

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The indigenous leaders yesterday claimed that the government had provided partial information and hid the truth about the constitutional recognition to the ethnic minorities and implementation of the CHT peace accord at a UN human rights review session.

They also said the government made similar promises at the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) session of the UN Human Rights Council in 2009 to implement the peace accord but no effective steps had been taken yet.

Representatives of Bangladesh Adibashi Forum (BAF) and Kapaeng Foundation made the claims at a press conference at Liberation War Museum in the capital.

BAF General Secretary Sanjeeb Drong said the government claimed that it recognised 48 ethnic groups in the constitution through the 15th amendment, but it did not specify the number.

In UPR's second cycle, the government also claimed to have arrived at the final stage of amending the Chittagong Hill Tracts Land Dispute Resolution Commission Act though the process had been repeatedly thwarted over the past four years, he said.

Drong said the government did not shed light on the communities' self-determination, which was the prerequisite for their overall development.

The two organisations, however, hailed the government for making promise of full implementation of the 1992 peace accord in the UPR session.

They hoped that the government would take effective steps to implement International Labour Organisation's Convention 107 and 169, which aim to ensure their right to land and preserve their cultural identities.

# History as compulsory subject stressed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a seminar yesterday stressed the need to include history as a compulsory subject in all levels of education in order to establish the spirit of the Liberation War, democracy, secularism and communal harmony in the country.

The real history of the country's Liberation War is still ignored as the history was distorted after Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was assassinated in 1975, said Rashed Khan Menon, president of Workers Party of Bangladesh.

He was addressing a seminar on "History, Heritage and Religion: Bangladesh Now" organised by Bangladesh Itihas Sammiloni (BIS), an organisation of history researchers, in an auditorium of Bangladesh

National Museum in the capital.

Rashed Khan Menon, also chairman of the education ministry's parliamentary standing committee, said they would take steps to include history as a compulsory subject in the curriculum of the National University (NU) if the university authorities send a proposal to this effect.

NU Vice Chancellor Prof Harun-Ur Rshadid said they were planning to include history as a compulsory subject in the curriculum of the university.

On Jamaat-e Islami, eminent writer and columnist Shahriar Kabir, who presented a written statement, said Jamaat, which is a militant organisation, was not being tried as an organisation due to obstructions from the US. Prof Mesbah Kamal of Dhaka University also spoke at the seminar.

## AUW's first commencement ceremony today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The Asian University for Women (AUW) will confer certificates on 134 students in its first-ever graduation ceremony today.

Vice Chancellor Dr Fahima Aziz and the university trustee members will attend the programme to be held at Chittagong Boat Club, an offshore tourist spot of the port city.

Malaysian writer and women's rights activist Marina Mahathir will deliver the keynote speech at the ceremony.

AUW began its journey in Chittagong in 2008.



People with hearing impairment demand their recruitment in government jobs during a rally organised by Jatiya Badhir Oikya Parishad in front of Jatiya Press Club in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR



The two-storey "Malumder Kather Bungalow", one of the few colonial-era buildings believed to date back before 1859, in South Middle Halishahar of Chittagong city. The historical and architectural jewel with ceilings made of wooden beams brought from Myanmar, inset, has been listed by Chittagong City Corporation for demolition for being "risky".

## Appeal for help

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Md Shamsuzzaman, a 25-year-old electrical engineer of Chapainaw abganj, was diagnosed with cancer in

2012 and now urgently requires around Tk 50 lakh for a bone marrow transplant.

His family already spent over Tk 25 lakh for his treatment in Tata Memorial Hospital in Mumbai and can no longer afford to provide the expenses.

They appeal to the well-off and kind-hearted individuals of society for financial assistance.

Contributions can be sent to Savings A/C No 20085, Islami Bank, Rajshahi Branch.

Interested people can also contact the family at 01712250573.

