

Yearly Report 2008

At a glance

Form of atrocity ↓	Perpetrator →	Security Forces	Bengali Settlers	SF+BS	UPDF	Total
No. of person killed		3	1	-	-	4
No. of person tortured		43	6	-	-	49
No. of person arrested		14	-	-	-	14
No. of person harassed		-	-	-	-	0
No. of person against whom case lodged		11	-	-	-	11
No. of house set fire		-	-	76	-	76
No. of house looted & destructed		-	-	76	-	76
No. of house searched		-	-	-	-	0
No. of woman raped		-	2	-	-	2
No. of woman sexually harassed		-	-	-	-	0
No. of person kidnapped		-	-	-	1	1
No. of person whose land grabbed		-	14	-	-	14
Total		71	23	152	1	247

SF+BS = Security Forces & Bengali settlers; UPDF = United Peoples' Democratic Front

Headline of the Report 2008

January 2008

5 January 2008: Appeal to the International Community

22 January 2008: Fresh initiative of district administration to help Bengali settlers to occupy indigenous people's land

26 January 2008: Government plans curbs on indigenous people's rights

February 2008

5 February 2008: Jumma NGO worker raped by her Bengali colleague in Khagrachari

6-7 February 2008: CHT Regional Council delegation called on the Finance Advisor and the Special Assistant to CA on CHT Affairs Ministry

10 February 2008: Roundtable conference of civil society delegation on CHT visit held

13 February 2008: EU mission talks CHT issues in Rangamati

14 February 2008: Internally displaced in CHT continue to suffer

19 February 2008: Conference on 'towards a better understanding of the rights of the indigenous peoples' held in Dhaka

20 February 2008: Adibashi students demand quota in civil service

23 February 2008: No end to CHT land disputes as commission limps

29 February 2008: Government should immediately initiate relief operations in CHT

March 2008

2 March 2008: Rohingya refugees

2 March 2008: 20 acre lands of tribesmen grabbed in Khagrachhari

5 March 2008: Indigenous girl raped by Bengali teachers in Rangamati, CHT

17 March 2008: Hill people fear food crisis as bamboo clusters flowering

27 March 2008: Opinion-exchange meeting held by Chief Advisor in Rangamati

31 March 2008: Roundtable Discussion on "Land Disputes in the CHT: Ways to Settling the Issue" held in Dhaka

April 2008

3 April 2008: Loss of crops due to Rat Invasion: 50pc people in Rangamati out of food security

- 20 April 2008: Arson attack on indigenous villages in Sajek under Baghaichari upazila by Bengali settlers in CHT
 23 April 2008: BISAC holds demonstration against arson attack on indigenous villages by Bengali settlers in CHT
 28-29 April 2008: Civil Society Team visited spot of the Sajek arson attack

May 2008

- 2 May 2008: Opinion-exchange meeting held by Education and Commerce Advisor in Rangamati
 5 May 2008: CHTRC delegation calls on Law and Land advisor A F M Hassan Arif
 5 May 2008: 3 innocent Jumma villagers arrested in Jurachari
 5 May 2008: Civil Society Team held press conference in Dhaka on Sajek arson attack
 6 May 2008: Army tortured five Jummas who came to enlist voter list in Naniachar
 7 May 2008: Army conduct searching operation at Soileshchari in Naniarchar
 10 May 2008: Bengali settlers continue to occupy land in Sajek
 11 May 2008: Sama Odhikar Andolon holds seminar to conceal its recent barbaric activities
 13 May 2008: A returnee PCJSS member held by the army in Dighinala following the Sajek arson attack
 19 May 2008: A NGO 'DORP' occupies orchards of the indigenous people in Bandarban
 20 May 2008: PCP observes its 19th Founding Anniversary
 21 May 2008: Relief provided by Sultana Kamal for victims of Sajek arson attack
 25 May 2008: Arrested PCJSS member placed police remand
 26 May 2008: Indigenous rights organisations holds protest meeting against arson attack and land grabbing in CHT
 29 May 2008: 4 Jumma villagers arrested from Sajek released on bail
 May 2008: National political parties demand to invite PCJSS to the on-gong dialogue

June 2008

- 3 June 2008: Army frequently conducts searching operation and tortures villagers in Bilaichari
 4 June 2008: Army conducts searching operation in Naniachar
 4 June 2008: Implement CHT Accord to solve problems of indigenous Jumma people in CHT
 8 June 2008: Eliminate state terrorism for crime-free educational institution in the country
 12 June 2008: HWF organises human chain on occasion of 12th abduction anniversary of Kalpana Chakma in Dhaka
 17 June 2008: PCJSS member Anunay Chakma Manas again shown arrested at Khagrachari jail
 18 June 2008: Follow-up: Sajek arson attack
 21 June 2008: Consultation on PRSP held in Rangamati
 27 June 2008: PCJSS leaders deliberately charged with murder case in Bandarban
 29 June 2008: M N Larma honoured Sidhu-Kanhu-Fulmni Award

July 2008

- 1 July 2008: District and session judge's courts start in CHT
 4 July 2008: Workshop on indigenous peoples and PRSP held by CIPRAD in Mymensingh
 7 July 2008: GOC of 24th infantry division calls on CHTRC chairman
 7 July 2008: Custodian death in army custody in Belaichari
 18 July 2008: PCMS and HWF organise roundtable on national women dev policy and indigenous women's rights
 25 July 2008: Rat Invasion: Hill people still suffer from food shortage

August 2008

- 2 August 2008: Bengali settlers blockade Sultana Kamal at Baghaihat in Rangamati
 5 August 2008: 8 Islamic militants held in Bandarban
 6-9 August 2008: International Indigenous People Day observed in Bangladesh
 9 August 2008: Jumma village attacked by Bengali settlers at Gangaram Duar in Sajek

- 10 August 2008: Land owned by Jumma occupied by Bengali settlers in Bandarban
- 14 August 2008: CHT Commission urges government to speed up CHT Accord execution
- 15 August 2008: Massive military operation is going on in Rowangchari
- 19 August 2008: One Jumma villager killed by Bengali settlers in Sajek
- 22 August 2008: Council of PCP of CU and Ctg. Metropolitan Unit and HWF of CU held in Chittagong
- 23 August: PCP organises protest rally at DU campus against the killing of Ladumoni Chakma
- 29 August 2008: 17th Council of PCP of Dhaka branch held

September 2008

- 5 September 2008: PCP organises farewell and reception in Chittagong University
- 10 September 2008: Commercial afforestation by Destiny-2000 by occupying IP's land in Bandarban
- September 2008: Follow-up of Bengali settlement programme in Sajek
- Sept-Oct 2008: Judge Court grants bail for indigenous activists in Khagrachari

October 2008

- 3 October 2008: Bengali settlers tried to commit communal attack in Baghaichari
- 18 October 2008: PCJSS member harassed by police and intelligent personnel in Khagrachari
- 20 October 2008: PCJSS submits registration form to EC
- 21 October 2008: Unite to realise constitutional rights of indigenous people- Shantu Larma urges students

November 2008

- 10 November 2008: 25th Death Anniversary of M N Larma observed in Dhaka and CHT

(1) 5 January 2008: Appeal to the International Community

A. Present State of Implementation of CHT Accord

The CHT Accord, popularly known as *CHT Peace Accord*, signed between the government and the PCJSS on 2 December 1997, ends more than two-decade old armed struggle for self-determination and paves the way for the peace, development and political solution of the CHT issues. Though then Awami League government signed the Accord, but it had no sincerity to implement the Accord. Only a little of the Accord was implemented during her three year and eight months tenure. During the period of the BNP led last four-party coalition government, it had violated vital clauses of the Accord. As a result, though more than ten years have passed away after signing of the Accord, most of the following provisions have not been taken into account for implementation:

1. No government steps to preserving the characteristics of the tribal-inhabited region and attaining the overall development thereof recognised by the Accord.
2. Full execution of the CHT Regional Council Act is yet to be made and Rules of Business of the CHTRC is kept pending without any approval by the Government. (such as no execution of power of CHTRC to supervising and coordinating to the subjects transferred to three HDCs, law and order, general administrations, development programmes, CHT Development Board, Coordination of NGO activities and disaster management and relief operation, traditional and social justice etc and issuing license for heavy industries)
3. No subject has been transferred to the three Hill District Councils (HDCs) since signing of the Accord. Election of the HDCs is yet to be held and Voter list only with the permanent resident of CHT is yet to be prepared for the election of HDCs.
4. Land Commission is yet to start its function and its Act is yet to be amended. Hence, no land dispute has been resolved.

