

Past of Ctg holds

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held from March 30 to April 10.

Referring to the fighting spirit and role of the people of Chittagong people in the anti-British movement, pre-liberation movement and the Liberation War, the speakers at the closing day yesterday hoped that the land would inspire the whole country towards economic development.

They claimed that Chittagong Port was one of the ancient sea ports in the world with 2,000 years of history behind it and hoped that it would continue to play a vital role in trade and commerce in the region for many more years ahead.

The second and last day of the conference was featured in three sessions -- 'Pre-history and Pre-mediaeval Chittagong', 'Mediaeval Chittagong' and 'Chittagong in the Colonial and Bangladesh Period'.

A total of 11 keynote papers were presented at the sessions.

Later, a cultural programme, including a group recitation 'Joy Nipirito Manusher Joy' by Abirity Sangathan, solo recitations and songs were performed in tribute to National Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam.

In the first session, Prof Jayanta Sinha Roy, assistant professor of archaeological department of Jahangirnagar University, Prof Suchandra Ghosh, associate professor, Ancient Indian History and Culture, Calcutta University, Shariful Islam, assistant keeper of Bangladesh National Museum, and Prof Dr Shahnaz Husne Jahan, Department of General Education, University of Liberal Arts, Bangladesh presented their papers. Prof Abdul Momin Chowdhury, supernumerary professor, Dhaka University, chaired the session.

The four papers focused on 'Prospects of Pre-historic Archaeological Research in the Hilly Regions of Chittagong', 'Agrarian Economy of Samatata and Harikela', 'Early Deva Kings of Harikela' and 'Trade and Technology of the Early Mariners of Chittagong'.

Prof Suchandra Ghosh in her paper mentioned that the history of the two adjoining sub-regions, Samata and Harikela, also known as trans-Meghna region, is always known for a host of similarities.

But later, separate identity of Harikela was found with more sources like land-grant charters or copper plates, coins and Chinese traveller's accounts, she said.

This region was so rich in early mediaeval Bengal because of a very strong monetary and agro-based economy and a riverine port town in Samatata and a sea port in Harikela.

Prof Ghosh also mentioned both the private and the royal ownership of land in the locality during the era of the Dev kings in the 9th and 10th centuries.

Dr Shahnaz, while presenting her paper, claimed that the history of Chittagong Port is of around 2,000 years and the existence of such an ancient and yet alive and active port is

very rare in the world.

She put forward a geological reason behind the port's active existence.

According to her, the Greco-Romans during the second century knew this port as Pentapolis, which was later termed Samandar by Arab and Persian traders during the 9th to 14th centuries, and Sudkawan, Shatijam or Che-ti-chiang from the 14th century to the first half of the 16th.

She said this port played a very important role in the trade network of the Indian Ocean while the trade route spread towards the Red Sea in the West. Trade also existed with the Sree Bijoy dynasty in the East.

Dr Shahnaz also mentioned the existence of productive hinterlands like Vanga, Pundrabardhan, Sreehatta, Bhutan, Kamrup, Tripura and Sultani Bangla due to the active use of the port.

Speaking about indigenous knowledge of present times, she said local people like boatmen, boat and ship builders and fishermen of this land in ancient times also used their knowledge for sea travel and boat and ship building.

Assistant Keeper of the National Museum Shariful Islam said the recovery of an incomplete copper plate inscription in 1920 and two metal vase inscriptions in 1993 revealed the existence of a rich kingdom in ancient Harikela Manadala Devatideva and Attakaradeva.

Prof. Jayanta Roy in his paper said it was very difficult to say anything about the individual pre-history of Chittagong since there had been no major archaeological studies on pre-historic culture or any other archaeological records in Chittagong and in Myanmar except for a few chance findings.

Mentioning the discovery of pre-historic weapons in the hills of Sitakunda in 1886, he hoped that a good number of specific pre-historic artefacts could be found if studies were conducted in Chittagong region and Myanmar.

