

Verdict on writ petitions against CHT agreement today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) is scheduled to deliver the verdict today on the long pending writ petitions that challenged the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) peace agreement and its provisions.

At the end of the hearing on the petitions on March 23, the HC bench of Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed and Justice Moyeenul Islam Chowdhury fixed April 12 (today) for delivering the judgement.

Badiuzzaman, a Bangalee settler in CHT, and Tajul Islam, a pro-Jamaat lawyer, filed the writ petitions in 2000 and 2007.

Following the writ petitions, the HC had issued separate rules asking the government to explain why the CHT peace deal and its provisions should not be declared illegal and unconstitutional.

On December 2 in 1997, the previous Awami League government signed the peace agreement with Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) leader Jyotindra Bodhipriya Larma.



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

With persistent power and water crisis and scorching heat, such long tailbacks make life worse for the city dwellers. The photo was taken on Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue yesterday.

5 killed in road accidents

METRO DESK

Five people were killed in separate road accidents in Narayanganj, Brahmanbaria and Manikganj yesterday.

Our correspondent in Narayanganj reports: Two people, including a US citizen of Bangladesh origin, were killed and five others injured in a road accident on Dhaka-Chittagong highway in the district.

The accident took place when a Dhaka-bound microbus from Noakhali hit a bus while overtaking another passengers' bus in the Kamtal area of Narayanganj Sadar.

The microbus got destroyed and its passengers -- US citizen Abu Bakar Siddique, 57, and Shariful Islam, 52, both hailing from Noakhali, died on the spot.

Five passengers of the bus were injured.

Our correspondent in Brahmanbaria reports: Two people were killed in separate road accidents on Dhaka-Sylhet highway in the district.

One of the victims was identified as Jaber Ali, 22, but the identity of the other victim could not be known immediately.

The unidentified man, aged around 20, was crushed under the wheels of a microbus while he was crossing the highway at Bahadurpur in Ashuganj.

In another accident, a Dhaka-bound bus knocked Jaber Ali down while he was crossing the road at Rampur in the district's Bijoynagar upazila.

Our correspondent in Manikganj adds: A man was killed and another was seriously injured in a road accident on Dhaka-Aricha highway in Baniajuri area at Ghior.

The dead was identified as Rajib Basu, 25, a medical representative of a chemical company in Manikganj, while the injured was Zahidur Rahman Sikdar, 25.

Ghior police said the accident occurred at around 12:15pm when a Khulna-bound bus hit the motorcyclist.

The motorcyclists were rushed to Manikganj Sadar Hospital where on duty doctors declared Rajib dead.

UN keen to help conduct war crimes trial

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The United Nations, if requested for, would provide all possible assistance to Bangladesh in conducting the war crimes trial.

Outgoing UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative to Bangladesh Renata Lok-Dessalieu said this during her farewell call on Foreign Minister Dipu Moni at her office yesterday.

Dipu Moni appreciated enhanced engagement of UNDP in Bangladesh's development work during the last few years, which has increased from \$25 million a year to \$75 million.

She, however, expressed concern at the gradual erosion in the core funding of UNDP at the global level and also regretted non-fulfillment of ODA commitment by most of the development partners.

Referring to the recently held Bangladesh Development Forum

(BDF) in Dhaka, Dipu Moni called upon the UNDP and other development partners to come forward with necessary investment to implement the agreed recommendations.

She also expressed happiness at the change of format of BDF from a donor-driven process to now a forum of partnership between Bangladesh and its development partners.

During the meeting, they also discussed issues related to strengthening of relevant institutions, which are critical for upholding the values of democracy and accountability. The foreign minister said that the people of Bangladesh have proved, time and again, that they would not accept anything less than democratic governance in Bangladesh.

They agreed that certain institutions, including the judiciary, the Anti-Corruption Commission, the National Human Rights Commission, and the Police, should be further strengthened

in order to ensure continuity in good governance and democratic culture in Bangladesh.

