havoc on the lives of the peaceful hill people came to a stop through

signing of it.

He went on to say Rangamati, Khagrachhari and Bandarban, three most beautiful districts of the country, are finally at peace. Refugees who had migrated outside the country have returned and reunited with their near and dear ones.

Considering these facts, the peace accord undoubtedly was a milestone achievement in solving the CHT conflicts politically, Menon observed.

"It is true that the accord could not satisfy all concerned. As you know the then opposition BNP opposed it strongly. They criticised the country will lose control on CHT once the agreement is implemented," he said.

"The then Awami League government therefore went slow to implement the accord and could not implement its major points during their three-year tenure after

signing it."

Menon added, "They [AL] also had to face obstacles on the point of constitutional acceptance of the accord, which was also a major cause behind the delay."

Another big factor was the attitude of army, who ruled CHT areas for long, about the peace accord, he observed.

It is good that the AL government after coming to power has taken initiatives to implement the accord. It has already formed a national committee and a taskforce to look after the implementation process. The Land Commission has also started its work," he said.

"I will say that possibility has been created now to bring pace in the implementation process of the accord which became slow once," Menon added.



Communist Party of Bangladesh leaders take out a procession from the city's Muktangan yesterday to mark the beginning of the month of victory.

No respite from 'military rule'

FROM PAGE 1

Santu Larma said the implementation process of the peace accord grinded to a halt during the four-party alliance as well as the caretaker government rule. The accord was violated during that seven years, he added.

Expressing optimism for complete implementation of the treaty, Santu Larma said, "I hope the present Awami League-led grand alliance government would implement it within its tenure."

Lauding steps taken by the current government to implement the accord, Santu Larma said the government reconstituted the peace implementation committee, the land commission and CHT refugee affairs taskforce.

He, however, said the government had violated the deal by appointing a state minister for the CHT affairs ministry instead of a fully-fledged minister as per the provision of the accord.

He said there are still about 500 security camps in CHT and only 31 camps including a brigade have been withdrawn. "I do not know why and how the

government is claiming that around 200 camps were removed from CHT," he said.

He said the government is yet to make the CHT Regional Council active and approve the rules of business for the council.

Election to the council could not be held till date as the elections to the three hill districts councils were not held as per the agreement, Santu Larma said.

He said the government should immediately finalise the rules of business for CHTRC, implement the rules of business for staffs of CHTRC, construct the CHTRC Complex, allocate fund for building an office of CHTRC in Dhaka, approve the rules of business for three districts councils, hand over maintenance of law and order, local police, land, land management, environment management, youth development programmes and tourism to districts councils, prepare separate voter lists for CHT districts and enact voter list rules, withdraw all remaining makeshift security camps and rehabilitate refugees and inter-

nally displaced people.

Santu Larma said the United People's Democratic Front (UPDF) is a terrorist organisation and urged the government to ban it. He claimed that a vested quarter is backing the UPDF to "bury" Parbatyia Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS). He said armed members of UPDF killed about 100 leaders and activists of PCJSS.

Top leaders of PCJSS Goutam Kumar Chakma, Ushatan Talukder, Rowshan Ara Begum, Sneha Kanti Chakma and acting Chief Executive Officer of CHTRC Krishna Chandra Chakma were present at the conference.

The PCJSS has taken up different programmes, including holding of rallies and discussion meetings in Rangamati, Bandarban and Khagrachhari to observe the 12th anniversary of the accord.

On December 2, 1997 the CHT Peace Accord was signed between the PCJSS and the then Awami League government.

Land remains as root cause of conflicts

FROM PAGE 1

Locals and people concerned say only a political decision of the government after discussions with all quarters can resolve these disputes.

Indigenous people claim that the problem arose when the government rehabilitated Bangalees in land owned by them.

They also allege that they are still under a kind of military rule although the peace accord has a clause on withdrawal of the army from the areas.

Visiting the areas it was seen that in some cases more than one person have regal papers regarding the settlement of the same piece of land.

Shashi Lal Chakma, a 72-year-old man, showed The Daily Star correspondent papers given to him in 1977 for the settlement of a piece of land at Bilachhari of Barkal upazila in Rangamati.

"In 1982, a person named Siddique also claimed the land

and showed papers of his ownership of that land. Now I cannot go to my land," Shashi said.

"Many others of my community lost their land although they have legal papers of their ownership," Shashi told The Daily Star.

Another member of the indigenous community in the same area, Guneshwar Chakma, said, "I planted trees on my land in 1994 but Bangalees have grabbed that land."

Hirok Chakma, member of Barkal Union Parishad, said, "The peace accord brought peace only to Bangalees, not us. They [Bangalees] can now easily grab our land and we have nothing to do. Successive governments have done nothing to implement the peace accord."

Almost all indigenous people in all the villages of the area have similar stories.

In 2001, the government formed the Land Commission as per the CHT peace accord and passed the CHT Land

Commission Act.

The commission, however, could do nothing in the past 12 years to resolve the disputes.

Retired Justice Khademul Islam Chowdhury, chairman of the CHT Land Commission, told The Daily Star that the commission has already decided to conduct a land survey in the area. "There is no other way but to conduct a survey to solve the problem," he said.

"Now the government will make the final decision about the survey and an inter-ministerial meeting is likely to be held this month to decide the matter," he added.

Meanwhile, Chairman of the CHT Regional Council Jyotindra Bodhipriya Larma, who is widely known as Santu Larma, yesterday alleged at a press conference in Rangamati that military rule still exists in CHT in the name of "Operation Uttaran".

Santu said invisible powers have always dominated everything in the hills. But he

expressed optimism about the full implementation of the CHT Peace Accord.

The press conference was organised to mark the 12th anniversary of signing of the accord.

Talking to The Daily Star, International CHT Commission Co-Chairman Sultana Kamal said the government seems to be sincere in implementing the peace accord as it knows that it is the way to bring permanent peace to the area.

"The Chittagong Hill Tracts Regional Council, the Land Commission and the CHT accord implementation committee should sit together with each other and also with the leaders of the indigenous communities and Bangalees to resolve the problems," Sultana said.

According to her, the absence of a political will is responsible for the long time it is taking to implement the CHT Peace Accord.