METROPOLITAN

Form commission to resolve land disputes of indigenous people

Speakers urge govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a roundtable yesterday demanded a separate land commission for the indigenous community living in the plains to settle their land disputes with the mainstream that displaced many indigenous people from their homesteads.

They also demanded a land survey under the commission recognising the traditional practice of communitybased land management by the indigenous people.

The roundtable titled 'Land problems of indigenous people of plains and its way forward' was jointly organised by Jatiya Adivasi Parishad, Kapaeeng Foundation and Gram Bikash Kendra at Cirdap auditorium in the city.

Bangladesh Resources Centre for Indigenous Knowledge (Barcik), presented a keynote paper.

Traditionally, indigenous people practise community-based management of land not ownership, as they believe that land belongs to god and it cannot be owned by humans, he said.

Because of this belief, keeping official record of land was never a practice among them, which eventually led to their displacement. Mainstream population often grabbed their land sometimes even their homesteads where they have been living for hundreds of years.

Pavel further said that there are about 38 indigenous communities with 15 lakh population living in the plain land of north, north-central and north-eastern part of the country. Of Pavel Partho, a researcher of them, about 90 percent are landless.

Farah Kabir, country director of ActionAid Bangladesh, said political will is necessary to resolve the land

She called on the government to include indigenous people in the next census to be held in 2011. No information is available about them in 2001 census.

State Minister for Land Advocate Mostafizur Rahman said a land commission can only give guidelines to resolve the land-related problems.

The present government is keen on resolving the issue as promised in the election manifesto, he added.

Speaking on the other land-related issues, the minister said the Vested Property Return (amendment) Act 2009 would be passed during the ongoing session of the parliament.

committee would be formed at district and upazila levels to settle the landrelated problems, he noted.

If any dissatisfaction arises from any parties regarding their decision, the law will also have a provision for special tribunal headed by a retired High Court justice to settle the matters, he said.

Currently, there are about 4,45,000 acres of vested property in the country.

Dr Sadeka Halim, commissioner of Information Commission, Prof Dalem Chandra Barman of Peace and Conflict Studies Department, Dhaka University, Sanjeeb Drong, general secretary of Bangladesh Adivasi Forum, Anil Marandi, chairman, and Rabindranath Soren, general secretary of Jatiya Adivasi Parishad, Dipayan Khisha, vice chairperson of Kapaeng Under the law, a five-member Foundation, also spoke.

Call to educate indigenous children in mother tongue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a programme yesterday called for partnership of the government and non-government organisations (NGOs) to address the issue of providing Adivasi (indigenous) children with primary education in their mother tongues.

They made the call at the closing session of the two-day seminar at Bangladesh Shishu Academy in the city organised by Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE), in association with other co-partners.

CAMPE Executive Director Rasheda K Chowdhury informed the seminar of the government's inability at this moment to take the responsibility of providing primary education for Adivasi children in their mother tongue across the country.

She called on the government to formulate a compressive policy and implement it, adding that the government with the help of partner organisations, including NGOs and donor agencies, should begin pilot projects in this connection.

Speaking as the chief guest, Primary and Mass Education Minister Md Afsarul Amin said different initiatives have been taken at different times to popularise primary education and reduce dropouts at different levels.

"The campaign 'Education for All' would not succeed, leaving the indigenous children behind and not giving them opportunity to learn education in their mother tongues."

The minister said his ministry will definitely address the issue with due importance.

Saima Anwar, deputy country director of Save the Children-UK, and Dr Shourav Sikder, chairman of Linguistics Department, Dhaka University, also spoke.

The seminar placed some recommendations based on field experience, researches and expert opinions on introducing multilingual education and its expansion along with addressing the existing constraints.

Some 12 organisations, which are carrying out education programme in different Adivasi languages around the country, exhibited their study materials at the seminar.

Unemployed nurses threaten immolation today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Diploma Unemployed Nurses Association continued their hunger strike for the 7th consecutive day yesterday.

But being hopeful of getting a positive decision from the government, the association rescheduled their selfimmolation programme for today at 4:00pm, which was supposed to take place yester-

"We will continue hunger strike until we get a positive decision from the government," said Iqbal Hossain Sabuj, secretary general of the association.

FM for regional action Around 50 nurses have already fallen sick and have been receiving saline at their protestation stage at the city's Muktangan while some 10 were admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) as their condition deteriorated.

They have been demanding batch-wise recruitment of nurses and also employment based on seniority instead of district quota.

Though the government is yet to give any formal decision in this connection, a meeting of the nurses recruitment committee was held at the ministry on Monday with deputy secretary (nursing and gender issues) in the chair.

Joint Secretary (hospital and nursing) KBM Omar Faroque said nurses would be recruited from every district and there is no meaning of continuing the movement.

"The government's decision is quite harmonious to their demand. But still they have been agitating for nothing," he said, adding that the present government is quite sensitive on the nursing issue.

The government has upgraded the status of nurses. Age limit for recruitment has also been increased to 36 years and decided to go for batchwise recruitment.

A high official of the health ministry said a vested quarter is trying to create anarchy in this field and is also provoking the association.

He informed that the theme of this year's summit would be climate change.

Bangladesh Diploma Unemployed Nurses Association continues its fast-unto-death programme at

Muktangan in the city yesterday demanding recruitment of nurses based on their merit and seniority.