Renata also provided a description of the UNDP activities in the Chittagong Hill Tracts area, and reaffirmed that the development projects in the CHT districts are taken in consultation with the appropriate government authorities. She also clarified that all development programmes in CHT are targeted for all marginalised people and Bangalees alike.

Dipu Moni appreciated UNDP's work in all parts of Bangladesh, including in the CHT. She, however, reiterated Bangladesh government's position that Bangladesh did not have any indigenous population, as is meant in UN jargon. Bangladesh rather had several ethnic minorities and tribal population living in all parts of Bangladesh, in harmony with the Bangalee population, she

added. She reaffirmed that Bangalees were not settlers in Bangladesh and that our situation could not be compared with those in some western countries.

Renata agreed with the observations made by the foreign minister and said that they would certainly follow the government's position on this issue.

The UNDP representative, while narrating her experience during the last four and a half years of her tour of duty in Bangladesh, expressed great admiration for the people and the culture of Bangladesh.

She expressed her happiness at the high level of cooperation she received from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in discharging her duties.

Dipu Moni wished Renata well in her new assignment in China, and said that her successor would receive the same level of cooperation in her mandated duties.

Grassroots-level programme of BNP ends tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The two-month grassroots-level programme of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) ends tomorrow through holding a discussion of the party's Dhaka division unit in the city.

A meeting on 'Importance of Grassroots Representatives' Conference' will be held at Mohanagar Natya Mancha in the presence of the party Chairperson Khaleda Zia.

Later, a report will be prepared based on the opinions from the grassroots-level activists during the meetings held at different places across the country.

However, sources said no field-level leader of the party was allowed to speak at any meeting organised at 10 cities, including divisional headquarters, across the country.

"A final outcome of the meetings will be placed before the chairperson," said Aman Ullah Aman, joint secretary general of the party and coordinator of the meeting for Dhaka division.

He was talking to reporters at a press briefing at tomorrow's meeting venue.

The grassroots-level programme started in Sylhet on February 6, followed by Barisal, Khulna, Jessore, Faridpur, Cox's Bazar, Mymensingh, Dinajpur, Rajshahi, Chittagong and Bogra districts.

Asked about the outcome, Aman said Senior

Vice Chairman Tarique Rahman started the similar programme in 2005, which bridged the gap between central and field-level leaders and workers.

Meanwhile, BNP has postponed its chairperson's public meeting in Barisal scheduled to be held on April 29, as most of its leaders will be busy in by-election of Bhola-3 constituency.

Khaleda kicked off her divisional public meeting on March 29 at Laldighi Maidan in Chittagong and she is scheduled to address a similar meeting in Khulna on April 18.

The date of her public meeting in Rajshahi has been fixed on May 4 and a grand rally will be held on May 19 in the capital.

Meanwhile, Dhaka district BNP at a meeting at Dhaka Reporters' Unity yesterday decided to organise a public meeting on April 26.

MOSHARRAF AT JCD MEETING BNP standing committee member Dr Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain at a protest rally organised by Jatityabadi Chhatra Dal at Muktangan in the city yesterday alleged that the government is busy to implement its own agenda and it has no intention to reduce the public suffering due to persistent crises of water, electricity and gas.

Later, a protest procession was brought out from the same venue demanding an end to the public suffering due to the crises.

106 HSC examinees expelled

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of 106 examinees were expelled yesterday from different centres for adopting unfair means in the examination of HSC and its equivalent examinations under 10 education boards.

Yesterday, on the fourth day of the examination, 5,831 candidates remained absent.

This is the highest number of candidates expelled so far on one day in this year's examination. The examination of English Second Paper was held yesterday. Seventy four examinees were expelled in English First Paper.

Among the expelled students, 32 were under Technical Board, 26 under Dhaka Board, 12 under Madrasa Board, ten each under Rajshahi and Barisal boards, five each under Comilla and Dinajpur boards and three each under Jessore and Chittagong boards.

250-bed cancer hospital to be built in city

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh Cancer Society will set up a 250-bed modern cancer hospital in the city, aiming to provide free treatment to 40 percent of its patients.