## 37KM SYLHET ROAD Transport owners, workers go on strike for road repair

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

All types of vehicles stayed off the Sylhet-Companiganj-Bhologanj road yesterday as transport owners and workers went on an indefinite strike demanding immediate repair of the busy road.

The strike caused sufferings to the inhabitants of Sylhet sadar and Gowainghat and Companiganj upazilas.

Companiganj Truck Malik Samity, stone trade association, stone crushers owners association and coal importers association made the demand while Sylhet district auto-rickshaw drivers association extended their support.

The 37-km road, littered with potholes and cracks, has become almost unusable, they said.

The associations, on May 7, handed over a memo to the deputy commissioner of Sylhet demanding initiatives to repair the road by May 15. As the deadline had passed, they went on strike form yesterday.

Abdul Khalique, president of Companiganj stone traders association, said they would announce fresh agitation at a rally today in the upazila.

Contacted, AQM Ekram Ullah, additional chief engineer of Roads and Highways Department, Sylhet region said they had proposed a Tk 198 crore project to improve the road's condition but it was not approved.

However, he said they will soon take up a Tk 1 crore project for the road.

# Centuries-old bungalow enlisted for demolition

MINHAJ UDDIN and SAIDUN NABI, Ctg

One of Chittagong city's colonial-era buildings is facing the threat of demolition as Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) recently published a list of 57 "risky" buildings, including the aforementioned one, which it plans to tear down.

The two-storied building, believed to be over one and a half centuries old and named by locals as "Malumder Kather Bungalow" (Malums' wooden bungalow), sits in South-Middle Halishahar.

The list, published in local newspapers on April 25, was prepared by Chittagong Development Authority (CDA) in 2006. However, it enlisted the building in its Detailed Area Plan of 2008 for preservation as an antiquity for its unique architectural traits and historical importance.

"The unique structure, built in the mid-19th century, is one of the remaining ones bearing colonial architectural traits," said Dr Shamsul Hossain, an expert and researcher on Chittagong's antiquities.

Though built of bricks and lime mortar, the word "wooden" was associated with the building's name due to the use of massive wooden beams in its two ceilings.

A total of 48 square beams of teak, each 20 feet long and with a cross-sectional area of one square foot (sq ft), support the ceilings, each one ft thick, against the walls, each 2.5 ft thick.

"The beams and construction materials were brought from Burma by the Malum brothers -- Abdul Malum, Zinnat Ali Malum and Nader Ali Malum," said Zinnat's descendant, Ezahar Mia.

The brothers used to trade rice with Myanmar on several ships they used to own, the octogenarian reminisced on tales his ancestors had passed down, adding that the building's construction was completed before the 1859 cyclone.

The 60ft by 46ft rectangular building now houses 44 of Zinnat's descendants, including Ezahar. The 2,760 sq ft ground floor is divided into 12 rooms, some covered with intricate designs of terracotta flowers.

A spiral staircase leads to the first floor, opening to a 580 sq ft rectangular room with four arched doors and two windows. Four rooms surround this room.

Ezahar said, "I have preserved this building since 1960 for its unique architectural beauty and traditional value."

Besides, the building bears memories of the 1971 Liberation War when the area's freedom fighters took shelter in it, he said.

"Many offered to build a multi-story building by demolishing the bungalow, but I opted to live in it. If I had the ability, I would have preserved it by turning it into a museum," he said.

"If the government takes initiatives to preserve this ancient and unique building as a heritage site by rehabilitating us, we are ready to cooperate," added Ezahar.

According to the Antiquities Act, 1968, (amended in 1976), any ancient (minimum 100 years old) product of human civilisation, illustrative of architecture, warfare, politics, or culture, can be regarded as an antiquity.

The government can protect any antiquity by entrusting its guardianship to its owners or by acquiring the land of the site, states the law.

On being contacted, CDA Chairman Abdus Salam recently told The Daily Star, "We must identify risky buildings irrespective of their historical importance."

