

CHIT PEACE ACCORD  
Need political  
consensus to  
implement it  
fully: speakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

It is the responsibility of the government to fully implement the Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord, said speakers at a discussion yesterday.

Although 26 years have passed since the signing of the accord, its main provisions still remain unimplemented, they added.

Dhaka Reporters Unity organised the event at its Nasrul Hamid Auditorium.

“To implement this agreement, there must first be a political consensus,” said CPB general secretary Ruhin Hossain Prince.

Nazmul Haque Prodhan, also general secretary of Jasod, said as the government was a signatory of the accord, they must implement it.

Bazlur Rashid Firoz, general secretary of Basod, alleged that the

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Eighty-five-year-old Swapan Mondol left home before daybreak and walked for 3-kilometres to queue up for purchasing rice and flour at a subsidised rate from a truck under the government's Open Market Sale programme at Batiaghata upazila in Khulna yesterday. After reaching the spot, he waited in the line for hours but the truck did not show up. Tired, Swapan had to sit down next to the line to catch a breath.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Fair polls must for  
political, economic  
stability: speakers

DIPLMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Political and economic instability may escalate in the country if the January 7 national election is not held in a free, fair and participatory manner, said political and foreign policy analysts at a webinar yesterday.

The speakers also said the checks and balance in the governance system under one-party rule have been on the decline over the past several years, and may deteriorate further.

Forum for Bangladesh Studies organised the webinar, moderated by journalist Monir Haider.

“There exists no accountability during the authoritarian governments. Thus, those close to the power structures are encouraged to take illegal means for their gains. This system also helps grow oligarchs, while peoples’ voices get weaker,” said former foreign secretary Touhid Hossain.

Moreover, there are indications that the US may impose sanctions over labour rights, which will rub salt to the injury given the economy is already struggling due to high prices of essentials, pressure on foreign currency reserves, pending foreign loan payments, fragile banking sector and money laundering, he said.

“In that case, many female garment workers may lose jobs and inflation may rise further,” Touhid Hossain said, adding that the declining trend in purchasing power of the middle and lower-middle income people will

continue.

Former election commissioner Sakhawat Hussain said Awami League thinks that the polls will be participatory if the voters’ presence is high. However, even with 61-67 percent votes cast, the polls held in 1976, 1983 and 1986 were not participatory, he said.

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TOUHID HOSSAIN  
Former foreign secretary

“In my understanding, the voter turnout in upcoming polls may be around 25 to 30 percent,” he also said, adding that peoples’ trust on the democratic institutions has significantly dwindled.

Mubashar Hasan, post-doctoral fellow at the University of Oslo, said Bangladesh appears to walk the path of authoritarianism. As a party, BNP is being pushed underground, which runs risks of radicalisation and violence, he added.

Prof Mahmudul Hasan at the International Islamic University Malaysia, also spoke at the event.

RAJSHAHI-1  
AL campaign heats up  
amid internal strife

ANWAR ALL, Rajshahi

In Rajshahi-1, the Awami League’s election campaign is intensifying as the ruling party candidate continues to face challenges from within the party.

AL candidate Omor Faruk Chowdhury is up against three AL independents – Golam Rabbani, Md Akteruzzaman, and Sharmin Akter Nipa, also known as Mahiya Mahi.

Another AL leader Ayesha Akter Dalia, disqualified for faulty nomination documents, is fighting a legal battle for reinstatement at the Supreme Court.

Omor Faruk is the incumbent of Rajshahi-1 constituency and has been nominated by the AL for the same seat. He served as the state minister of industries from September 2012 to January 2014.

Golam Rabbani is the former president of Tanore Upazila AL, who sought AL nomination for the same seat but got rejected, similar to the case of Akteruzzaman, Mahiya and Dalia.

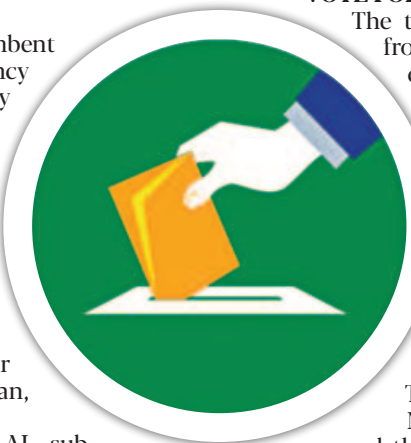
Dalia is a member of AL sub committee on industries and commerce affairs.

“I’m optimistic about contesting in the election as others with similar faults have already regained their candidature,” she said.

**ALLEGATIONS AGAINST AL CANDIDATE**

At least nine complaints have been submitted to the election commission by the independents against the AL candidate, claiming his supporters are turning the election environment hostile.

Golam Rabbani claimed yesterday that supporters of the AL candidate tore down all his posters in Rishikul union.



On Friday night, Mahiya Mahi reportedly faced threats from Rajshahi city AL General Secretary Dablu Sarker when she was campaigning at Tanore upazila.

The election enquiry committee on December 21 issued a show cause notice to the AL candidate’s supporter Fazle Rabbi Farhad.

Besides, Md Billal Hossain, the assistant returning officer of the constituency, yesterday issued a warning to teachers of different educational institutes against campaigning for any candidates.