5. Only 31 temporary army camps out of 543 camps were withdrawn. Rests of temporary camps are yet to be withdrawn. Moreover, 'Operation Uttaron' was imposed in 2001.
6. 9,780 families out of 12,222 families of repatriated Jumma refugees have not returned their lands, homesteads and orchards and 40 villages of the returnees are still under the occupation of the settlers.
7. Internally Jumma displaced families numbering more than one hundred thousand families are yet to be rehabilitated.
8. Since stopping of activities of the CHT Accord Implementation Committee on 13 September 2001 by then Caretaker Government, the activities of the committee have never been reactivated till to-date.
9. Withdrawal decisions of the cases filed against PCJSS members and the permanent residents involved with PCJSS are yet to be executed.

B. Role of present Caretaker Government to implement the Accord

Since assuming to the state power by the present Caretaker Government undertook various vital initiatives that were not addressed by any political government, such as, drive against widespread corruption, separation of judiciary from the executive, re-constitution of Anti-Corruption Commission etc, but it is the Dr. Fakruddin Ahmad's interim government who addresses the same. Considering this, the indigenous Jumma people hoped that this neutral Caretaker Government would start proper implementation of the CHT Peace Accord that was also kept unimplemented by the previous political governments. However, though one year has passed, no proper initiative has yet been taken for implementation of the CHT Peace Accord by the Caretaker government.

It is slightly signaled hope that three meetings have been held during the present Caretaker government. But no progress has been made to this direction. The first meeting was held in April by Dr. Iftekhar Ahmad Chowdhury, Advisor for CHT Affairs Ministry (CHTAM) with four chairmen of CHT Regional Council and three Hill District Councils. In addition, two meetings of Advisory Committee of CHTAM were held by the present Caretaker Government. It is reported that development activities of the CHT, implementation of the CHT Peace Accord and other issues were discussed in these meetings, but no concrete decision has been taken in the meeting.

On the contrary, the Caretaker government curtailed at least one-third budget of CHT Regional Council, an apex body of the special administrative arrangement for CHT. Now CHT Regional Council is facing financial crises to run its activities.

It is also alleged that the military forces are still reluctant to implement the Accord. The military authority continues to be final policy making and law enforcing authority in the CHT like as before during the political government. Anti-Accord attitude of the military forces is the main challenge in implementing the Accord.

By taking the advantage of the state of emergency, the military forces have increased anti-Accord activities, such as, forcible occupation of indigenous Jumma people's land, settlement of Bengali Muslim families to outnumbering indigenous and setting up new camp to support them, strengthening of extreme communal forces through Sama Odhikar Andolan and nomination of them to HDCs, trying to replace Bengali members of CHT Regional Council with extremist leaders of Sama Odhikar Andolan etc.

As part of the strengthening of this organisation, military forces supported to organise district conference of the Sama Odhikar Andolan held on 20 July 2007 at office of the Khagrachari Contractors' Association. Though State of Emergency does not permit to organise such conference, but Sama Odhikar Andolan could easily do it. As per decision, holding of sub-district level conferences and reconstitution of sub-district committee of the Sama Odhikar Andolan are also going on uninterrupted.

On 2 December 2007 Law and Information Advisor of the present Caretaker Government Barrister Mainul Hossain attended the discussion organised by the Sama Odhikar Andolan, in the VIP lounge

of at the National Press Club in Dhaka. He said in this discussion that CHT Peace Treaty of 1997 could be reviewed.

The followers of Abdul Wadud Bhuiyan have also been rehabilitated to Khagrachari Hill District Council (KHDC) nominating them as member of this council in July 2007 by the Caretaker Government. The Chairman of the council, Mr. Manindra Lal Tripura was appointed by Abdul Wadud Bhuiyan during the regime of BNP-led coalition government. He has been kept up as chairman. The Bengali member of the newly constituted KHDC, Md. Abu Bakar Siddique is BNP leader and Sama Odhikar leader as well.

A supporter of Sama Odhikar Andolon Advocate Md. Tajul Islam filed a writ petition (no. 6451/2007) against CHT Peace Accord at High Court on 22 August 2007. It is alleged that DGFI was involved with this motive.

C. Human rights situation during present Caretaker Government

The present military-backed Caretaker Government of Bangladesh of Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed imposes the State of Emergency in the country amid conflict political situation on 12 January 2007. Under the state of emergency, the Joint Forces led by military forces are conducting drive against the corrupt politicians, businessmen and godfathers. As part of this drive, a few godfathers and corrupt leaders of last four-party alliance government have been arrested in CHT. However the military forces have been using the state of emergency with a different motive in case of indigenous peoples in CHT. Basically it has been used to suppress the voice of indigenous Jumma people of CHT.

The military forces are using the emergency rules to unleash sweeping political repression against indigenous Jumma peoples including PCJSS and its front organisations. To materialise their allegation, the government forces have been showing arm recovery from arrestees' possession putting their (army) arm and hence lodging false arm case against them. Since the promulgation of the State of Emergency, at least one innocent villager has been killed and 50 indigenous activists including 20 members of PCJSS (among others, PCJSS general secretary Satyabir Dewan, two central members of PCJSS, headman and UP chairman Ranglai Mro etc) have been arrested by the government forces.

Pressure on indigenous activists by arresting and sending detention of their leaders was not stopped; the government forces are still putting pressure on the indigenous activists who are yet not arrested to give up raising voice against military and Bengali settlers including resignation from their respective organisation.

D. Appeal:

Like widespread corruption, terrorism and abuse of power in Bangladesh, the CHT problem as well as non-implementation of the CHT Peace Accord is also a crucial national problem in the country. For the sake of good governance and rules of law in the CHT, implementation of the CHT Peace Accord is a must. Without proper and speedy implementation of the CHT Peace Accord, a congenial atmosphere for free, fair and impartial election could not be ensured in the region. In order to resolve CHT problem through political and peaceful means and to create a favourable atmosphere for free and fair election, international community should influence present Caretaker Government of Bangladesh and Bangladesh Military Forces to:

- 1) start initiative for speedy implementation of the CHT Accord that paves the way for the peace and development in the region;
- 2) prepare voter list of the region only with the permanent residents of CHT as per CHT Peace Accord and allow to enter international observers in CHT during the preparation of voter lists and election as well;
- 3) stop military atrocity and harassment on the indigenous peoples' activists and withdraw the cases filed against them, and release them immediately;
- 4) stop settlement programme of Bengali settlers and land grabbing and return back them to their cluster villages until and unless land disputes are resolved through land commission.

(2) 22 January 2008: Fresh initiative of district administration to help Bengali settlers to occupy indigenous people's land

District administration of Khagrachhari district has taken fresh initiative to help Bengali settlers in occupying indigenous people's land in Mahalchari upazila (sub-district) under Khagrachhari district. It is reported that on 22 January 2008 Additional District Magistrate (ADM) Mr. Monindra Kishore Majumder issued an order to Mr. Abul Hossain, Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) of Mahalchari upazila to examine documents of the disputed lands and solve the problem soon. It is also reported that Headman of local mouza was also issued a show-cause notice to explain why he did not inform the administration in time when the problem cropped up. In addition, on 21 January 2008 the police of Mahalchari police station filed a case against Mr. Bishwajit Chakma, Chairman of Keyangghat union and five others accusing their alleged involvement in axing trees on lands claimed by Bengali settlers.

It is worth mentioning that there are huge traditionally occupied lands, other than recorded lands of indigenous Jumma people. Traditionally occupied lands do not require having land deed. It is also mentionable that government does not formally recognize the rights of the traditionally occupied lands. Government regards these lands as Khas lands. Indigenous villagers made tree gardens on these recorded and traditionally occupied lands. But the Bengali settlers claimed that these lands were settled to them by the government. Local indigenous public representatives and traditional leaders are of opinion that these settlements were given without taking recommendation of the local headman which is practice in force in CHT. They said that the district administration's order is nothing but helping Bengali settlers to occupy this traditionally occupied land in the name of examination of the disputed lands. It is also reported that the CHT Sama Odhikar Andolon (CHT Equal Rights Movement), an organisation of extreme nationalist and communal forces in CHT, has been supporting Bengali settlers in occupying the indigenous people's land.

On the other, basically public representatives of Chairmen and Members of local unions and traditional leaders of Headmen and Karbaries of local mouzas and villages have been fighting against the land grabbing by Bengali settlers with the direct help of civil and military administration. Local indigenous villagers claimed that the filing case against Mr. Bishwajit Chakma and issuing show-cause notice are also nothing but to suppress their voice.

Local indigenous leaders of Mahalchari upazila have been demanding to resolve land disputes through CHT Land Dispute Resolution Commission as per CHT Accord. But bypassing the demand of Jumma people, the local administration ordered again and again the Jumma people to be presented their land documents. The CHT Accord provides that a Land Commission shall be constituted under the leadership of a retired Justice for settlement of disputes regarding lands and premises and the Commission shall resolve the land disputes in consonance with the law, custom and practice in force in the CHT.

(3) 26 January 2008: Government plans curbs on indigenous people's rights

New Age, Front Page, Dhaka, Saturday, 26 January 2008

Despite repeated pledges to guarantee ethnic minority rights, the military-controlled interim government has taken a move to curb democratic rights of indigenous communities, according to an official document obtained by New Age.