It is the authorities concerned, not CCC, who must take the initiative to preserve heritage sites, stated CCC Chief Revenue Officer Ahmedul Haque, adding that they would start demolishing structures as per the list.

Department of Archaeology Chittagong regional Director Md Mizanur Rahman said they had no idea of the building's presence.

Dr Shamsul Hossain, also a former curator of Chittagong University Museum, said many priceless historical treasures in Chittagong city had already been lost.

The government authorities always remained negligent in this regard. If they continue to shrug off responsibilities then the remaining ancient buildings will also disappear, apprehended Hossain.

## Publicity for museums urged for tourism boost

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Raising awareness among people about museums in Chittagong would flourish the tourism sector in the port city, said speakers at a seminar yesterday.

The seminar titled "Museum Management and Tourism: Perspective Ethnological Museum" was held in the Ethnological Museum in Chittagong city.

The museum authorities organised the seminar on the eve of International Museum Day.

Shamshul Hossain, a former deputy curator of the museum at Chittagong University, presented a keynote speech at the seminar.

Prof Shahrier Takukder, a teacher at the Institute of Fine Arts of Chittagong University; and Abul Momen, resident editor of Bangla daily Prothom Alo, took part in a discussion on the topic.

At the event, a copy of "Eternal Chittagong", a book on the antiquities of Chittagong published by The Daily Star, was handed over to the museum Keeper Md Amiruzzaman.

## OVERSEAS RECRUITMENT Four fake agents held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of police arrested the owner of a fake overseas recruiting agency and his three accomplices from their office in the capital's Nikunjo on Wednesday.

The arrestees are Mamunur Rashid, managing director of the so-called agency "BD Company"; and Farhana Rony, Ahsan, and Rozi.

A fake seal which reads "Ministry of Foreign Affairs, London United Kingdom", and some forged documents of some foreign companies were also seized from there, said a CID official.

Although the company is not registered with the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET), the agency publishes advertisements in newspapers to send people to the USA and Canada in exchange for Tk 16 lakh and Tk 12 lakh respectively, the official added.

A case was filed in this regard.



### Discussion

Chittagong Hill Tracts Commission will organise an analysis of "The human rights situation in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) and the current state of implementation of the CHT peace accord"; Venue: Cirdap Auditorium; Time: 1:45pm.

### Seminar

Ministry of Agriculture will hold a national seminar on "Floriculture Development in Bangladesh"; Venue: the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council seminar room, Farmgate; Time: 9:00am.

### Seminar

Bangladesh National Museum will organise a seminar marking its 100th anniversary; Venue: its premises; Time: 11:00am.

### Human chain

Jatiya Mukti Council, Nayagotonatrik Gonomorcha, Jatiya Gononatrik Gonomanchara and Jatiya Gonofront will form a human chain protesting against the Trade and Investment Cooperation Framework Agreement; Venue: before Jatiya Press Club; Time: 4:00pm.

### Rally

Imarat Nirman Sramic Union Bangladesh will organise a labourers' rally demanding "budgetary allocation to ensure residences, rationing, work safety

and welfare fund for construction workers"; Venue: before Jatiya Press Club; Time: 11:00am.

### Discussion

Bangladesh Freedom Foundation and the daily Samakal will hold a discussion on "Increasing budgetary allocation on science education"; Venue: the daily's premises; Time: 11:00am.

### Discussion

Institution of Diploma Engineers, Bangladesh will organise a discussion on "Granting and certification of construction under local governments: Context Savar tragedy"; Venue: its premises; Time: 3:30pm.

### Discussion

Shushashoner Jonno Nagorik will organise a discussion on "Problems of the garment industry and related thoughts"; Venue: Jatiya Press Club; Time: 10:00am.

### Conference

The Centre for Urban Studies, Dhaka will organise its annual conference on "Recent research on urbanisation in Bangladesh"; Venue: Asiatic Society of Bangladesh; Time: 9:30am.

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