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CHT PEACE ACCORD 25 years on, full implementation still elusive

MOKAMMEL SHUVO

It has been 25 years since the Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord was signed, but rights activists and leaders of the party that signed it with the government say key clauses of the agreement still remain unimplemented.

They say the government is not willing to implement the accord and this was resulting in a growing distrust between the indigenous people of the three districts and the authorities.

The peace accord was signed on this day in 1997 between the Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghaty Samity (PCJSS) and the then Awami League government.

Former lawmaker and PCJSS Vice-President Ushatan Talukder said as per the accord, the CHT Land Commission was supposed to protect the indigenous peoples' right to their ancestral lands. "But the commission remains non-functional because the rules have not been formulated for the amended CHT Land Dispute Resolution Commission Act, under which the commission was supposed to function," he said.

He added that the authorities were not formulating the rules because they were not willing to make the land commission effective.

"Besides, the district councils were supposed to be formed through popular vote of the permanent residents of the region. But that has not happened because there is no list of voters. Meanwhile, the ruling party men are forming these councils."

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People crossing a damaged bridge over a water body at Karmakarpara in Tangail's Basail upazila. Vehicular movement remains suspended on the Hatkhola-Kanchanpur-Paschimpara road since the bridge was affected by floods in 2021, causing locals to suffer. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: MIRZA SHAKIL

A grave crisis awaits the country

Dr Kamal says citing 'rampant graft'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eminent jurist Dr Kamal Hossain yesterday said the country is heading towards a grave crisis due to mismanagement, partisanship and corruption in every sector, including banks and financial institutions.



"The dreams and achievements of the Liberation War are being abandoned for some corrupt and vested quarters. The government could not take any effective action against those who embezzled huge amounts of money by taking advantage of partisanship in banks and financial institutions.

"A lack of justice against the corrupt, money laundering and looting

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BNP tells IGP it wants to hold rally at Nayapaltan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP yesterday told IGP Chowdhury Abdullah Al-Mamun that they wanted to hold their Dhaka divisional rally at Nayapaltan central office on December 10.

During a meeting with the IGP at PHQ, they also assured him that the rally would be a peaceful one like those held in other divisions, said the party leaders.

A senior police official, present at the meeting, said the IGP urged the BNP leaders to hold the December 10 rally at Suhrawardy Udyan. He also assured the BNP leaders that the police would give them foolproof security.

The BNP delegation was led by the party's Vice-Chairman Barkatullah Bulu.

Asked, Bulu said, "We want to do it [hold the rally] in Nayapaltan."

The BNP had sent two letters to the police on November 13 and 20.

"We sought permission to hold the rally at

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Interest rate cap not coming off soon

Says BB governor

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The interest rate cap for businesses is not coming off anytime soon, said Bangladesh Bank Governor Abdur Rouf Talukder yesterday.

"This is not the right time to lift the cap. We are waiting for a good time, maybe it will be lifted anytime," he said on the first day of the three-day annual conference of the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) held at the capital's Lakeshore Hotel.

At present, the interest rate for term loans and working capital is capped at 9 percent.

Previously, the interest rate for consumer loans was also capped at that. But that has been withdrawn; there is a band of 3 percentage points within which the rate can be moved, Talukder said.

The central bank would soon be introducing a market-based exchange rate.

"Actually, we would not be able to control hundi as they always offer at least Tk 5 more than us. So, we are thinking in other ways."

For instance, mobile financial service providers are now allowed to bring in remittances, so it would be easy for non-

resident Bangladeshis to send money to their loved ones at home, he said.

"Though many people are complaining that the government is controlling imports, we are just controlling the import of some luxury goods."

To reduce over-invoicing and under-invoicing, the BB is examining all the letters of credit and found huge trade-based money laundering.

The central bank examined more than 100 LCs as a test case and found some had done over-invoicing of 20 to 200 per cent.

Similarly, some exporters showed under-invoicing that was much lower than the real price, he said.

"If anyone wants to import products showing the real prices, they would not face any difficulty," Talukder added.

A combination of flexible management of the exchange rate, credit growth tightening and judicious use of tax and expenditure measures are required to support the adjustment agenda, said Sadiq Ahmed, vice-chairman of Policy Research Institute, while presenting a paper on Post-Covid Challenges in an Uncertain and Divisive World.

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CAAB issues new policy for entry passes

Alleges misuse by high-ups

RASHIDUL HASAN

The Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh will scrap around 10,000 entry passes to Dhaka airport given to top officials of different ministries, departments and other dignitaries, alleging that many of the passes were misused.