Dr Shamsul Hossain, former curator of Chittagong University Museum, expressed his dissatisfaction, saying that many historical properties had been lost due to lack of proper preservation.

He urged initiatives in preserving the findings in a scientific way.

In the second session, three papers were presented. In the absence of Mohammed Ali Chowdhury, professor of history department at CU, the abstract of his paper on 'Arakan-Chittagong Relations during the Mediaeval Period' was read by Adnan Mannan Chowdhury, lecturer at CU's genetic engineering department.

Dr Sutapa Sinha, associate professor of Department of Islamic History & Culture at University of Calcutta, presented an article on "Coins of Mediaeval Chittagong" at the session.

In her article, Sutapa Sinha elaborated on the varieties of coins used in Chittagong region in the mediaeval period, especially during the Sultani regime.

She said although the standard weight of coins in that period was between 10.6 grams and 10.8 grams, there was a special type of silver coins in Chittagong from 1538 to 1575 and its adjacent region with the weight of 10.45 grams.

Dr Shamsul Hossain, retired deputy curator of CU Museum, presented a paper on "Recently Destroyed Mughal Tomb and Ruins in the City of Chittagong."

He said four Mughal mosque-tomb complexes and one tomb have, so far, been located in Chittagong. Of the above tombs, two have recently been obliterated by their lay keepers.

These four mosque-tombs are Bagh-i-Hamza Masjid, Miskin Shah Mulla Masjid, Kadam Mubarak Masjid, Bayazid Bostami Masjid, while the tomb is Shahjahan Tomb.

Showkat Ara Begum, assistant professor of history at CU, presented an article on "Mughal Amal-e Shahar Chattagram (The city of Chittagong during Mughal regime)."

She illustrated on the origin of the names of different areas of Chittagong city, saying the city began to be built up in a planned way after it was conquered by the Mughals in 1666.

The name of different areas in the city, including Rahamatganj, Hamzer Bagh, Ghat Farhadbegh and Askar Dighir Par, were named after the Nawabs (local rulers) appointed by Mughal emperors.

Vice-Chancellor of Premier University Prof Dr Anupam Sen presided over the session. He said the Bangla language had been nourished and had flourished since the Sultani regime.

The third session was chaired by Prof Mofakkarul Islam, supernumerary professor of Dhaka University.

The presenters were Gholam Mustafa, associate professor, Department of Bangla, CU, Md Mahbul Hoque, assistant professor of history department at CU and Md Shamsul Huq, a journalist of daily Prothom Alo.

They presented papers on 'Chattagram Jubo Bidroho: Mukti-Sangramar Agni Shohan', 'Muktijuddher Prathomik Protirodh: Chattagram' and 'Chattgram Biplobi Betar Kendro'.

4 Bangladeshis

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Thursday afternoon. Papers and documents would be prepared this week in line with the negotiations sent to the Bangladesh consulate in Dubai through the ministries of home and foreign affairs.

The convicts are Khalilur Rahman of village Kachua, Rabiul Mia of village Pashchim Pakuria, Ashrafuzzaman of Singpara under Chunarughat and Zahidul Islam of Topkhana under Baniachang upazila in Habiganj.

The victim, Nazrul Islam of village Vetka under Tongibari upazila in Munshiganj, and the convicts used to work at a company in Dubai.

Two years ago, they locked in a clash over a trifling matter resulting in the death of Nazrul. As the police filed a murder case accusing the four, a Dubai court on June 27 last year awarded them death sentence.

But, the court said that paying blood money amounting two lakh dirham to the victim's family could save their lives.

The Dubai authority sent the papers of the verdict to the expatriates' welfare ministry in Bangladesh and to the family members of the convicts.

Their families then contacted the Chunarughat UNO, who arranged for negotiations with the victim's family through the UNO of Tongibari.

The Chunarughat UNO took the representatives of the convicts to Munshiganj. Tongibari UNO Md Rafiqul Islam and Vetka UP Chairman Shawkat Ali Khan were present during the negotiations.

