

# Garment workers demonstrate for salary, bonus in capital

**STAR REPORT**

Workers of an export-oriented garment factory in Hatirpool of the capital yesterday demonstrated for salaries and bonuses before Eid-ul-Fitr, fearing that they will not be paid as the factory's managing director was allegedly mugged.

Around 300 workers of TH Fashions, a subsidiary of Impressive Group, blockaded the road in front of Motalib Plaza in Hatirpool fearing that they will not be paid their salaries and bonuses before Eid as their managing director lost Tk 30 lakh to muggers, said Sirajul Islam, officer-in-charge of Shahbagh Police Station.

The workers chanted slogans against the factory authorities demanding they give them their salaries and bonuses before Eid.

Baharine Sultan Bahar, a leader of Jago Bangladesh Garments Sramik Federation, rushed to the spot and asked the workers not to vandalise vehicles and buildings.

Witnesses said police fired rubber bullets on the demonstrators to bring the situation under control, injuring at least five workers in the process.

However, Sirajul Islam denied firing bullets on the demonstrators.

He said the Tk 30 lakh lost to muggers was to be paid to the workers as their salaries and bonuses.

Muggers allegedly took away Tk 30 lakh from the managing director of TH Fashions and Impressive Group, Mosharrif Hossain Dhali, in the capital's Paribagh yesterday.

Dhali said he had withdrawn the money to pay the workers their salaries and bonuses.

"Some muggers stopped my car and took away the money," he claimed.

The workers stopped demonstrating after Dhali assured them of paying their salaries and bonuses before Eid.

About 900 workers stitch cloths for international retail brands like Myer at the four-storey building of TH Fashions.



An armoured personnel carrier, alongside additional police forces, stand guard outside the US embassy in Dhaka yesterday following Washington's worldwide alert that al-Qaeda may launch attacks on US interests in the Middle East, North Africa and beyond in the coming days. Inset, a law enforcer stands alert in a guardpost outside the embassy. PHOTO: STAR

## BISHWAJIT MURDER CASE

### One more witness gives statement before court

**COURT CORRESPONDENT**

One more witness gave his statement before a Dhaka court yesterday in Bishwajit Das murder case.

Md Swapan, a cleaner, was on duty adjacent to Victoria Park in Old Dhaka during a road blockade of the BNP-led 18-party alliance December 9 last year.

Swapan told the court that around 9:00am on that day he saw a procession coming from Jagannath University and a man was being stabbed before Intensive Dental Care.

The following day, he came to know that the man died at a hospital whose name was Bishwajit. But he did not know the killers' names.

Recording his deposition, Speedy Trial Tribunal-4 fixed August 12 for the next hearing.

Earlier, five witnesses gave their statements on different dates.

Some Bangladesh Chhatra League activists allegedly stabbed Bishwajit, 24, owner of Amantron Tailors, to death during the road blockade.

# IMPLEMENTATION OF CHT PEACE ACCORD

## Government's ambiguous stance threatening to destabilise region

### Says Santu Larma

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Regional Council Chairman Jyotirindra Bodhipriya Larma, popularly known as Santu Larma, yesterday came down heavily on the government for not completely implementing the CHT Peace Accord, 1997 during its present term.

"The government spread lies over the implementation. The government's ambiguous stance is again threatening to destabilise the hilly region's overall atmosphere," he said.

Santu was addressing as chief guest a discussion, "Providing education to indigenous communities in their mother tongue", organised by Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) in the capital's Brac Centre Inn.

The government, like the previous ones, was "communal, extremist and anti-democratic" and this stance will not ensure the rights of indigenous communities, he said.

"The incumbent government is also not people-oriented, the rule of which is essential, and has been working for a particular community to hold on to power," he observed.

On ensuring education for indigenous communities, Santu said it was the government's responsibility to ensure the basic rights, including education, of its citizens as it was impossible for others to do so.

He urged the government to immediately implement the accord and take necessary steps to provide education to indigenous children in their respective mother tongues.

Chairing the discussion, MJF Executive Director Shaheen Anam emphasised the government's role in implementing the accord and in ensuring the educational facilities.

Dhaka University teacher Prof Sikder Monoare Murshed presented a keynote paper on the topic's existing challenges and solutions. Jahangirnagar University teacher Prof Ainoon Naher and MJF Programme Manager Tandra Chakma also spoke.

At another discussion yesterday, Santu, also chairman of Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity, said the situation in CHT would go out of control if its problems were not addressed properly.