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Minister Dipu Moni said some of the most vulnerable countries to climate change are in South Asia and collective regional action is needed to combat its adverse Minister Sheikh Hasina to Bhutan generated effect.

CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS

The foreign minister said this when Special Envoy of the Prime Minister of Bhutan and Minister of Economic Affairs Lyonpo Khandu Wangchuk called on her at State Guesthouse to extend zero tariff access to 18 commodities Padma yesterday.

The Special Envoy apprised Dr Dipu Moni of Tamabil border check post. the preparations being taken for the 16th Saarc Summit to be held at Thimpu on April 28-29, export from eastern part of the country to

During the meeting, the two ministers also

discussed issues of bilateral interest. He observed that the recent visit of Prime

greater enthusiasm among the people of his country.

The Special Envoy also conveyed his government's appreciation for Bangladesh's decision from Bhutan and also allowing export through

This would greatly facilitate Bhutanese angladesh, he observed.

GRAFT CASE

MACHINE-READABLE PASSPORT Special court Contract signing today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The contract signing ceremony of a project for introducing machine-readable passport (MRP) and machine-readable visa (MRV) for Bangladesh will take place today at the office of the Department of Immigration and Passport (DIP).

The contract signing will take place between DIP and Malaysia-based IRIS Corporation Berhad in presence of Home Secretary Abdus Sobhan Sikder, Project Director Brig Gen Md Refayet Ullah and senior officials of IRIS.

Earlier, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina approved awarding the contract for the long-awaited project to the Malaysian company.

The contract signing is taking place when Bangladesh is having only 42 days to comply with an international aviation deadline.

Bangladesh has to go for MRP and MRV from April 1 as per International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) for international travelling. No hand-written will be accepted after the deadline.

verdict against Maya stayed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday stayed a verdict of a special court which sentenced Dhaka city Awami League general secretary Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya to 13 years' imprisonment in a corruption case.

An HC bench of Justice MA Wahhab Miah and Justice Md Abdur Razzaque stayed the verdict against Maya until disposal of the appeal against

the verdict. Maya filed the appeal on Monday seeking stay on the

order of conviction and sentence against him. On June 4 last year, the HC

granted bail to him upon an appeal filed by him against the special court verdict passed on February 14, 2008.

TRIAL OF WAR CRIMINALS

Amra Muktijoddhar Santan, a platform of the children of the freedom fighters, burn effigies of Jamaat leaders Matiur Rahman Nizami and

the city.

Appointment of investigators, prosecutors next month

'Ban Jamaat-Shibir politics'

The demand came from a

Jamaat or Shibir is not a

They also demanded trial

human chain formed in front

of the National Press Club in

political entity, they are funda-

mentalist and militant organi-

sations, said the leaders of the

platform at the human chain.

of the war criminals.

Says law minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojahid in front of the National Press Club in the city yesterday.

tions.

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of Amra

Muktijoddhar Santan, a plat-

form of the children of the

freedom fighters, yesterday

demanded ban on the politi-

cal activities of Jamaat and

Shibir permanently announc-

ing them as militant organisa-

Call to execute

verdict in Kazi

Aref murder

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Aref Ahmed murder case.

Speakers at a discussion yes-

terday called on the govern-

ment to take immediate steps

to execute the verdict in Kazi

Ten years have passed after

the killing of Kazi Aref, but the killers are yet to be punished, as the appeals hearing of the

case remains pending with the Appellate Division of the

Kazi Aref Parishad organised the discussion to mark

the 11th death anniversary of

Kazi Aref, a freedom fighter

and founder of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD), at the

The speakers also said that

the trial of war criminals

should start immediately in

order to repay the debt of

gratitude to Kazi Aref, who was

Kamal Chowdhury, the dis-

cussion was addressed by

Mahmudur Rahman Manna,

Vice-President of Sammilito

Sangskritik Jote (SSJ) Golam

Kuddus and General Secretary

Hasan Arif and Prof Abdul

Mannan Chowdhury.

National Press Club.

campaign for the trial.

Supreme Court, they said.

case

Law Minister Shafique Ahmed yesterday said the investigators and prosecutors would be appointed in the first week of March for holding trial of 1971 war criminals.

one of the pioneers of the New judges will be Presided over by member appointed to the Appellate secretary of the Parishad and High Court divisions soon, he said.

After investigation, it will be decided how many war Awami League leader criminals will be tried, Shafique told reporters after a meeting with Japan International Cooperation Agency (Jica) Director General Masataka Nakahara at the

During the meeting, the Jica DG urged the law minister to take necessary steps to clear the way for signing an agreement between the Bangladesh government and Jica on four

development projects. Jica earlier offered the US \$400 million projects to be implemented in the country.

Shafique said the government is working for holding trial of the war criminals at a special tribunal in a fair and transparent manner maintaining international stan-

He said no unnecessary delay will take place in com-

pleting the trial. He also ruled out any political instability due to holding the trial.

The platform members

also burnt the effigies of

Jamaat leaders Motiur

Rahman Nizami and Ali Ahsan

mittee of the organisation

Humayun Kabir and Secretary

General Sayed Ashraful Islam

President of central com-

Mohammad Mojahid.

Nayan were present.

He did not make any comment on the relation between the judegment on the Fifth Amendment to the constitution and the renaming of different establishments.

He, however, said after getting copy of the SC verdict, the matter will be sent to the law commission for necessary recommendations. On receiving the recommendations, the government will bring amendments to the constitution.





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