Two killed

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A pick-up knocked down Khaleque leaving him dead on the spot when he was crossing a road in Agargaon around 7:30am to board a Farmgate-bound bus, victim's son Kabir told The Daily Star.

Kafrul police arrested Md Shahjahan, the driver of the pick-up, and seized the vehicle.

In another incident around 7:00am, a speeding bus hit Rafiqul Islam in the City of Chittagong.

The seriously injured day labourer was admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where he succumbed to his wounds around 2:30pm.

Jatrabari police arrested the bus driver and seized the vehicle from the spot.

Contacted, victim's brother Shariful Islam said his brother met with the accident on his way home after a night's earth-digging.

Police filed two cases of unnatural deaths in connection with the accidents.

Green signal

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General Tikka Khan threw green signal for the operation that would plunge Pakistan into tragedy a few days later on March 25. As a matter of fact, following the meetings between Yahya Khan and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and between their advisors on March 17, the president ordered the army to prepare for action against the Awami League leadership. Consequently, once he had received Yahya's instructions, Tikka Khan authorized General Khadim Hussain Raja and General Rao Farman Ali to work out the details of the planned operation. They did so with the greatest efficiency.

Meanwhile, the talks between the regime and the Awami League continued. Among the Bengali population, there was a rising degree of exasperation at the fact that the regime had till then made no progress in trying to work out an arrangement with the majority party. That only added to the militancy among the population, very large sections of which now openly demanded that Bangabandhu declare the independence of Bangladesh on an immediate basis. While some quarters pinned their hopes on the two sides reaching an acceptable degree of accommodation, most were convinced that Pakistan could not continue in light of the rapidly changing scene in its eastern province. Hence the urgent calls to Bangabandhu for an outright declaration of independence.

On March 18, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman rejected the commission of inquiry set up by Tikka Khan to probe the circumstances in which the army had been called out, and stayed out, between March 2 and March 9. Bangabandhu clearly felt that an inquiry by the army itself would not be a fair one. As such, the people would not accept such a commission.

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Gas supply

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The gas field located at Companyganj in Noakhali is believed to have a small reserve of natural gas. However, officials said this gas supply would help easing the nagging crisis in the Chittagong region a little.

Bapex had to install a 15-km pipeline from the gas field to Daganbhuiyan in Feni to supply the gas to the national grid, officials said.

The gas exploration in Sundalpur area started in 2008.

The gas supply started from the new field at a time when the country is experiencing a severe gas shortage. At present, the country produces some 2000 mmcf against the demand for 2500 mmcf.

At present, Petrobangla has been conducting explorations at seven locations -- Srikanj, Kapasia, Rupganj, Mobarakpur, Madon and Bajitpur -- across the country. The Petrobangla chairman said the results of the explorations are expected to come by 2013 from these structures.



Participants of the Sylhet divisional round The Daily Star Spelling Bee Powered by Horlicks. PHOTO: STAR

Spelling Bee

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through to the oral section. The three rounds of oral competition were quite intense and were witnessed by previously eliminated students along with their parents and teachers.

The students displayed exceptional skills and gusto justifying their inclusion in the best 40. Tawsifur Rahman, Samin Azhan Chowdhury and Argho Roy were among the favourites in the Sylhet Divisional round.

With a score of 165--in second position overall from Sylhet--in the online Spelling Bee game young Tawsifur Rahman made quite a name for himself in the competition with his uninhibited innocence and

remarkable spelling prowess, displaying some of the raw charm of Sylhet.

Samin Azhan Chowdhury had never been abroad but spoke fluent English with an impeccable British accent. Her calm demeanor along with her sound foundation in the fundamentals of the English Language made her a powerhouse from Sylhet.

"Never in my wildest dreams did I imagine making it to the divisional round as I played the online Spelling Bee game at Champs21.com only once," Samin reveals. However, she always loved spelling from a very young age and played the American version of the online Spelling Bee game.