The home ministry in an instruction, issued recently, asked the authorities concerned to prevent intellectuals and eminent personalities from attending functions organised by ethnic minorities which were mainly aimed at drawing the attention of the authorities to the discrimination and negligence they are being subjected to.

The instructions, which came in line with an intelligence agency report, also included lessening coverage of their programmes both on print and electronic media, and monitoring of the movement of a few ethnic minority leaders, including Joytirindra Bodhipriya Larma alias Santu Larma who had led a bush war in the Chittagong Hill Tracts for about two decades until a peace deal was signed in 1997.

The instructions are being carried out by many government departments, according to sources in the administration.

When contacted for comments, the home secretary, Abdul Karim, said he was not aware of such instructions. 'I have to see if there is something like that,' said the home.

It is learnt that a government agency has reported to the high ups that the ethnic minority people have been engaged in propaganda against the interim government aimed at tarnishing the country's image by holding various programmes.

'Necessary measures should be taken so that the editors, left-leaning politicians and eminent personalities do not participate in the programmes,' says the report, submitted to the offices of the president, chief adviser, home ministry, inspector general of police and Dhaka Metropolitan Police commissioner.

It named the persons and quoted their speeches delivered in the programmes, organised by the indigenous community on the occasion of International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples on August 8, 2007.

Bangladesh Adivasi Forum and Bangladesh Adivasi Odhikar Andolan organised several discussion meetings which were attended, among others, by indigenous leaders Santu Larma, Rupayan Dewan, Raja Debashis Roy, Promod Mankin, Rabindra Soren and Sanjib Drong, economist Rehman Sobhan, former bureaucrat Dr Akbar Ali Khan, lawyer Dr Kamal Hossain and Sarah Hossain, politicians Manjurul Ahsan Khan, Rashed Khan Menon, Hasanul Haq Inu, former vice-chancellor Emajuddin Ahmed, retired official Amin Ahmed and Professor Badiul Alam Majumder.

Referring to Santu Larma's speech, the report said he had termed the policymakers of the government communal commenting that their [indigenous people] rights could not be established until a non-communal progressive government was formed.

The report said the adivasi organisations and some 'so-called intellectuals' had demanded that the indigenous people's day should be observed officially.

At one such discussion, Hasanul Haq Inu, Manjurul Ahsan Khan and Rabindra Soren delivered speeches which were 'unwarranted,' the report claimed.

'They are also trying to obtain messages from the president and the chief adviser on the occasion [of indigenous day],' it further says, adding that in the name of observing the day, they are engaged in propaganda against the country.

'They may also give confusing statements highlighting human rights violations by the operations of the army and the army-led joint forces,' the report said, urging the government to take necessary steps so that no 'unlawful' activities could take place through such programmes and addresses during the state of emergency.

The home ministry, citing the reports of the intelligence agency, sent a note to the information ministry on October 11, 2007 to take measures to prevent such activities.

Instructions to take necessary steps were also given to Bangladesh Television, Bangladesh Betar and other institutions concerned to that end.

(4) 5 February 2008: Jumma NGO worker raped by her Bengali colleague in Khagrachari

On 5 February 2008 a indigenous women working with Padakhep Manabik Unnayan Kendra named Ms. Ushanu Marma was raped by her boss Mr. Sultan Mahabub, Area Manager of Khagrachari branch office of Padakhep Manabik Unnayan Kendra.

It is learnt that on that day at 8.00 p.m. Mr. Sultan Mahabub called Ms. Ushanu Marma at Khagrachari area office in the name of official work. At that time, no body was at the office. Whole night the victim was confined at the office and raped by Sultan Mahabub. At a time, victim became senseless. After getting her sense early in the morning, she could not speak at all due to weakness. Durbar Network, a national women network took the case against this barbarous incident.

(5) 6-7 February 2008: CHT Regional Council delegation called on the Finance Advisor and the Special Assistant to CA on CHT Affairs Ministry

A 6-member delegation of CHT Regional Council led by its member Mr. Goutam Kumar Chakma called on the Finance Advisor Mr. A.B. Mirja Azizul Islam and Special Assistant to Chief Advisor on CHT Affairs Ministry Raja Devashis Roy on 06 and 07 February 2008 respectively. The delegation includes members of the CHT Regional Council, namely, Mr. Raktatpal Tripura, Mr. K S Mong, Mr. Nurul Alam, Mr. Mahbubur Rahman and Ms. Unue Prue.

On 6 February 2008 the delegation met to Mr. A.B. Mirja Azizul Islam, Advisor for Finance Ministry of present Caretaker Government at his office. It is learnt that fund allocation for the supplementary budget of the financial year 2007-2008 and the yearly budget of the financial year of 2008-2009 of CHTRC, funding for construction of CHTRC complex and for salaries and allowances for reinstated employees to their previous jobs from among the Returnee PCJSS members and Jumma Refugees etc have been discussed. The Delegation explained that CHTRC Budget was mainly of revenue budget and in the past two years it was cut down extremely for which serious deficit of funds for running the functions of the CHTRC occurred. They further explained that the CHTRC Act of 1998, which was passed by the National Parliament entitled CHTRC to formulate and approve budget for CHTRC and hence any cut down of its budget was not legal as well as logical. The Finance Adviser, in spite of financial restraint, assured of considering the budgets of CHTRC with sympathy

On 07 February 2008 they met to Barrister Raja Devasish Roy, Special Assistant to Chief Advisor on the Ministry CHT Affairs and the Ministry of Forest and Environment at his MoCHTA office. Md. Abdul Sattar, Secretary and other officials were present during the meeting. It is reported that finalisation of the Rules of Business of CHTRC and the Regulation of Privileges for the CHTRC Chairman and Members, funding for construction of CHTRC complex, fund allocation for CHTRC Budgets, Rules of the Employees reinstated to their previous jobs from among the Returnee PCJSS members and Jumma Refugees, amendment of CHT Land Dispute Settlement Commission Act 2001 etc were discussed in the meeting. It is also learnt that the Delegation explained that the Government drafted the Rules of Business of CHTRC in 2001 and the CHTRC placed its recommendations on it and then the MoCHTA finalised the draft in 2002, in consultation with the CHTRC and concerned ministries. Once again it was discussed and almost finalised in 2003-2006. Now the government reviewing it once again could enforce it immediately. The Special Assistant stated to see to the matter as early as possible. With regard to the Regulation of the Privileges for reinstated Employees from among the Refugees and PCJSS members the delegation explained that in a meeting with the government in 2006 both the Finance and Establishment ministries representatives opined that salaries and allowances even for the period of absence in the job could be provided. However, the Special Assistant stated that the matter was to be placed to the Finance Ministry soon for its opinion. The Special Assistant gave assurances of making attempts to have solution at the earliest. A decision was made that an institution, namely, Nursing Training Institute of Rangamati would be transferred to the Rangamati Hill District Council (HDC) within February 2008. In this respect CHTRC Delegation asked the Special Assistant to transfer all other subjects/departments oh the HDCs through issuing Executive orders by the government. The Delegation asked for finalisation of the amendments on the Land Commission Act 2001 and to issue ordinance to enforce it. The Special Assistant would take the matter with the concerned authorities of the Government.

(6) 10 February 2008: Roundtable conference of civil society delegation on CHT visit held

On 10 February 2008 17-member civil society delegation led by Pankaj Bhattachariya, Vice President of Sammilita Samajik Andolon held roundtable conference on their recent visit to Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) at VIP Lounge of National Press club in Dhaka. Former Vice Chancellor of Jahangirnagar University and former Adviser of Caretaker Government Dr. Zillur Rahman Siddiqui presided over the conference. The members of the delegation, civil society members, journalists, university teachers and students, political leaders, NGO and human rights activists, representative from donor agencies were present at the conference.

It is mentionable that the civil society team from Dhaka visited Khagrachari and Rangamati districts of CHT to observe human rights situation in the region from January 28 to 30, 2008. They talked to representatives of indigenous Jumma peoples, Bengali community, religious leaders, civil society members, journalists and local administrations including Chairman and members of the CHT

Regional Council, chairman of Khagrachari Hill District Council, Deputy Commissioners and Khagrachari and Rangamati districts.

In the roundtable conference, Professor Dr. Ajoy Roy, on behalf of the delegation read out a report on experiences of their CHT visit captioned "They (indigenous Jumma people) are also human being, let survive them with their rights" urging "to participate in establishing their glorious rights". In this report they pointed out that an uneasy situation has been prevailing in the hills and it can explode into a volatile state any time unless there is a timely intervention.

Professor Ajoy Roy also said the delegation received a numerous allegations, including intimidation and eviction of indigenous people by Bengali settlers, who in some cases got assistance from the government agencies. But Jumma people want to get back their lands where they have been residing for generations. In the name of taming anti-peace elements, the security forces have heightened their surveillance and expanded their security periphery confiscating lands of the Jumma people, causing a sense of fresh fear among the hill people.