The 15-storied hospital would be built at a cost of Tk 250 crore and the hospital complex will comprise a dormitory, a diagnostic centre and an academic building, a delegation of the Cancer Society said during a meeting with President Zillur Rahman at Bangabhaban in the city yesterday.

Cancer Society president Prof Dr Mollah Obaidullah Baki led the 10-member delegation.

The delegation members requested President Zillur Rahman to lay the foundation stone of the proposed cancer hospital at his earliest convenience.

They mentioned that there are some 12 lakh cancer patients in the country at present.

The delegation also emphasised the need to raise awareness about cancer as 50 percent of the diseases can be prevented through awareness. Cancer can be cured if it is detected at the early stage, they said.

President Zillur Rahman assured them of extending his all-out support for the construction of the cancer hospital.

He urged them to provide necessary treatment to the common people of the country at a minimum cost.

Farroque gets bail in defamation case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

A Sylhet court yesterday granted bail to Opposition Chief Whip Zainul Abdin Farroque in a defamation case.

Chief Judicial Magistrate Mohammad Amir Uddin granted bail to Farroque after he appeared before the court in the morning and prayed for bail through his lawyers.

Former Sylhet BCL president and city AL secretary aspirant Shafiqul Alam Nadel filed the case on March 16 against Farroque for his remarks against Sajeb Wajed Joy, son of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Farroque's counsel Abdul Gaffar told The Daily Star that Farroque yesterday appeared before the court in compliance with an instruction from a High Court bench, where he had earlier prayed for bail.



PHOTO: COURTESY

Angry locals put up barricades on Mohakhali-Gulshan link road and Mohakhali Bazar road in the city yesterday demanding uninterrupted water supply. (Story on Page 16)



PHOTO: STAR

Samjantrik Chhatra Front forms a human chain on the Dhaka University campus yesterday demanding exemplary punishment to stalkers and an end to violence against women.

'Involve local govt to ensure quality healthcare'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a workshop yesterday stressed the need for ensuring quality health service by involving the local government division and community people.

At the workshop titled 'Improving Quality Health Services', the speakers also highlighted loopholes of the health service system and identified some ways to address the problems.

Ministry of Health and Family Welfare organised the workshop in association with Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) at Sasakawa auditorium of the ICDDR,B in the city.

At the inaugural session of the workshop, Director General of the Director General of Health Services (DGHS) Shah Monir Hossain said a massive reform is needed in the health sector.

"The existing facility is not enough and the time is very mature to discuss about the total reform of health sector," he said

adding that an accreditation council should be developed and the hospitals should total autonomy.

Furthermore, decentralisation is needed and it should be incorporated with the health policy, he added.

Health Minister Dr AFM Ruhul Haque said improvement in health, sanitation and other sectors will be difficult without decentralisation.

"The upazila health complexes, Union Sub Centres, Community Clinics, delivery centres --- all are centrally controlled. But monitoring from the centre is tough," he said adding that unless the local government gets involved with health delivery, it is not possible to provide quality health services.

"Quality is not a luxury. As far as health is concerned, quality is a necessity," said Health Secretary Sheikh Altaf Ali.

He also stressed collaboration from other ministries to provide quality health service.

JICA Chief Representative Takao Toda said quality comes from commitment, which paves the way for establishing trust towards the society and trust between people and the government.

He also talked about the JICA's activities where involvement of the community and local government made it possible to ensure safe motherhood.

Safe Motherhood Promotion Project had been running for the last four years in Narsingdi while only one maternal mortality was recorded in the locality in the last three years, which was 300 earlier, said Syed Mohammad Iqbal, chairman of Danga union in Narsingdi.

Japanese Ambassador Tamotsu Shinozuka, Secretary of Local Government Division Monzur Hossain, Director General of the Directorate General of Family Planning Abdul Quayum and Director (Hospital) of DGHS Dr Mujibur Rahman also spoke at the inaugural session.