

28YRS OF CHT ACCORD

Disappointment,
frustration keep growing

MD ABBAS

Frustration and disappointment have been growing among the indigenous people of the Chittagong Hill Tracts as the CHT Peace Accord has still not been fully implemented even after 28 years.

Signed on December 2, 1997, between the then Awami League government and the Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti (PCJSS), the accord was expected to bring long-awaited justice, autonomy and peace to the region.

The previous government said that 65 out of 72 sections of the accord have been implemented, with only a few remaining.

But PCJSS leaders disagree, saying that only 25 sections have been fully executed, 18 partially, and 29 not implemented at all.

The leaders also said that successive governments, including the Awami League government that signed the deal, have not taken adequate steps to make the accord fully effective.

Following the removal of the Awami League



government, and after repeated demands from the CHT Peace Accord Implementation Movement, the interim government reformed the Peace Accord Implementation and Monitoring Committee on January 1. Foreign Affairs Adviser Touhid Hossain was appointed as the chair of the committee.

The committee held its tenth meeting in Rangamati on July 19, where officials said that effective measures would soon be taken to implement the accord and appointed the chairman of the Land Commission.

“This announcement gave us some hope. However, the government’s later actions have left us deeply frustrated and disappointed,” said

Dipayan Khisa, a central committee member of the PCJSS.

Everyone knows making the CHT Land Dispute Resolution Commission functional is one of the most important steps in implementing the accord, especially for resolving long-standing land conflicts, said Khairul Chowdhury, a

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Students of Azimpur Government Girls' School and College in Dhaka were sent home yesterday morning as classes and exams were suspended after teachers at government high schools across the country went on an indefinite work abstention to press their four-point demand.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Tarique not on voter roll

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candidates to be registered voters.

At a press conference, EC Senior Secretary Akhtar Ahmed said only those who registered by October 31 would be able to cast their votes in the upcoming election.

Asked if Tarique registered, the EC secretary said that as far as he knew, Tarique had not registered.

On whether Tarique could still run, he said: “He can, if the Election Commission decides.”

He explained that under the Voter List Act, 2009, the EC has the authority to grant such opportunities. Section 15 of the law states that the EC may, at any time, include or remove the name of any person entitled to be on the voter roll.

According to Article 12(1) of the Representation of the People Order, 1972, however, a person is disqualified from election if their name is not on the voter list.

WHY TARIQUE NOT A VOTER

During the last caretaker government rule, Tarique was arrested on March 7, 2007. He was granted bail on September 3, 2008. He left for London with his family on September 11, 2008, for medical treatment.

Since then, he has been living in London with his wife Zubaida Rahman

and daughter Zaima Rahman.

Despite living abroad, Tarique was appointed acting chairman of the BNP in 2016 after his mother Khaleda Zia was imprisoned.

Officials said the EC prepared a voter list with photographs ahead of the December 2008 polls, but Tarique was not enrolled as he was abroad. He has not been included in subsequent voter lists prepared ahead of the 2014, 2018, and 2024 elections.

NO LEGAL BARRIER TO RETURN
Law Adviser Prof Asif Nazrul yesterday said he was not aware of any legal barriers to Tarique’s returning to Bangladesh.

The government would provide full cooperation if any issues arose, he said, adding, “We will also provide full cooperation regarding his security.”

Nazrul emphasized that the decision to return rests entirely with Tarique himself.

Speculation about his return intensified after BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia’s health deteriorated on Friday while undergoing treatment at the Evercare Hospital. On Saturday morning, Tarique posted on his verified Facebook page that returning to Bangladesh from the UK was not entirely in his hands.

NID CORRECTION HALTED

At the press conference, EC Secretary Akhtar Ahmed announced that the commission on November 23 decided to suspend NID correction and voter migration processes. However, voter enrolment will continue, but the new voters won’t be able to vote in this election.

He clarified that corrections to seven key fields – voter’s name, father’s name, mother’s name, occupation, date of birth, voter address, and photograph – will remain suspended. Currently, changes allowed include husband’s or wife’s name, marital status, educational qualification, religion (where applicable), disability status and type, and telephone number.