Argho Roy might have been the strongest speller from Sylhet with a score of 1032 in the online Spelling Bee game, a feat he achieved after playing for over three and a half hours.

"My mother wanted me to take part in the Spelling Bee after seeing my interest in spelling from a very early age and she has really helped me through it," adds Argho who won a school spelling competition in class 4.

Keep your eyes on Channel i to see whether these three are among the six that have qualified from Sylhet division. The dates of when the divisional round will be shown will be announced later.

Govt's LP gas for cheats

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State-run Padma, Meghna, Jamuna and the SAOCL market LP gas for the government. LP Gas Ltd sells a 12.5-kg cylinder for Tk 631.5 to the marketing companies that sell it to dealers for Tk 679.5. The dealers can charge consumers a maximum of Tk 700 a cylinder, said Rahman.

The scam came to the fore recently following an unabated price spiral in LP gas -- by nearly Tk 500 per 12-kg cylinder -- in the last three months. The price has gone up to Tk 1,700 a cylinder. Private operators have attributed the price hike to rising LP gas prices on the global market.

Dealers and traders make a profit of Tk 100 from each LP gas cylinder of private companies. But they charge more than double the government-set price for BPC-produced LP gas. Allegations are rife that a section of dishonest BPC officials help them run the business.

"A section of unscrupulous dealers and traders eats up subsidy of over Tk 300 on each LP gas cylinder. Some BPC officials get a percentage from those dealers," said a senior BPC official requesting anonymity.

According to the BPC, the caretaker government in 2008 decided to increase LP gas price to Tk 1,000 from Tk 600 a cylinder to cut subsidies. But dealers refused to buy LP gas at an increased price.

Soon after the Awami

League government came to power, the price was re-fixed at Tk 850 a cylinder. But dealers rejected it. Later, the price was set at Tk 700 when private players were selling each LP gas cylinder for Tk 1,200-1,300.

BPC Chairman Abubakar Siddique said private operators were partially responsible for the price manipulation.

"They (private companies) have a role...they make a pact between themselves and hike the price."

Dealers of both private and public companies take advantage of the big gap between LP gas prices charged by the BPC and private players, he said.

"Dealers rub BPC's name off a cylinder and sell it as a private company's product. We wrote to marketing companies last week asking them to warn their dealers. Otherwise, their licences will be cancelled," said the BPC chairman.

Private players said the price of per tonne LP gas rose to \$1,195 this month from \$1,031 in February on the international market for the Iran crisis and soaring demand for LP gas in petrochemical industries.

Khizir Ahmed, general manager of Bashundhara LP Gas, said, "Buyers do not know that the BPC sells LP gas at a subsidised rate of Tk 700 a cylinder. Middlemen eat up the subsidy under the nose of the authority."

Delhi now keen

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"I am sure we will," he said, when asked whether India wanted to put at rest the row between the two close neighbours over the delimitation of the maritime boundary in the Bay of Bengal.

Questioned about India's reaction to Bangladesh's triumph in the maritime case against Myanmar at the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) on Wednesday, Saran told the foreign minister, "This was an important decision and we look forward to working with Bangladesh."

Emerging from an hour-long meeting with Dipu Moni, the Indian envoy said New Delhi wanted to discuss bilaterally all issues that affected both India and Bangladesh.

"These are issues between the two neighbouring countries. All issues are on the table," he said, adding, "We have a healthy process of dialogue and consultations and we will continue to do that."

Bangladesh lodged cases

with the UN on October 8, 2009 after India and Myanmar unfairly cut off a significant portion of its maritime area in the Bay, sources say.

Bangladesh's objection to Myanmar's claim was lodged with ITLOS and also to the Indian claim with the UN's Permanent Court of Arbitration based in The Hague, the Netherlands. The judgment in the case with India is expected to come in 2014.