The delegation also mentioned that by taking the advantage of non-implementation of the Accord, government agencies are aiding Bengali settlers to occupy land, identifying them as permanent resident and accordingly providing 'permanent resident certificate' to them. The report also stated that government administration in collaboration with military forces recently resumed Bengali settlement programme in CHT. For this purpose, not only homesteads of the indigenous peoples, Bengali settlers have been occupying the lands of religious institutes including Buddhist temple and meditation centre. The delegation claimed in their report that they also found evidences of political repression, physical torture and religious persecution upon Jumma people and instigation of communal tension by the government agencies etc. The delegation is of the opinion that by resuming Bengali settlement programme, CHT region would be turned into Muslim Bengali-majority region soon. They concern over inclusion of Bengali settlers and Rohingya Muslims in the on-going voter list, as it helped to make majority of Bengali Muslims in the voter list in CHT region. The delegation finally put the following recommendations:

Full implementation of CHT Accord in letter and spirit removing all impediments in implementation to it;

Stopping of the Bengali settlement programme and only inclusion of old Bengali permanent residents in the voter list.

Returning back Jumma-Bengali ratio into 70:30 and for this purpose reallocation of Bengali settlers from CHT region.

Zillur Rahman Siddiqui, in his speech, appreciated the move by the civil society delegation saying it was a timely trip. He called upon the government to consider the demands of the indigenous people to establish peace in the CHT through full implementation of the CHT Accord.

Mr. Pankaj Bhattachariya, eminent columnist Mr. Sayed Abul Maksud, Professor Dr. Rangolal Sen, General Secretary of Jatiya Adivasi Parishad Mr. Rabindranath Saren, General Secretary of Bangladesh Adivasi Forum Mr. Sanjeeb Drong, human rights activist Mr. Numan Ahmed Khan, women rights activist Ms. Chaitali Tripura, development activist Sharif M Kafi and Mr. Soumen Chakma spoke at the conference. Among others, Lt General (retd) Narunnabi attended the conference. The speakers said that the citizen's group should hold dialogue with the government and other political parties to help resolve the CHT problems. Pankaj Bhattacharya said that a vested quarter is engaged in an ill effort to create anarchy in the country and hamper the national elections. He urged the government to look into the issue seriously. He categorically said vested quarters are working with the agenda of Jamaat-e-Islami and fundamentalists in the name of Sama Odhikar Andolon, an extremist organisation of Bengali settlers.

The members of the civil society delegation were:

1. Mr. Pankaj Battachariya, Vice President of Sammilita Samajik Andolon.
2. Professor Dr. Ajoy Roy, Convenor of Sampriti Manch, ex-teacher of Dhaka University
3. Mr. Sayed Abul Moksud, Journalist and columnist

4. Mr. Kamal Lohani, cultural personality,
5. Dr. Rashidi Mahbub, former Vice Chancellor of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Medical University
6. Mr. Belal Ahmed, Secretary General of Bangladesh Solidarity Movement,
7. Dr. Sourab Sikder, teacher of Dhaka University
8. Mr. Robindranath Trivedi, Secretary General of HRCBM-National Chapter-Dhaka
9. Mr. Shahidul Alam, photo journalist and film maker, Drik Gallery
10. Mr. Nazrul Islam Mithu, Reporter, the New Age
11. Ms. Kabita Papri, Reporter, the Daily Ittefaq
12. Mr. Anwar Kabir, Free lance journalist
13. Mr. Firoz Manna, Reporter, the Daily Jonokonto
14. Ms. Smriti Kona Bishwas, NGO Activist
15. Mr. Aungyojai Marma, indigenous rights activist
16. Mr. Thowai Aung Marma, indigenous rights activist
17. Mr. Dipyan Khisa, Editor, Mawrum

(7) 13 February 2008: EU mission talks CHT issues in Rangamati

The Daily Star, Wednesday, 13 February 2008

A eleven-member high profile mission of European Union (EU) now on a three-day tour of CHT visited different areas of Rangamati yesterday and talked to public representatives and officials on different issues.

The mission reached Rangamati on Monday to observe the current situation, implementation of CHT peace accord, voter registration and also to see implementation of different development projects under United Nations Development Programmes (UNDP) in the hills.

The team members at a meeting exchanged opinion with local public representatives, political leaders and officials on CHT issues. It was held at the conference room of CHT Regional Council (CHTRC).

Member of the team are Soven Austborge of Swedish embassy, German ambassador Frank Maik, Denmark ambassador Nathalia Fainburge, Norway ambassador Inzebjorge Stofring, Freize Maijy Dart of Netherlands embassy, British High Commissioner Anwar Chowdhury, EU ambassador Stephen Froin, UNDP resident representative Renetaluk Desalin, EU observer Charlage Eutheli, Febrizo Phensi and UNDP representative in Bangladesh Aothar Dal.

Santu Larma, chairman of CHTRC, chairman in-charge and member of Rangamati Hill District Council Bihari Ranjan Chakma, Deputy Commissioner Md Nurul Amin, CHTRC member Goutam Kumar Chakma, its chief executive officer Sukriti Ranjan Chakma and civil society leaders attended the meeting.

The mission will visit healthcare projects being jointly implemented by Rangamati Hill District Council and UNDP and other projects of UNDP at Suvalong of Barkal upazila today (Wednesday). They will leave Rangamati for Dhaka this evening, sources said.

(8) 14 February 2008: Internally displaced in CHT continue to suffer

New Age, Dhaka, Thursday, 14 February 2008

Barendra Tripura cannot afford the 20-odd-kilometre ride on 'chandergari', ramshackle jeeps turned into public transports that meander through the hilly terrain with more passengers and goods than they ought to carry, to the Massalong bazaar to buy a month's provisions for his family.

Once every month, the 55-year old starts from his house in the remote hills of Rangamati for the bazaar very early in the morning. He walks 40-plus kilometres to the bazaar and back to buy rice, salt, kerosene and vegetables for his four-member family.

On his latest trip to the bazaar, he had Tk 200 to buy provisions for the family, which translates into 83 paisa per person per day. 'I could manage only Tk 200, that too after two months. If I take chandergari, half of it will be spent on the fare,' said Barendra, as he walked through Konglak, a hill

top locality more than 2,200 feet above the sea level, on his way to the Massalong bazaar on February 7. Barendra, who has recently migrated from the Toi Choi mauza to Natunbari High School para (neighbourhood), is one of many internally displaced people in the Chittagong Hill Tracts who have virtually no social and economic security.

Like many others, he was forced to leave his ancestral home in Khagrachari because of the decades-long armed conflict in the hill tracts. Internal displacement in the hill tracts started with the construction of the Kaptai dam and intensified during the armed conflict, which left more than 8,500 people killed.

Forced eviction, atrocities during the conflict between the government and the rebels, confiscation of land to establish military camps, population transfer programme, clashes between Bengali settlers and minority ethnic groups have also compelled many hill people to flee their homesteads.

Repatriation and rehabilitation of refugees was started with the signing of an agreement between the government and the Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samiti, bringing an end to the insurgency in late 1997, paving ways for resettlement of the displaced people.

But the problem remained thanks to inefficacy of two bodies formed to resolve the problems. The task force to rehabilitate the displaced people and the land reforms commission to settle land disputes have never functioned effectively even after 10 years of signing of the deal.

A large number of displaced people still live in reserved forest areas in the deep interior of Rangamati and Khagrachhari. Most of the refugees, repatriated from neighbouring India, live in makeshift camps housed at different government institutions in the districts with little food aid from the government.

There has been no charity for the internally displaced ones. They lack food, water, medical treatment, education, sanitation and other amenities, forcing them to continuous habitat shift from one place to other in search for better livelihood supports. Additionally, they face eviction threat from forest officials on a regular basis.

Neither the district administration nor the taskforce on CHT refugee has correct statistics on the number of displaced people, although the government spends a significant amount of money on the refugees' cause.

In the last 20 years, Tk 1,100 crore was spent from the public exchequer on the refugees, the deputy commissioner of Khagrachari, Shahadat Hossain, said. Asked about the condition of the internally displaced persons, the chairman of the taskforce, Samiran Dewan, told New Age that a list of displaced people was prepared. 'But not all displaced people were accommodated in it.'

The list stirred a controversy as Bengalis from the plains were also included in it, he added. The hill leaders opposed inclusion of Bengalis settlers in the list, almost stalling the rehabilitation process. 'We had a series of dialogues over the matter but failed to come to any conclusion,' Samiran said.

He added that the taskforce is now tasked with distribution of rations among 12,222 families, including 90,208 from indigenous communities. Official estimates say between 500,000 and 550,000 people were displaced due to the conflict.