The CAAB also pointed out that some passes were used even for the purpose of smuggling.

Besides, those eligible for the entry passes will have to go through training and examination.

Air Vice Marshal M Mafidur Rahman, CAAB chairman, said changes were made in its policy regarding the issuance of passes to enter the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport to ensure the security of the country's main gateway by air.

"We are now going to be tough while issuing entry passes to VIPs. The present trend is that 10 to 12 people enter the airport with a minister. Sorry to say, but from now on only the minister will be able to enter using a pass," the CAAB boss told The Daily Star at his office in the capital's Kurmitola.

Besides, the respective ministers will have to inform the authorities concerned before entering the airport with passes.

"We are going to start these practices this month. It will take some time to implement as giving up [bad] practices

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ATTEMPT TO FRAME STUDENT 3 Sylhet cops suspended

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Three constables of Sylhet Metropolitan Police have been suspended over attempting to frame a college student and his friend for carrying yaba tablets.

The three -- Md Jhunu Hossain Joy, Imran Mia and Mohammad Abdullah -- were attached to the SMP's police lines.

Sudip Das, additional deputy commissioner (media) of SMP, said the constables were suspended yesterday and a departmental case would be filed against them.

According to sources, Saifur Rahman Asad, a resident of Sylhet city's Majortilla area and son of police Inspector Abu Sayed, went to the shrine of Hazrat Shahjalal (RA) along with his friend on October 13.

The three constables detained them there, searched their bags, and claimed that they were carrying yaba tablets. As Saifur informed his father about the matter, a police sub-inspector went to the spot and took them to Kotwali Police Station, from where the two were released on a bond.

The SMP decided to conduct a departmental inquiry into the matter and tasked Additional Deputy Commissioner (force) Saleh Ahmad with the investigation. The official submitted the probe report on November 24.

ADC Saleh said, "It was a very bad incident. Though Saifur and his family were unwilling to file an official complaint, the SMP commissioner took the matter seriously and ordered an investigation. After conducting the probe based on evidence and witnesses' statements, I submitted the report to the commissioner."



PEEK-A-BOO! ... A Red Ghost Crab peeks out of its burrow on Dimer Char in the Sundarbans. These generally shy crustaceans become a sight to behold when they appear out of their burrows all at once -- like a large red carpet over the sand. Found in many beaches and shoals across the country, the Red Ghost Crab even has the "Laal Kakra'r Char" named after it in Kuakata. They are easily recognisable from their boxy shape, horned eyestalks and uneven claws. Though they dominate sandy shores in tropical and subtropical regions all around the world and are listed in the "least concerned" category by the IUCN, the Red Ghost Crab is still facing a drop in their numbers due to human activities such as trampling by foot traffic, motorcycles racing through beaches, inorganic pollutants and a general loss of habitat.

PHOTO: TIMU HOSSAIN

CHEQUE BOUNCE SC stays verdict barring cases against defaulters

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court yesterday stayed the High Court verdict for the next two months that barred banks and non-bank financial institutions from lodging cheque dishonour cases under a negotiable instrument act to recover defaulted loans.

A five-member bench of the Appellate Division headed by Chief Justice Hasan Foez Siddique passed the order following a petition filed by Brac Bank seeking a stay on the HC verdict on November 23.

The apex court also asked Brac Bank to file a leave to appeal petition challenging the HC verdict in two months.

The SC stayed the verdict on the ground that the HC cannot give such directives prohibiting banks or financial institutions from filing cheque dishonour cases, Minhazul Haque Chowdhury, Brac Bank's lawyer, told The Daily Star.

A single judge's HC bench has delivered the verdict and directives interpreting the constitution after holding a hearing on a

criminal matter, which that bench cannot do, he added.

The HC had delivered the verdict after hearing an appeal petition filed by one Mohammad Ali over a cheque dishonour case of BRAC Bank.

In 2011, Ali, a businessman from Nabinagar upazila under Brahmanbaria district, took a loan of Tk 4 lakh from BRAC Bank's Nabinagar branch, according to the case documents.

He was supposed to service the loan in 36 instalments, but he managed to pay Tk 3.18 lakh in 22 instalments.

He gave a cheque of Tk 2.95 lakh to the bank against the remaining dues but it bounced.

Against this backdrop, Brac Bank in 2015 filed a case with a magistrate court in Brahmanbaria for recovering the dues, which included the remaining principal amount and interests accrued.

Following the case, the Additional District and Sessions Judge's Court in Brahmanbaria convicted Ali and

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