ITLOS, based in Germany, in its judgment sustained Bangladesh's claims to full 200-mile exclusive economic zone and territorial rights in the Bay, and to a substantial share of the outer continental shelf beyond 200 miles.

Meanwhile, a foreign ministry press release said Pankaj Saran congratulated Dipu Moni on the successful outcome of the court case at ITLOS.

The foreign minister said it was a judgment that would benefit not only Bangladesh but also Myanmar since it would end a long-pending

irritant and allow both countries to build up resources in the Bay for their socio-economic development.

"They [Dipu and Pankaj] noted that the arbitration process for the settlement of the maritime boundary between Bangladesh and India was also going ahead and the issue would be resolved in due course," the press release said.

In the Joint Communiqué issued in New Delhi on January 12, 2010 during Sheikh Hasina's visit to India the Indian and Bangladesh premiers both agreed on the need to amicably demarcate the maritime boundary.

Since then, the foreign ministry officials said, there had been goodwill and efforts from the Bangladesh side toward resolving the issue bilaterally, but India did not show any such interest.

Rather, they said, India along with Myanmar had drawn line so unfairly and unlawfully that it cut off a major portion of Bangladesh's maritime territory in the Bay.

2 more

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floating near Char Jhapta, three kilometres off Char Kishori in Gazaria upazila where "MV Shariatpur-1" sank.

The victims' identities were not immediately known, Shahidul Islam, officer-in-charge of Gazaria Police Station, told The Daily Star.

Five days into the tragedy, relatives of some missing passengers were still rushing onto the shore yesterday hoping to the recover the bodies of their near and dear ones.

The Dhaka-bound double-deck vessel had capsized with around 300 passengers on board after colliding with a cargo vessel.

War tribunal

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prosecution team's and investigation agency's performance and the minister refused to comment on those. The tribunal expressed annoyance on several occasion at the prosecutors and the investigation agency for failing to produce witnesses, present complete investigation reports and formal charges supported with evidence, and coming up with proper replies to the court's queries.

Shafique Ahmed said the officials of his ministry are monitoring the work and development of the second tribunal, which would be housed at the Old High Court building in the capital.

The existing tribunal was set up on March 25, 2010, at the same building to try crimes against humanity committed during the Liberation War of Bangladesh in 1971.

A law ministry high official on condition of anonymity told The Daily Star that the government is yet to decide on the judges of the new tribunal. However, the appointment of judges would not take much time, the official said.

The second tribunal would comprise a chairman and two members just like the existing one, the official said, adding that the judges may be appointed from the High Court and a district court.

The official said the present tribunal may amend its rules of procedure if the government requests to transfer cases to the new tribunal.

The existing tribunal is dealing with eight cases filed against six Jamaat-e-Islami and two BNP leaders in connection with crimes against humanity.

Laden

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found in the compound in Abbottabad where the al-Qaeda leader was killed by US special forces last year.

Bin Laden asked deputies to plan an attack against an aircraft carrying Obama and General David Petraeus.

He said the killing would throw the US into crisis, as Vice President Biden was "totally unprepared" to take over.

The documents were seen by the Washington Post. There is growing anticipation in the US over government plans to publish all the papers seized at the compound when it was raided in May 2011.

Laptops, notepads and computer hard drives were also taken.

Bin Laden asked one of his deputies, Ilyas Kashmiri, to start preparing the attack.

"Please ask brother Ilyas to send me the steps he has taken into that work," he wrote in a 48-page note.

The US media says intelligence officials believe it is unlikely that al-Qaeda had the capacity to launch such an attack in the US, and have not seen evidence of any preparations.

Kashmiri was killed in a US air attack a month after the death of Bin Laden.

In his 48-page note Laden called on al-Qaeda operatives to move away from the Pakistani tribal areas because of the constant attacks by US remotely-controlled planes.

He also debated changing al-Qaeda's name, because US officials "have largely stopped using the phrase 'the war on terror' in the context of not wanting to provoke Muslims", he said.