According to available statistics, some 5,100 people from 1,000 families were repatriated while the internally displaced people could not return to their original villages. 'Dithering by the government has put us on the street. We are not sure whether we'll get back our home and land,' a member of a repatriated family told New Age at Dighinala Upazila headquarters, where several hundred repatriated families took shelter on the premises of different government establishments. He said the administration serve them with eviction notices on a regular basis. 'Where should I go...my land is still occupied by Bengali settlers with the assistance from the administration, why they [Bengali settlers] are not served notices,' the returnee, who was evicted from his home in 1986 in the wake of arson attacks by Bengali settlers.

After the military-controlled interim government came to power, the taskforce chairman claimed that it had rehabilitated 26 refugee families at Dhiginjala.

However, local sources said, these families were not rehabilitated on their land. They were rehabilitated on a highland, not suitable for agricultural production.

(9) 19 February 2008: Conference on 'towards a better understanding of the rights of the indigenous peoples' held in Dhaka

On 19 February 2008 a daylong conference titled "Towards a Better Understanding of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples" was organised by the European Commission, UNDP and Bangladesh Indigenous Peoples Forum at Hotel Westin in Dhaka. Mr. Jyotirindra Bodhipriya Larma, Chairman of CHT Regional Council; Dr. Stefan Frowein, Head of Delegation of the European Commission; Ms Renata Lok-Dessalien, UN Resident Coordinator to Bangladesh and Ms B Tenn Tusar, Ambassador, Royal Netherlands Embassy spoke in the inaugural session while Ms. Rasheda K. Chowdhury, Advisor on Primary and Mass Education, Women and Children Affairs and Cultural Affairs of Caretaker Government delivered closing speech of the conference. Indigenous peoples' rights, European Union and indigenous rights, indigenous language and cultural situation of Bangladesh, realizing indigenous rights in Bangladesh and human rights monitoring in vulnerable areas were discussed in the conference. Personal testimonies on identity, traditions and perceptions of development of Chakma, Garo, Khasi and Santal communities were also presented in the closing session. The conference ended following by an indigenous cultural show.

In the closing session, Advisor of present Caretaker Government on Primary and Mass Education, Women and Children Affairs and Cultural Affairs Ms Raseda K Chowdhury said that government have taken steps for protecting the rights of indigenous peoples. Indigenous women issue would be addressed in the national women policy which is being formulated by the government. She mentioned that ILO 107 Convention which was ratified by the Government of Bangladesh recognised rights to learn primary education in mother tongue. She assured that primary education in mother tongue for indigenous children would be introduced with the initiatives of all sections.

In his speech at the opening session, Chairman of the CHT Regional Council and President of Bangladesh Indigenous Peoples' Forum Mr. Jyotirindra Bodhipriya Larma said that this conference would make a difference in the life of thousands of indigenous peoples and would help government, civil society and majority community to understand indigenous issues, their worldviews, development and rights. Mr. Larma also mentioned that indigenous peoples in the country are vulnerable and at risk facing many problems, as the constitution of Bangladesh did not recognize their identity and rights. Most of them are living on their traditional lands, but the government claimed that those are government land. Regarding development Mr. Larma said that indigenous peoples are under heavy pressure by development projects without their own control. Indigenous peoples are the only beneficiaries and they have no or little voice in decision-making process. Indigenous peoples should have control over their own development. Referring implementation of CHT Accord, he added that from PCJSS side, they fulfilled all the conditions and commitments in time. It is very sad that most of the major articles have not yet been fulfilled by the government. However he hoped that the Caretaker Government would be very sincere to address CHT issues and take proper initiatives to implement the Accord.

On the other, in his opening statement Head of the Delegation of the European Commission to Bangladesh Dr. Stefan Frowein said that the European Union has been a stalwart supporter of indigenous peoples' rights and was instrumental in the developments. He also said that from the EU perspective, this is a particularly opportune moment to throw the spotlight on indigenous peoples' rights, with having been declared the European Year of the Intercultural Dialogue. Appreciating the signs of intensified engagement by the Caretaker Government on this issue and the commitment and drive of H.E. Barrister Devasish Roy as Special Assistant to the Chief Advisor, he said tangible progress could be made in advancing the rights of indigenous peoples during the remaining lifetime of this administration.

UN Resident Coordinator to Bangladesh Ms Renata Lok-Dessalien said that indigenous peoples are marginalised all over globe. She added that this problem should be resolved through political means.

In the plenary session, keynote papers were presented by eminent lawyer Ms. Sara Hossain on the Indigenous Peoples' Rights; delegates of European Commission Mr. Charles White Ley and Mr. Fabrizio Senesi on the European Union and Indigenous Peoples' Rights; teacher of Dhaka University Prof. HKS Arefin and Dr. Sourov Sikdar on Indigenous Language and Cultural Situation of Bangladesh; General Secretary of Bangladesh Adivasi Forum on Realizing Indigenous Rights in Bangladesh and eminent human rights activist and former Advisor of Caretaker Government Ms. Sultana Kamal on Human Rights Monitoring in Vulnerable Areas.

Former Member of Parliament Mr. Abdur Razzak, Mr. Promod Mankhin and Mr. G M Qader, Executive Director of Manuser Jonno Foundation (MJF) Ms. Shaheen Anam, Associate Professor of Dhaka University Mr. Mesbah Kamal, leaders from different indigenous peoples' organizations, representative from Oxfam-GB, Action Aid, BLAST etc. were present and taken part in plenary sessions. Speakers demanded constitutional recognition of indigenous peoples, recognition of their traditional land rights and full and proper implementation of CHT Accord.

Personal testimonies on identity, traditions and perceptions of development of Chakma, Garo, Khasi and Santal communities were also presented in closing session of the conference by Ms. Manila Chakma, Mr. Ajoy Mree, Ms. Flora Bablee Talang and Mr. Rabindranath Soren respectively.

(10) 20 February 2008: Adibashi students demand quota in civil service

The Daily Star, 20 February 2008

Jatiya Adibashi Chhatra Parishad, a forum of indigenous students yesterday formed a human chain at Shaheb Bazar square here demanding preservation of Adibashi quota in Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) examinations.

They protested and condemned what they said an anti-liberation circle's demand for cancellation of quota system. They said the quota system is still necessary for promoting interests of underprivileged people like Adibashis.

They demanded preservation of two seats for Adibashis in every department of Rajshahi University. They also demanded preservation of seats at every public universities and government colleges.

Their other demand included study in primary schools in the mother tongue of Adibashis.

Among others, Rajshahi city unit convenor of Jatiya Adibashi Chhatra Parishad Harendranath Singh, joint convenor Nabadip Kumar, Manik Saren, Adibashi students Bonnya Kujur, Subash Hembrom, Jiban Mahato and Luice Tudu participated and addressed.

(11) 23 February 2008: No end to CHT land disputes as commission limps

New Age, Dhaka, Saturday, 23 February 2008

Settlement of land disputes in the Chittagong Hill Tracts has remained elusive due to dormant state of a commission, formed to settle such issues, ever since it came into being some nine years ago and unwillingness of successive governments to remove discrepancies in the relevant law.

The commission held only one meeting in nine years, yielding no results although its two successive chairmen passed away while the other resigned on health ground since its formation in June, 1999.

There has hardly been any official move to reconstitute the commission since its last chairman died in December, 2007. Meanwhile disputes over land ownership have been mounting in Rangamati, Khagrachari and Bandarban hill districts where land management follows mainly traditional and customary laws for indigenous people.

When contacted, the special assistant to the chief adviser on CHT affairs ministry, Raja Debashis Roy, skipped a question on the issue saying he would not be in town until late this month. A senior official at the chief adviser's office said he had no information about it. The chief adviser, Fakhruddin Ahmed, is in charge of the ministry.

The jumma representatives put notes of reservations pointing out inconsistencies between the 1997 peace treaty and the Land (Disputes Settlement) Commission Act, passed hurriedly by the Awami League government the day before it handed over power to an interim administration in 2001.

Their demand for making the commission operational by amending the law remained shelved although the immediate-past Bangladesh Nationalist Party-led alliance government, which was initially antagonistic to the peace deal, endorsed an 18-point recommendation made by the CHT regional council.

Two decades of bush war in CHT had forced tens of thousands of indigenous people to leave their homes and take shelter at safer places, including neighbouring India, and taking the advantage, land grabbers, including settlers, moved in to occupy their lands.

The bush war ended with the signing of a peace treaty between the government and the Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity, and the displaced people returned to the CHT, but most of them are yet to get their lands back.

The problem has intensified with the passage of time, according to the highlanders, with influx of people regularly from the plains.

'The settlers took advantage of the dormant state of the land commission,' said a report published by a citizen's group which visited the CHT, home to 11 ethnic minority groups.

The government constituted the land commission and appointed Anwarul Haque Chowdhury, a retired judge of the Supreme Court, its chairman on June 3, 1999. The chairman died six months after taking over the charge. His successor Abdul Karim, also a retired justice, was appointed on April 5, 2000, and resigned from the position on health ground after paying a visit to the commission office in Khagrachari.