In a statement last night, the EC said NID corrections will continue on a limited scale for urgent needs such as medical treatment, study abroad, obtaining passports, and visas, and employment-related requirements.

The EC also extended the deadline for expatriate voter registration via the Postal Ballot BD app to December 25, from the earlier deadline of December 18.

The registration started on November 19 for expatriates in 140 countries. As of yesterday evening, 1,23,700 registered.

gain some benefit for my mother.... My aunt is twice as old as me. She is 10 times more powerful than me. She has been in politics longer than I’ve been alive,” she said.

“I want to see the evidence of how I influenced the prime minister in order to get this verdict,” she added.

Last week, a group of prominent British lawyers and former cabinet ministers wrote an open letter raising “profound concerns” over Tulip’s trial in Bangladesh, reported Sky News.

Barrister Cherie Blair, who is married to ex-prime minister Tony Blair; Sir Robert Buckland, who served as justice secretary; and Dominic Grieve, an ex-attorney general, wrote that the criminal proceedings against Tulip were “artificial and a contrived and unfair way of pursuing a prosecution”.

OTHER ACCUSED

Alongside Hasina, Rehana, Tulip, Sharif Ahmed, and Khurshid Alam, the other convicts include former secretary Kazi Washi Uddin; former additional secretary Md Oliullah; former administrative officer Saiful Islam Sarkar; former senior assistant secretary Purabi Golder; Rajuk’s former chairman Anisur Rahman Miah; former Rajuk members Tanmoy Das, Mohammad Nasir Uddin, Shamsuddin Ahmod Chowdhury, and Nurul Islam; former deputy director Nayeb Ali Sharif; former assistant director Mazharul Islam; and former PMO secretary Mohammad Salahuddin.

THE CASE

The ACC filed six cases in January with its Dhaka Integrated District Office-1 over alleged irregularities in the Purbachal New Town project.

It accused Hasina of colluding with senior Rajuk officials to unlawfully secure six 10-katha plots in the Sector 27 diplomatic zone for herself, her daughter, son, Rehana, Bobby, and Azmina, despite their being ineligible under existing regulations.

Chargesheets were filed on March 25 with the Metropolitan Senior Special Judge’s Court, naming Hasina as a common accused in all six cases.

Charges were framed on July 31 against 29 individuals, including Hasina, Rehana, Joy, Putul, Bobby, Tulip, and Azmina, in their respective cases.

Modi wishes Khaleda quick recovery

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who has contributed to Bangladesh’s public life for many years,” Modi said in a message through his verified X handle last night.

“Our sincere prayers and best wishes for her speedy recovery.

India stands ready to extend all possible support, in whatever way we can.”

The Indian High Commission in Dhaka shared Modi’s post on its verified Facebook page.

On November 28, Pakistan Prime

Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif wished her a swift recovery.

The 80-year-old former prime minister was admitted to Evercare Hospital on November 23 after being diagnosed with infections affecting her heart and lungs.

Concern grows over Khaleda’s health

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“Doctors are keeping madam [Khaleda] under close observation.”

He also urged party leaders, activists, and the public to pray for her speedy recovery.

At another programme, around the same time, BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi said, “Khaleda Zia is in the CCU. She is very ill. However, her condition has not changed...”

A member of her medical board earlier told this newspaper that excess fluid has built up in her body, requiring regular dialysis.

The 80-year-old politician has long been battling multiple health complications, including liver cirrhosis, arthritis, diabetes, and issues affecting her kidneys, lungs, heart, and eyes. She has a pacemaker and has previously undergone stent implants in her heart.

CONCERN GROWS

Party leaders say the news of her illness has created a sense of unease within the party, with many leaders

and activists travelling to Dhaka and gathering in front of the Evercare Hospital.

In Dhaka, Rajshahi, Chattogram, Barishal, Sylhet, Mymensingh and other districts, local BNP units and affiliated organisations arranged prayers in mosques, temples and community centres throughout the day.