The government has not realised the situation in CHT. The future of indigenous people has become uncertain as they are leading insecure lives with their backs against the wall, he added.

"This cannot continue indefinitely. Aggrieved people might either want to live with honour or accept their fate," he told the discussion organised in the capital's Parliament Members' Club.

Parliamentary Caucus on Indigenous People organised the discussion marking the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, to be observed on August 9, with assistance of International Labour Organization, Research and Development Collective, and Oxfam.

Mentioning Saturday's arson attack on indigenous people at Matiranga and Khagrachhari which displaced 200 people, Santu said the government was not sincere in implementing the accord.

Criticising the military presence in the CHT region and attitude of most government bureaucrats towards implementing the accord, Santu said "Islamisation" in the CHT, started by the Pakistan government, was still ongoing.

Presenting treaties and agreements which helped establish indigenous people's rights worldwide, the caucus technical committee Coordinator Prof Mesbah Kamal said land, to indigenous people, was not just property but a part of their culture, lifestyle and livelihood.

The caucus' member, Mainuddin Khan Badal, said having no accord was better than a bad or unimplemented accord and that the prime minister should give thought to implementing the accord as her government had signed the treaty.

Industries Minister Dilip Barua, the caucus Convener Rashed Khan Menon and State Minister for Social Welfare Promode Mankin were present.

## PLAIN LAND INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

### They lost over 6 lakh bighas of land in 30 years

#### Seminar told

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**

Plain land indigenous communities, including Santal, Hajong, Khashi, Orao, Dalu, Patro and Pahan, have lost over six lakh bighas of land to grabbers in the last three decades, said speakers at a seminar in the capital yesterday.

"The current value of the lost pieces of land, approximately six lakh seven thousand bighas, is Tk 9,043 crore," said Dr Abul Barkat, chairperson of Bangladesh Economic Association, citing a study conducted by Association for Land Reform and Development and Bangladesh Indigenous Peoples Forum.

The seminar titled "International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples and Land Rights of Indigenous People" was organised by the Bangladesh Indigenous Peoples Forum in Cirdap to mark the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, to be observed on August 9.

In addition, the study also revealed that in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) region, the amount of land used by indigenous communities for jhum cultivation reduced from 73.4 percent to 48.8 percent in the last three decades, whereas land used for commercial agriculture has gone up to 32 percent from 10.4 percent, stated Dr Barkat.

"This shows how much the livelihood and lifestyle of the indigenous people have been transgressed upon by outsiders," he added.

Correspondingly, indigenous people currently make up less than half of the total population of the CHT region, whereas three decades ago, they used to be the vast majority, said Dr Barkat, quoting the study.

Chakma Raja Devasish Roy emphasised the need for implementation of the CHT Peace Accord, 1997.

The accord maintains that only the hill district councils (HDC) can administer and grant land exchanges, whereas in reality, the deputy commissioner still holds that power, with HDCs and indigenous chiefs only playing an advisory role, said Raja Devasish.

## AUGUST 21 GRENADE ATTACK CASES

### Tajuddin of Huji used to frequent Pintu's house

#### Prosecution witness tells court

**COURT CORRESPONDENT**

A prosecution witness of the August 21 grenade attack cases yesterday told a Dhaka court that banned Islamist militant outfit Harkatul Jihad al Islami (Huji) leader Moulana Tajuddin used to visit the residence of his brother Abdus Salam Pintu, a BNP leader and former deputy minister.

Nayek Mohammad Habibur Rahman said this while giving his statement before the Speedy Trial Tribunal-1 of Dhaka.

Pintu and Tajuddin both are accused in the two August 21 grenade attack cases. Pintu was earlier arrested and is now in jail custody while Tajuddin is a fugitive.

In his deposition, Habibur Rahman said he worked as a security guard at Pintu's Dhanmondi residence from October 13 of 2001 to January 28 of 2002.

Habibur said Tajuddin's marriage ceremony was also held at Pintu's residence.

Lawyers of other accused in the cases cross-examined Habibur yesterday. His cross-examination will continue today.

Earlier, the same court recorded statements of 68 prosecution witnesses including complainant of the cases.

The August 21 grenade attack was carried out while the then opposition leader Sheikh Hasina was addressing a party rally at Bangabandhu Avenue on August 21 in 2004.

Hasina narrowly escaped death with an ear injury but 24 leaders and workers of her party were killed, including late president Zillur Rahman's wife Ivy Rahman, and 300 others were injured.

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