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Decade-old hills admin at stake

HC spares CHT peace accord but declares illegal Santu-led admin structure under Regional Council Act; govt to appeal against verdict

JULFIKAR ALI MANIK and ASHUTOSH SARKER

The existence of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Regional Council for over a decade is under threat as the High Court yesterday declared the CHT Regional Council Act 1998 illegal and unconstitutional. The council has been functioning under the leadership of Jyotirindro Bodhipriya Larma, popularly known as Santu Larma, since its formation in 1999 under the act formulated as a result of the historic CHT Peace Accord 1997.

The HC bench of Justice Syed Rezaat Ahmed and Justice Moeenul Islam Chowdhury declared the act illegal following a writ petition filed in 2000.

It, however, rejected another writ petition filed in 2007 for declaring the CHT Peace Accord illegal too.

Settlers don't need to be certified as non-tribal

They don't need to own land in CHT to be voter

No priority for indigenous people in dist council job

Peace process will be hampered: AG

Peace process will be strengthened: Razzaq

The court declined to interfere in the peace accord because some relevant provisions of it had already been merged with the "impugned legislation". The CHT Regional Council was formed

to coordinate among the district councils of Rangamati, Bandarban and Khagrachhari regarding development activities, resolving inconsistencies in their activities and maintaining law and order.

It has also the authority to coordinate the activities of NGOs and issue license for heavy industries.

The court started delivery of the judgment on Monday morning and completed it yesterday afternoon.

After the verdict, Attorney General Mahbubey Alam said, "The High Court discharged the writ petition that challenged the CHT Peace Accord and its implementation. So, the peace accord is legal. The court declared one law and a few sections of other laws, which had been formulated in light of the peace accord, illegal."

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Hopes not over yet
Says Raja Devasish Roy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Members of civil society yesterday said High Court's judgment declaring the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Regional Council Act 1998 unconstitutional and illegal would not affect implementation of the CHT peace treaty.

Talking to The Daily Star ASM Shajahan, former adviser to the caretaker government, said, "I think the verdict will not make any effect in implementing the CHT treaty as the court has declared the peace treaty legal."

Raja Devasish Roy who was a lawyer for the CHT Regional Council said the government as well as the council will appeal against the HC's verdict soon.

"I hope the Appellate Division will stay the High Court's verdict once we file a writ petition to this end."

We also hope that the

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

E-voting in DCC polls

130 voting, counting machines ready for use on trial basis

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The Election Commission has promulgated rules for introduction of electronic voting system in the upcoming polls to Dhaka City Corporation on a limited scale to begin a process for making election management up-to-date.

In exercise of the authority of Local Government (City Corporation) Act 2009, the EC made the rules on April 6, specifying the detail procedure of usage of the electronic voting machine in election for the first time in Bangladesh.

It has decided to introduce the e-voting system in DCC ward-49 in Dhanmondi area on an experimental basis and completed all necessary preparations to this effect, EC officials said.

So, over 42,000 voters in that area will get the chance to cast their votes--one for the mayoral candidate and two for ward councillors--in the DCC polls likely to be held on May 31 through the electronic voting machine.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said her government is planning to introduce electronic voting system in Bangladesh to make the election process more transparent and credible.

She disclosed the plan when the outgoing UN resident coordinator and UNDP resident representative to Bangladesh Renata Lok Dessallien paid a farewell call on her at her office.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

GREETINGS
The Daily Star
Wishes its valued readers, patrons, well-wishers and advertisers a happy Bangla New Year.

HOLIDAY
The offices of The Daily Star will remain closed today on the occasion of Pahela Baishakh, the first day of Bangla New Year. Therefore, there will be no issue of the newspaper tomorrow.

Nation gets in festive mood
Ready to greet Nababarsha
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The nation welcomes today the Bangla New Year 1417 in a traditional manner amid a colourful festivity.

With the sunrise, the Bangalees left behind all their sorrows of loss and unfulfilled expectations and geared up for better days.

The city puts on a festive look, and, from the early morning, people in traditional attires through Ramna Batamul and other programme venues in the city and elsewhere in the country to celebrate the first day of the Bangla year.

The centres of celebration in the capital, Ramna Park, Suhrawardy Udyan, Shahabagh and Dhaka University campus, are under multi-tier

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

RAMNA BATAMUL BLAST CASES Trial trapped in legal tangle

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nine years have elapsed since the bomb blast at a Bangla New Year celebration at Ramna Batamul in the city that left 10 people dead and scores injured, but the trials of the two cases filed in this connection are yet to be completed.

After years of fruitless investigation into the blast that still haunts people, the investigators found link of Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (Huji) to the carnage during the immediate past caretaker rule.

Seven and a half years into the incident Criminal Investigation Department pressed charges against 14 members of banned militant outfit Huji on December 30 in 2008.

The bloodbath took place during the Pahela Baishakh celebration on April 14, 2001.

Following the explosion two cases were filed with Ramna Police Station -- one for murder and the other for possessing and using explosive substances.