Many supporters have also taken to social media, posting prayers for Khaleda’s swift recovery.

Family members, government officials and BNP leaders and activists visited the hospital all day long.

Khaleda’s younger brother Shamim Eskander, his wife Kaniz Fatema, and their son Avik Eskander were seen visiting the hospital in the afternoon.

Outside the hospital, Zonayed Saki, chief coordinator of Ganosamhati Andolon, said, “Over the last 15 years, Khaleda Zia has reached a new height by becoming a centre of hope and trust for people in the anti-fascist struggle.”

Calling her “a patriotic,

democratic and uncompromising leader”, Jamaat Naye-e-Ameer Syyed Abdullah Muhammad Taher said, “She [Khaleda] is no longer just the leader of a party. She is the leader of all people.”

BNP leaders and activists gathered outside Evercare Hospital yesterday all day long to enquire about Khaleda’s health, despite repeated instructions from the party not to crowd the hospital premises.

Iqbal Hossain, a BNP activist from Madaripur, said, “I really want to see Madam. Even if I cannot see her, when Madam leaves the hospital, at least I will get to see her car.”

Gias Uddin, a Jubo Dal activist from Chapainawabganj, said, “I will try to see her, even for a moment.”

Another BNP activist, Julhas Hossain, said, “We know the party instructed us not to crowd here, but I couldn’t stay away. I came to stand here to know Madam’s condition.”

The Bangladesh Nationalist Pharmacy Association held a prayer event in front of the hospital.

Hasina, Rehana, Tulip jailed

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Judge Md Rabiul Alam of Dhaka’s Special Judge’s Court-4 found the 78-year-old Awami League chief guilty of abusing her power to illegally secure a Purbachal plot for Rehana, despite Rehana being ineligible.

Tulip was found guilty of influencing and persuading Hasina to secure the plot for Rehana.

“Corruption has turned into a disease... It has engulfed the entire society,” the judge said, urging collective resistance. He explained that for fugitive accused in cases with no death penalty, there is no provision for appointing a state defence lawyer.

Yesterday’s sentence came four days after Hasina was handed 21 years’ rigorous imprisonment by a special court in three other cases tied to the Purbachal scam. These included two cases, in which her daughter Saima Wazed Putul and son Sajeeb Wazed Joy were co-accused and were each sentenced to five years.

Judge Rabiul yesterday began delivering the verdict at 11:30am in a packed courtroom under tight security. The court ordered Rajuk to cancel Rehana’s plot allocation and sentenced 14 others to five years’ imprisonment under section 5(2) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1947. The list includes former state minister for housing and public works Sharif Ahmed and several former government and Rajuk officials.

All 17 convicts, including Hasina, Rehana, and Tulip, were fined Tk 1 lakh each, with an additional six months’ imprisonment in case of default.

ACC Public Prosecutor Khan Md Moinul Hasan Lipon said the verdict fell short of prosecution expectations. “We will talk to the commission [ACC] for further steps about it,” he said.

Only former Rajuk member Mohammad Khurshid Alam was present during the verdict. His lawyer Mohammad Shaheenoor Islam declined to comment.

Two additional graft cases against 21 people, including Hasina, nieces Azmina Siddiq and Tulip, and nephew Radwan Mujib Siddiq Bobby, are pending at the same court, with verdicts expected in January.

The ruling follows a series of legal

blows for Hasina.

On November 17, she was sentenced to death by the International Crimes Tribunal-1 for crimes against humanity committed during last year’s July uprising. Ousted on August 5, 2024 amid a student-led mass movement, she remains accused in over 550 cases nationwide, excluding the corruption charges.

‘FLAWED AND FARCICAL’

Tulip Siddiq told The Guardian that the ruling “deserves contempt” and called the entire process “flawed and farcical”. She said the outcome of the “kangaroo court” was predictable and politically motivated, adding that she would not be distracted from her duties to her constituents.

The Guardian noted that the UK has no extradition treaty with Bangladesh, making it unlikely Tulip will serve the sentence. A Labour Party spokesperson said the party does not recognise the judgment, arguing Tulip was denied due process and was never informed of the charges despite repeated requests through her legal team.