After the position remained vacant for a long time, the BNP-led alliance government appointed Justice AM Mahmudur Rahman on November 29, 2001. Rahman passed away on December 1, 2007, and the position has been vacant since then.

The commission had held its only meeting on June 8, 2005, six years after its formation, in which Rahman introduced its members over a luncheon at Khagrachari Circuit House.

It did not help resolve in any way the land disputes that led to other complications in the hill districts, which account for one-tenth of the country's total territory, inhabited mainly by indigenous people.

No land survey for CHT has been conducted as yet.

The 1997 peace treaty stipulated formation of the commission in order to resolve the growing land disputes between the settlers and the displaced indigenous people.

The commission comprises a retired judge as its head while chairman of the CHT regional council or his representative, the chairmen of three hill district councils, the circle chiefs and the divisional commissioner or his representatives are the members, according to the provisions of the law.

Formed on June 3, 1999, the commission failed to conduct any meeting until a parliamentary committee raised question in April, 2005 about it.

It had asked the government to make the commission functional. The commission has full power to cancel ownership of lands and hills if proved to have been occupied illegally.

The commission then organised its maiden and only meeting on June 2005, stressing the need for amendment to the law.

'There are some clauses in the law which need to be amended to make the commission operational', said the chief of the CHT regional council, Jyotirindra Bodhipriya Larma, widely known as Santu Larma who blamed the then government for encouraging tens of thousands of people from the plains to settle in the hilly districts in 1979.

Such settlers were given controversial land-lease contracts making the indigenous people's position vulnerable, Santu, also the chairman of the JSS, told New Age.

Referring to the post-treaty law enacted to settle the disputes, another JSS leader pointed out that a number of clauses in the Land (Dispute Settlement) Commission Act were contradictory to the treaty signed between the government and the JSS.

The discrepancies include definition of refugees (inclusion of Bengali settlers as refugees), ignoring traditional land laws, custom and practices, distribution of fringe land on the Kaptai dam, and the chairman's unilateral power to make decision on any contentious issues that might be raised in its meeting.

'The chairman of the commission has been given dictatorial power', said Rupayan Dewan, a central committee member of the JSS, adding that the commission could not be made functional unless the inconsistencies go.

The regional council and the BNP government after a few rounds of meetings had concluded that the law would be amended. But the matter still remains pending causing great uncertainties over settlement of land disputes in the CHT.

(12) 29 February 2008: Government should immediately initiate relief operations in CHT

New Age, Dhaka, Friday, Editorial, 29 February 2008

We are appalled by the military-driven interim government's apparent apathy to the plight of thousands of families in the Chittagong Hill Tracts who have been enduring a famine-like situation as a result of the destruction of crops on large areas of land by vermin. According to a New Age report published Thursday, the flowering of bamboo plants, which, according to local people, occurs every 50 or so years, has led to a sudden surge in the rat population, which in turn has resulted in the destruction of crops on vast areas of land, leaving some 7,000 families severely affected. However, this catastrophe was not suddenly uncovered. Locals had long ago warned the authorities that the flowering of bamboo plants would invariably lead to an explosion in the number of rats, as is evidently always the case, and ultimately cause the destruction of crops. However, it is obvious that the locals were not taken seriously by the authorities or by agricultural experts, who in their manifest pomposity and arrogance chose not to pay heed to conventional wisdom and local knowledge that is passed down through the generations. Even when New Age reported the onslaught of rats in the CHT and warned that starvation of a large population was imminent because of crop destruction over three weeks ago, the authorities did not take any steps to mitigate the damage.

Now that a full-blown tragedy has started unfolding in earnest, the government has finally awoken from its slumber and has reportedly directed field-level administration to send detailed situations reports from the affected areas. However, this once again reflects the government's ineptitude and ineffectiveness. At a time when international donors and foreign agencies like the United Nations Development Programme have already taken stock of the situation and decided to provide emergency food aid to the 7,000 severely affected families, our own government, instead of trying to make up for the lost time by immediately commencing emergency relief efforts, is still waiting for field reports as if time is on its side. We find the lack of appropriate action by this regime absolutely unacceptable and urge it to expedite the process of providing necessary aid to the affected people of the hill districts. If it fails to do so, it will only contribute to a far greater calamity, the consequences of which could be horrific.

(13) 2 March 2008: Rohingya refugees

The Daily Star, Sunday, 2 March 2008

The Rohingya refugee problem in Bangladesh has been a long pending one. It is now 17 years that they have been in Bangladesh without proper international attention.

Following the latest influx during 1991-92, Rohingyas took refuge in Bangladesh. Then about 258,000 Rohingyas were registered by the government of Bangladesh and granted refugee status through an executive order, however, without any proper legal sanction. In addition to that thousands of Rohingyas arrived here and mixed with local population over the years.

Some estimates suggest that there are about 300,000 nationals of Myanmar (mostly Rohingyas) outside the official camps who are 'illegally' staying in the Cox's Bazar, Bandarban and Chittagong districts.

The UN refugee agency, the UNHCR, which is mostly responsible for lingering the problem, came into operation here in 1992.

There are now some 26,000 plus refugees in two official camps in Cox's Bazar. The government of Bangladesh manages these camps with assistance from the UNHCR and other donors.

According to an official record of the government and the UNHCR, so far about 237,000 refugees have returned to Myanmar.

However, local people believe the opposite: almost all of the so-called repatriated Rohingyas came back to Bangladesh later on and continued to live here and there in greater Chittagong district and far away to greater Barisal district. Birth rates among those Rohingyas, whether in the camps or outside, are reportedly very high. The UNHCR and relevant UN agencies are ignorant on this issue.

The Rohingyas are an ethnic group from the Northern Rakhine State (formerly Arakan State) of Myanmar. They are persecuted in their home country, Myanmar. Out of about 2.5 million Rohingyas, two million are reportedly now out of the country of their origin. They are in Bangladesh, Malaysia, Pakistan, India, Thailand, the USA and in different Middle Eastern and European countries.

It is very unfortunate that the international community including the UN agencies and countries like the USA, UK, China, Thailand and India have failed to perform their due role with regard to restoration of democracy and human rights in Myanmar. These countries have their respective business and other interests with the present military regime of Myanmar.

Given the scenario of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, there has been no repatriation since 2006. In 2005, only 92 persons went back. On the other hand, there is a move to make the problem linger. Some vested and interested groups including some religion-based local political parties and international agencies are behind this. They are reportedly negotiating with the government of Bangladesh for an arrangement to have permanent shelter for the remaining Rohingya refugees here. (If it were granted it would be an added burden to a poor country like ours indeed. This will encourage others to come to Bangladesh).

It is learnt that the UNHCR authority is expecting the present caretaker government to execute their plan : to have local integration (e.g. naturalization) for the remaining camp refugees. They are also planning to pressurize the government to open up the two-refugee camps, so that the refugee population could mix with local population.

In the mean time, a group of nearly 10,000 'unregistered' Rohingyas have been provided shelter by the government on the reserved land of the forest department. Now, some so-called development partners (in fact, they do consider themselves as colonial masters) have reportedly been pressurizing the government for refugee status for those groups.

The people and the government of Bangladesh, which has been extending shelter generously to the Rohingyas for a long time, should be vocal now against any proposal for having permanent shelter for them in Bangladesh. The political parties should also take up the issue for the interest of the country.

The government should extensively talk with its Myanmar counterpart for taking back the remaining Rohingyas now staying here in Bangladesh recognised as refugees or staying here illegally.

The developed countries should come forward as well in this regard without any vested interest and share the burden through resettling a significant portion of the remaining refugees in their respective countries, if they really have any concern about the Rohingyas.

(14) 2 March 2008: 20 acre lands of tribesmen grabbed in Khagrachhari

The Daily Star, Sunday, 2 March 2008

Aminul Haque's two sons are leaders of BNP fronts-- Jubo Dal and Chhata Dal. He allegedly grabbed about 20 acre lands of indigenous people in Ganjapara union in Khagrachhari during the past alliance government.

Aminul is a resident of Mohazonpara Narikel Bagun area in the Sadar upazila. His son Bahadur Alam alias Bahar is Khagrachhari Jubo Dal vice-president and the other-- Shahidul Hoque is a cadre of district Chatra Dal, the victims said.

The lands grabbed by Aminul Haque earlier belonged to some 10 indigenous families in Ganjapara, according to Golabari Union Parishad Chairman Chaila Prue Marma and some other sources.

While talking to this correspondent, some of the victims complained that Aminul grabbed most of the lands by using political clout during the rule of four-party alliance government. They were helpless as sections of unscrupulous officials and political leaders connived with the land grabber who also threatened of muscle power, they said.

They said they went to authorities concerned for legal action but they were 'harassed by some officials and local political leaders', they claimed.

"I went to the court of First Class Magistrate on August 8 last year to seek legal action. The then magistrate ordered police to investigate the matters and record a case", Golabari UP Chairman Chailapru Marma told this correspondent yesterday. "But have not yet investigated the matter, let alone filing of case", he said.