The Speedy Trial Tribunal-3 of Dhaka, which is now holding the trial of the murder case, has so far recorded statements of 43 prosecution witnesses out of the total 84 since the trial began on April 15 last year.

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BCL leader shot dead in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Criminals yesterday gunned down a Bangladesh Chhatra League leader at Shekher tek in the capital in brought daylight.

Locals and police said Chhatra League Ward-43 unit General Secretary Mohammad Ahiduzzaman, 25, was killed after he had lunch with his mates at a local restaurant.

Soon after the killing, police arrested alleged gang members of Nabi Group--Gazi Ohid and Babu.

According to witnesses, three criminals sprayed several bullets at Ahid on Road-12 of Shekher tek around 2:00pm after Ahid and his six associates had their lunch.

Abu Noman, Ahid's associate who witnessed the attack,

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Future of energy lies in coal

International conference asks govt to go for open pit mining, easy bidding to woo private sector investors

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A high profile international conference yesterday recommended open-pit coal mining for Bangladesh, and urged the government to ease up the bidding and purchasing mechanism in the power sector to encourage private investment.

The recommendation for open-pit mining was however somewhat guarded saying, "In terms of coal mining, it was recommended that the open-pit method should be followed wherever feasible. Any decision should take into account the issue of socio-economic context (rehabilitating

Oil-based power plants for short-time solution

Coal-fired plants as medium- and long-term solution

Immediate and safe coal extraction

30,000 MW power generation goal by 2020

Growth", attended by delegates of leading

the affected people) and loss of agriculture lands. Possible resistance against open-pit mining should be handled proactively."

A mining authority could be set up to deal with the rehabilitation and relocation of affected people, and to ensure accountability and transparency, it added.

The International Chamber of Commerce, Bangladesh (ICC,B) organised the conference titled "Energy for Growth", attended by delegates of leading

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MORE STORIES IN STAR BUSINESS

Women's role in war to be documented

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A parliamentary sub-committee was formed yesterday to collect information and write a complete history of women's contribution to the Liberation War.

The sub-committee will prepare a detailed list of women who directly or indirectly contributed to the war in 1971.

Headed by Ruby Rahman, a ruling Awami League (AL) lawmaker, the three-member body was asked to travel across the country to gather information and documents on women's sacrifice in the war.

The parliamentary standing committee on liberation war ministry at a meeting held at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban formed the sub-committee.

"To my knowledge, there is

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

মেতেছে সবাই আজ কাছে থাকার উৎসবে

নতুন বছরকে বরণ করে নিতে আপনিও আসুন প্রাণের মেলায়

শুভ নববর্ষ ১৪১৭

অনুষ্ঠানসূচি:
ঢাকা
ছায়ানটের বর্ষবরণ অনুষ্ঠান, রমনা কন্সল
গ্রামীণফোন-চ্যানেল আই বৈশাখী মেলা, চ্যানেল আই প্রাঙ্গণ

বক্সাল
বর্ষবরণ ও বৈশাখী মেলা ১৪১৭, চরক্যাপন, ভোলা
বৈশাখী উৎসব ১৪১৭, মনুখালী, করিদপুর

ময়মনসিংহ
বর্ষবরণ উৎসব ১৪১৭, সন্নিবাখালী, জামালপুর
বৈশাখী উৎসব ১৪১৭, ময়মনসিংহ সদর (১৪-১৬ এপ্রিল)
বাংলা নববর্ষ উৎসব ১৪১৭, টাঙ্গাইল (১৪-২০ এপ্রিল)

সিলেট
বৈশাখী উৎসব ১৪১৭, মৌলভীবাজার অনুশীলন চক্র, মৌলভীবাজার, শ্রীমঙ্গল
বৈশাখী উৎসব ১৪১৭, বিশ্বনাথ থিয়েটার, সিলেট

চট্টগ্রাম
পহেলা বৈশাখ ওপেন এয়ার কনসার্ট, সরাইল, ব্রাহ্মণবাড়িয়া
বৈশাখী মেলা, বৈশাখী মেলা উদ্‌যাপন পরিষদ, পরশুরাম, ফেনী
বাংলা নববর্ষ উদ্‌যাপন ১৪১৭, রাসান্যাট সদর
বৈশাখী উৎসব ১৪১৭, বৈশাখী মেলা উদ্‌যাপন পরিষদ, সীতাকুণ্ড

খুলনা
বৈশাখী মেলা ১৪১৭, বেনাপোল বৈশাখী উদ্‌যাপন পরিষদ, বেনাপোল, যশোর (৩ সপ্তাহব্যাপী)
বৈশাখী মেলা ১৪১৭, খুলনা ডিসি অফিস
বাংলা নববর্ষ ও বৈশাখী মেলা ১৪১৭, উত্তর কালীগঞ্জ পাবলিক লাইব্রেরি, কালীগঞ্জ, সাতক্ষীরা
বর্ষবরণ উৎসব ১৪১৭, খুলনা ক্লাব

সকল উৎসবের কাছে থাকতে পেরে গ্রামীণফোন পর্বিত