“Anyone facing any charge should always be afforded the right to make legal representations when allegations are made against them,” the spokesperson said. “Given that has not happened in this case, we cannot recognise this judgment.”

While talking to Sky News, Tulip said she still had no contact whatsoever from the Bangladeshi authorities, despite them “spreading malicious allegations about me for a year-and-a-half now”.

“I’ve had no correspondence from them - I’m not difficult to find, I’m a parliamentarian,” she said.

“The allegation that I’ve been convicted for states that I, when I was an opposition member of parliament here in Britain, used my political influence over my aunt who was then the prime minister of Bangladesh to convince her or I suppose force her to allow my mother who is her sister to purchase a plot of land in some random place in Bangladesh.

“Just to look at the allegation itself for a minute: I exerted influence over the prime minister of Bangladesh as an opposition MP here in Britain to

Teachers’ strike disrupts classes

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withdrawn in 2015.

In Rajshahi, the strike halted educational activities at many schools.

Teachers of Government Promothnath Girls’ High School refrained from all duties, suspending classes, and exams for the day.

“We informed students beforehand, so no one faced any inconvenience,” said Jamil Ahmed, a mathematics teacher.

Rajshahi Shiksha Board Model School and College, however, held its scheduled tests using its college-level teachers. “Exams for classes 6 to 9 are being held smoothly,” said English lecturer Shohan Reza.

Shahidullah Saeed, regional coordinator of the secondary teachers’ platform and a teacher at Rajshahi Collegiate School, said 17 of the district’s 19 government schools did not conduct exams. “The remaining institutions will join soon. The programme is being followed uniformly across the country.”

Similar reports came from Sherpur, Mymensingh, Kushtia, Dhaka, and Chattogram, where teachers at several prominent institutions postponed scheduled tests.

Speaking to The Daily Star,

Mohammad Omar Faruk, central coordinator of the protesters’ platform and a teacher at Government Coronation Secondary Girls’ School in Khulna, said, “Most government schools have suspended examinations. Some institutions may have held exams if they did not get our instructions, but the boycott is underway nationwide.”

On DSHE’s circular, he said, “When schools themselves postponed exams today [Monday], a late-night directive cannot suddenly become effective. The circular only shows the authorities have taken note of our protest.”

Guardians expressed frustration over the disruptions of exams.

Sonia Akter, mother of a 4th grader in Narsingdi, said the delays created anxiety among younger students.

Another parent, Shahansha Al Mamun, said his daughter has become reluctant to study due to the uncertainty caused by the strike.

There are around 700 government secondary schools across the country, accommodating more than 5.5 lakh students. Currently, teachers receive salaries under the 10th-grade pay scale, with a starting basic salary of about Tk 16,000.

Meanwhile, government primary school teachers are divided over their demand to elevate the pay scale to

grade 11.

A section under the Primary Teachers’ Organisation Unity Council resumed classes after a three-day protest and conducted exams yesterday. Another faction – the Primary Teachers’ Demand Implementation Council – continued boycotting tests.

Teachers suspended all exams at Rongchi Government Primary School in Sunamganj’s Madhyhanagar.

“This is not against students. We will return once our demands are met,” said an assistant teacher, adding that teachers would work to recover learning losses when the situation improves.

The Primary Teachers’ Demand Implementation Council said yesterday that its full-day work abstention and exam boycott would continue today.

Currently, there are over 65,000 government primary schools, with over 1 crore students enrolled. The teachers are currently placed in Grade 13, with a starting basic salary of around Tk 11,000.

On Sunday, the Directorate of Primary Education instructed officials to ensure that annual exams are completed smoothly and warned that any failure to conduct the tests properly would lead to action under the existing rules.

with the possibility of a 30-day extension. If they go beyond this limit, the law recommends departmental disciplinary action against the person.

The NHRC is now legally bound to continue searching for missing individuals until their fate is confirmed, issuing quarterly progress reports to the family.

The law also empowers the NHRC to enter and investigate any detention centres.