**‘VOTE FOR CHANGE’**

The three independent candidates from within AL are actively campaigning against the AL candidate, urging voters to “vote for change”.

“My fight is not against the boat symbol. My fight is against Chowdhury... he will have to cry on election day. Because, people will cast their votes against him that day,” Mahiya Mahi said during electioneering in Tanore on Thursday.

Mahia also said she wants to end the “Zamindari system” the AL candidate created in the constituency.

During a campaign, Golam Rabbani claimed to have the backing of numerous senior AL leaders and activists who felt neglected by the AL candidate for an extended period.

AL candidate Omor Faruk Chowdhury is also not just sitting around. He said no true AL activists can vote against the “boat”.

“When anyone fails to get a party nomination, they lose the right to contest polls. If they contest, they are no longer an Awami League activist,” he told a meeting recently.

Workers Party to  
go tough on graft  
if voted to power  
Announces 28-point polls  
manifesto

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Workers Party, an ally of ruling Awami League, yesterday announced its election manifesto for the 12th parliamentary election, saying the country is grappling with various crises, including corruption, nepotism, inflation, and economic discrimination.

“Workers Party is determined to prevent corruption, embezzlement, and money laundering, to break market syndicates that control product pricing, and to build an anti-imperialist and non-communal Bangladesh in the spirit of Liberation War,” said the party in its manifesto.

The 28-point manifesto was unveiled at Jatiya Press Club by the party’s politburo member Noor Ahmad Bakul, which read that they will strictly deal with corruption and form a special court to bring the corrupt under justice.

“An initiative will be taken to bring back the black money that was laundered, and strict action will be taken against loan defaulters,” reads the manifesto.

The party has fielded a total of 23 candidates across the country with their own symbol – hammer. However, two top leaders of the party – Rashed Khan Menon and Fazley Hossain Badsha – are running with AL symbol, “boat.”

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‘We’ll be on the  
streets to reclaim  
voting rights’

Says Moyeen Khan; 2 BNP  
leaders held for distributing  
leaflets in Sylhet

STAR REPORT

BNP senior leader Abdul Moyeen Khan yesterday said the party will be on the streets until the fall of the Awami League government, which they vowed to bring about peacefully.

“We’re carrying out the movement to get back people’s voting rights. We’re on the streets, and we will be there with this goal until this autocratic regime is unseated,” he said.



PHOTO: COLLECTED

BNP leader Abdul Moyeen Khan distributing leaflets in front of Jatiya Press Club yesterday.

He made the remarks while distributing leaflets with the party’s call to boycott the upcoming polls among pedestrians in front of Jatiya Press Club.

Moyeen, along with leaders of Jatiyatabadi Muktiyoddha Dal, freedom fighters’ wing of BNP, distributed the leaflets to drum up public support in favour of boycotting the polls.

Moyeen, a BNP standing committee member, said their party is committed to establishing a pro-people government in the country by removing the unrepresentative government in a completely peaceful and systematic democratic process like a

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Recruitment system  
of migrant workers  
should be revamped  
Says NHRC full-time member  
Salim Reza

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The country’s recruitment system for sending workers abroad requires a thorough reform, said Salim Reza, full-time member of National Human Rights Commission, yesterday.

“I don’t think the [current] piecemeal system is providing any significant progress,” he said.

He was addressing a consultation on “Regularisation of Sub-agents for Ensuring Fair and Ethical Recruitment Practices” organised by Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU) with support of ILO and UN Women at a city hotel.

The event was organised to create recommendations for a set of rules to be formulated by the government for the registration of sub-agents and specifying their roles and responsibilities in the labour migration sector.

Earlier this year, the government amended the Overseas Employment and Migrants Act, recognising sub-agents who work at the grassroots.

Salim Reza, a former secretary of expatriates’ welfare ministry and former director general of the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET), said he has been working on developing a model for the recruitment system based on his own experience, adding that he would disclose the model later.

Addressing the event as chief guest, he pointed to the high number of workers migrating abroad this year and

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Women’s rights organisation Naripokkho demanded safety of women and minority communities during the upcoming national election at a programme at Central Shaheed Minar yesterday. As part of the event, they also held a cultural programme and lit up candles.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Caught, mugger  
swallows gold  
earring in Dhaka

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sonia Akter along with her family was targeted by a mugger while they were crossing a road in Gulistan yesterday afternoon.

The mugger snatched Sonia’s gold earring and attempted to make a quick escape.

But her husband Rasel ran after him, shouting “mugger” before catching him. The mugger then swallowed the stolen ring in an attempt to hide evidence.

The incident took place around 1:30pm, just minutes after the couple and their son got down from a bus in Gulistan from Narayanganj.

They said they came to the capital for shopping.

Describing the incident, Rasel said he fell on the road and suffered injuries as he chased the mugger, who claimed his name was Rubel.

Pedestrians swarmed there and beat him up before handing him over to Bangshal police.

Police took him to Dhaka Medical College Hospital and an x-ray confirmed the presence of Sonia’s earring in his abdomen, said Subir Kumar Karmakar, a sub-inspector of the police station.

Medical procedure is going on at the hospital to retrieve the earring, the official said.