Sub-Inspector Rafiq, who was asked to probe the allegations have done nothing so far, he said. "Rather, he has very good relations with the grabber", Chailapru Marma said. He said he also submitted a complaint to joint forces in December last year to take steps for return of the grabbed lands.

Chaindi Aung Marma, 61, of Ganjapara area alleged that Haque grabbed about two acre lands of her family by making fake document. "He (Haque) leased the land for two years for a brick field from my brother Mrasathowai Marma. After my brother died, he declined to return the land, saying my brother sold the land", she said. Chaindi filed a case with the civil judge's court.

Anil Chakma of Perachhara Darmapur area claimed that Haque grabbed about one acre of his land. He moved police stations but to no effect, he claimed.

The victims also include Satho Aung Marma, Neeaug Marma and Lali Marma alais Lal Buri, who alleged that Haque grabbed about 10 acres of their land by using the then ruling party cadres and forged documents. Some Bangalee people also alleged that was tried to grab their lands.

The victims alleged that Haque enjoyed the blessings of Khagrachhari municipality chairman and district BNP secretary Joynal Abedin, among others. Joynal Abedin, a close aide to former lawmaker Wadud Bhuiyan, is also advisor to the Parbattya Chattagram Samo Adhiker Andolon (PCSAA), a forum of Bangla speaking people in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT).

While contacted, Hoque said he has all legal documents on the lands but he could not show any paper. He however admitted that he is facing some cases regarding land.

Assistant Police Superintendent (ASP) Mohammad Tareq Ahmed, when contacted, said police has nothing to do till case is filed. He however said he will look into the matter.

When contacted, Joynal Abedin denied his involvement with Haque in land grabbing.

(15) 5 March 2008: Indigenous girl raped by Bengali teachers in Rangamati, CHT

On 5 March 2008 a 16-year old indigenous girl was raped by two Bengali teachers who are in training at Primary Training Institute (PTI) in Rangamati. The teachers were arrested by the police. A rape case was lodged with Kotowali police station.

It is reported that at 3.30 p.m. on that day the two girls, namely Rupa Chakma (16) d/o Madhabi Chakma from Khagrachari and Sumita Chakma (15) d/o Samaresh Chakma from Dighinala went to

the roof of teacher hostel of PTI to collect jackfruit. At that time, the two teachers namely Mr. Tisu Kanti Nath of Uttar Hatimara Government Primary School in Naniarchar upazila and Mr. Al Masud, teacher of Baghaichari Model Government Primary School in Baghaichari upazila tried first to take the girls to their room by coaxing, but their attempt was failed. In the meantime, they turned out children who accompanied the girls from the hostel. Later the two teachers took the girls forcibly to their two separate rooms. Tisu Kanti Nath raped Rupa Chakma while Al Masud failed as the guardians rushed there to rescue them. The raped girl was admitted to Rangamati general hospital. One adolescent girl Kajal Chakma who accompanied the girls said that after turning out them from the teacher hostel, the cook of the hostel Md. Tajuddin locked up the gate of the hostel. The activists of the 'Committee on Protect of Violence Against Women' rushed at the hospital.

(16) 17 March 2008: Hill people fear food crisis as bamboo clusters flowering

Locals in Khagrachhari say the 'ominous sign' will cause massive rat invasion

The Daily Star, Monday, 17 March 2008

Bamboo clusters in Khagrachhari are flowering and fruiting in a massive scale, giving an ominous sign of food crisis in the hills. Elders said flowering and fruiting of bamboo takes place at an interval of 40 to 50 years. The fruits draw rats in a massive scale, which also eat up rice and other food crops. Locals call it idur banya (invasion by rats), which also cause other calamities. After fruiting, the bamboos wither away. Once it appears, the menace normally persists for three years, the elders said.

Bamboo clusters in about 45 villages in eight upazilas have been affected with the natural phenomenon, according to forest officials and locals. Of these, 15 villages are in Dighinala, 10 in Laxmichhari, 5 in Matiranga, 10 in Mohalchhari and five in remote Panchhari upazila. Two-thirds of bamboos grown in Khagrachhari are in Dighinala, Mohalchhari, Panchhari, Laxmichhari and Matiranga upazilas. If withering of bamboo forests continues, supplies to Karnaphuli Paper Mill (KPM) may be affected, KPM sources told this correspondent.

This correspondent visited Semina Para, Kalidaskarbari Para, Kongchairi Para and Panchhari in Dudukchhari; and Kestamoni Para, Durgamoni Para, Haduk Para and Headman Para, Juniara, Alutilla, Gugrachhari, Buyachhari, Bichitala, Doilla, Shantipur and Datkappa villages in other upazilas where bamboos are dying after flowering and fruiting.

Chailaprue Marma, chairman of Golabari Union Parishad (UP), said he will send a letter to higher authorities seeking food assistance for people and steps to protect bamboo forests.

Kamalchhari UP chairman Sa-U-Prue Marma said bamboo is the main source of livelihood for most indigenous people in remote hills. About 7000 families in his union may face food crisis.

Babuchhara UP chairman Paritosh Chakma said many people died in Mizoram of India in 1959 due to food crisis after flowering of bamboos.

An official of KPM seeking anonymity said he heard about flowering of bamboos in Khagrachhari and other remote areas of Rangamati. KPM may face crisis of raw materials of bamboo clusters wither away.

Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Mohammad Ali Kabir said this is a natural phenomenon. A proposal has been given to the forest department to take immediate steps to preserve the dying bamboo clusters, he said.

Biddya Binod Chakma, a Karbari (village chiefs) from remote Maidda Karallachhari village in Mohalchhari upazila said people killed a large number of rats in the area as they destroy jumm paddy.

Quoting indigenous jhum farmers, sources claimed that around two-thirds of paddy has been eaten up by rats in hilly terrains of Rangamati and Bandarban. The remote hilly areas are not covered under development programmes of government or NGO, sources said.

Dr. Habibur Rahman, associate professor of Botany at Matiranga Degree College, said bamboo clusters die and disappear whenever they bear flowers and fruits. This happens at an interval of 25 to 40 years. Such phenomenon occurred in 1943 and in 1980 in CHT, he said.

Deputy director of district Agriculture Extension Department (DAE), TMMonzurul Islam, said upazila agriculture officers will be sent to affected areas to estimate the crop damage.

When contacted, Khagrachhari Hill District Council chairman Monindra Lal Tripura said, "We are thinking to launch a package programme from the district council fund for the affected people".

(17) 27 March 2008: Opinion-exchange meeting held by Chief Advisor in Rangamati

CHT accord is to uphold hill people's rights and signed in full accordance with country's sovereignty, says Chief Advisor

On 27 March 2008 an opinion-exchange meeting was held by Chief Advisor of Caretaker Government Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed with the government officials and people of different professional groups of the region at Rangamati Tribal Cultural Institute auditorium in Rangamati. Mr. Nurul Amin, Deputy Commissioner of Rangamati district presided over the meeting. Chairman of the CHT Regional Council Mr. Jyotirindra Bodhipriya Larma alias Santu Larma, Chief of Army Staff General Moeen U Ahmed and General Officer Commanding of 24 Infantry Division Major General Mohammad Abdul Mobin were present at the meeting. Divisional Commissioner of Chittagong division Mr. Hossain Zamil delivered welcome speech in the meeting.

Among others, Special Assistant to the Chief Adviser on Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) affairs and Forest and Environment affairs Raja Devashish Roy, Chairman of Rangamati Hill District Council (HDC) Mr. Jagat Jyoti Chakma, Chairman of Bandarban HDC Prof. Thanzama Lusai, Chairman of Khagrachari HDC Mr. Manindra Lal Tripura, President of Rangamati Headmen Association Mr. Binoy Kumar Dewan, Member of CHT Regional Council Mr. K S Mong, Member of Advisory Committee of CHT Affairs Ministry Md. Nurunnabi Chowdhury, leader of permanent Bengali resident Mr. Kazi Nazarul Islam, women rights activist Ms. Indrani Chakma, women entrepreneur Ms. Shefali Chakma, journalist Osman Goni spoke in the meeting. Besides, women rights activist Ms. Donai Prue Nelly, development activist Mr. Mongthowai Marma, former district education officer Mr. Anjulika Khisa, advocate Mostafa Kamal, among others, took part in the exchange of opinions during open discussion.

In his initial speech in the opinion-exchange meeting, Chief Adviser Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed said that CHT Accord of 1997 was signed in full accordance with the country's sovereignty and integrity and for upholding the political, social, cultural, educational and economic rights of the peoples living in the hilly region. He also added that in conformity with the Accord, some government steps have already been taken and the process is on.

He said the CHT Regional Council, three Hill District Councils (HDCs) and the Land Commission have been formed through formulating appropriate laws. Of them, the Regional Council and the three HDCs are carrying on with their activities, and the HDCs are gradually turning into central points of development of the hill districts. He also said that many transferable matters have been given to the HDCs and the process of transferring six more affairs is being expedited.

About land-related problems in CHT, he said due to various problems and limitations, the Land Commission has not so far been able to work properly. The post of Chairman of the Land Commission fell vacant recently and the government is going to fill the vacancy soon. The government would take effective measures to recast the Land Commission to make it functional. He urged all have to work unitedly on the basis of mutual trust and confidence regarding land-related matters.

He said that as per the Accord, 65,000 repatriated refugees were rehabilitated under the agreed 20-point package facilities and other financial facilities. Task Force on rehabilitation of returnee refugees and internally displaced persons was formed in order to rehabilitate them.

Referring to various measures for the development of the CHT, he said the amount of annual allocation for the CHT has been increased after the CHT Accord. TK 2600 millions of Annual Development Programme (ADP) have been allotted for current fiscal year. He mentioned various development projects of the development partners for the development of this region, including the schemes undertaken by ADB, UNDP and UNICEF. He, however, said all had to be careful so that

duplication did not take place in the development works of the government and NGOs to avoid misuse of resources.

On education, he stressed the need for establishing boarding schools at a greater rate in the hilly region to spread education and increase the literacy rate.

Referring to the recent infestation of rats in some upazilas of Rangamati and Bandarban, he assured the affected people of government steps to compensate them.

He put emphasis on further expansion of solar electricity in the CHT region. In this regard, the CA mentioned activities of the state-owned Infrastructure Development Company's project work in remote hilly areas for providing solar electricity.

On tourism, he said it is possible to build world-class tourist centres in the panoramic CHT region. He said the government would take all possible measures for the development of tourism in this area and ask the tourism ministry to soon prepare a comprehensive report consulting private sector in this regard.

On food-processing industry, he said the government would take all possible steps to create a favourable environment so that the private sector can come forward to invest in this sector.

Dr. Fakhruddin announced the following government decisions at an opinion-exchange meeting-

- a) introduction of mobile phone network in CHT, primarily in the three municipalities of Rangamati, Khagrachari and Bandarban. Setting up digital telephone exchanges in upazilas of the three hill districts would be considered provided availability of resources.
- b) within next month, a final decision on manpower would be taken for establishing three judge courts in the three hill district headquarters.
- c) to increase the allowance of indigenous headmen.

He said objective of the present government was to ensure socioeconomic and cultural progress of the CHT people, who need to maintain peace and discipline. He observed that the unfortunate situation that was created in the CHT in the past was overcome to a large extent today. He noted that all people of this region irrespective of ethnicity, language and culture and religious beliefs are citizens of Bangladesh. He said that present government wanted to create such an environment wherein all people would contribute to the advancement of the country by maintaining cordial relations, mutual trust and confidence. He sought cooperation from indigenous hill peoples and Bengali peoples of the region to make a success the transition to democracy through holding free, fair and neutral election next December to build a corruption-free prosperous and enlightened Bangladesh.

After closing the meeting, Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed visited Rangamati Raj Bana Bihara (Buddhist temple) and called on Venerable Sadhananda Mahastabir alias Banabhante. He later left Rangamati in the afternoon for Bandarban where he stayed overnight and visited some indigenous villages this morning before return to Dhaka.

It is observed by the Kapaeng Watch that during his first visit to CHT region since his assumption of office, the head of the Caretaker Government Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed showed positive attitude to the CHT issues in his speech. However, it is also observed that he did not mention even single word on the burning issues of CHT, such as, withdrawal of temporary camps and de facto military rule 'Operation Uttoron' as per CHT Accord, Bengali settlers' issue and continuous land grabbing by the Bengali settlers, fresh settlement programme of Bengali settler families even during his period, preparation of voter list only with permanent residents of CHT as per CHT Accord, appointment of Chairman of CHT Development Board among from indigenous community and bringing it under overall supervision of CHT Regional Council as per CHT Accord etc. In other word, he indirectly supported to the ongoing land grabbing by the Bengali settlers in his speech by urging "to work unitedly on the basis of mutual trust and confidence regarding land-related matters". Even he did not clearly mention whether his government would undertake immediate initiative to amend the controversial provisions of the CHT Land Dispute Settlement Commission Act 2001. It is also worth mentioning that he used the derogatory term 'tribe/tribal' rather than 'indigenous people'.

It is reported that in organizing the opinion-exchange meeting, the government authority did not involve key institutions of the special administration system of CHT, namely, CHT Regional Council and three HDCs. The Chairmen and Members of these councils were invited as guest, but not host. It is one of the dishonor attitudes to the CHT institutions by the government.

(18) 31 March 2008: Roundtable Discussion on "Land Disputes in the CHT: Ways to Settling the Issue" held in Dhaka

A roundtable discussion titled "Land Disputes in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT): Ways to Settling the Issue" was organized by the eminent citizens on 31 March 2008 at WVA Auditorium in Dhaka. Former Vice Chancellor of Jahangirnagar University Zillur Rahman Siddiqui presided over the discussion while Prof Ajoy Roy of Dhaka University presented the keynote paper in the discussion. The discussion was attended by Dr. AMM Shawkat Ali, Adviser to the Caretaker Government of Bangladesh on Food and Disaster Management as Chief Guest and Chakma Circle Chief Barrister Raja Devasish Roy, Special Assistant to the Chief Adviser of the Caretaker Government in charge of the Ministry of CHT Affairs and the Ministry of Environment and Forest as Special Guest.

Among the eminent citizens and representatives from different social strata Former Adviser to the Caretaker Government Advocate Sultana Kamal, eminent economist Dr. Abul Barkat, Executive Director of ALRD Mr. Shamsul Huda, eminent lawyer of Bangladesh Supreme Court Barrister Sarah Hossain, Vice President of Sammilita Samajik Andolon Mr. Pankaj Bhattachariya, Chairperson of Community Development Library (CDL) Mr. Mohiuddin Ahmed, General Secretary of Bangladesh Adivasi Forum Mr. Sanjeeb Drong, Professor of Dhaka University Dr. Sourav Sikdar, General Secretary of Jatiya Adivasi Parishad Mr. Rabindranath Soren, Senior Reporter of the Daily Ittefaq Ms. Kabita Papri, and eminent columnist and researcher Mr. Syed Abul Maksud also spoke on the occasion.

Chief Guest of the discussion **Dr. AMM Shawkat Ali** reaffirmed that the present caretaker government would soon reconstitute the CHT Land Commission to settle the longstanding land disputes between indigenous communities and Bengali settlers in the region. He said that the government would appoint a new chairman to the Land Commission and was also planning to appoint two fulltime members to facilitate the works of the commission. He also added that the present government will finish reorganising the Land Commission so that the next government can take it forward. He said that a durable solution to land disputes is a precondition for enduring peace in the region.

He said the government would investigate why lands in the CHT area have been handed over to Bengali settlers despite the ban on reallocation of all lands there. He also emphasized on the need of a population census specifically for the indigenous people of the country. Dr. Ali suggested the organizers of the discussion, discussants and other well wishers of the indigenous people to prioritize the recommendations of the discussion to submit to the Government so that the Government could implement those on priority basis.

Special guest of the discussion **Barrister Raja Devashish Roy** said that there is no recognized special policy on CHT affairs. No Ministry including the Ministry of CHT Affairs and the Ministry of Land has any plan or policy to bring demographic change or start land reallocations in CHT. The previous land allocations to the Bengali settlers in CHT including unlawful allocation to non-resident powerful elites should be reviewed under existing laws.

He said that the government has decided to activate a commission about a decade after its formation to settle the longstanding disputes over land ownership in CHT. The government has initiated the process to amend few provisions of the Land (Disputes Settlement) Commission Act and reconstitute the commission for speedy disposal of disputes. Terming the "supreme power" of the chairman of the CHT Land Commission unconstitutional, he said the chairman is the main obstacle to settling the land disputes in CHT areas. He said that the differences of opinions between the Ministry of Law and the Regional Council concerning the absolute authority of the Commission's Chairman in settling land disputes and some other clauses of the Commission Act would be mitigated in consultation with the

Regional Council so that the Land Commission starts its activities during the tenure of this present Caretaker Government.

In his keynote presentation, **Dr. Ajoy Roy** elaborately shared the experiences of 17-member civil society delegation from Dhaka visited Khagrachari and Rangamati districts of CHT to observe land disputes and human rights situation in the region from 28-30 January 2008. Describing the historical background and processes of marginalization of the indigenous ethnic communities and the state hegemony being practiced in CHT so far Dr. Roy drew the attention of country's citizens towards overall helplessness/subjugation of the indigenous people in CHT due to covert military rule and demographic and cultural aggression that have been intensified since emergence of the country. The sense of helplessness among the indigenous people deepened further due to recent move by the administration to settle Bengali settlers in different areas inhabited by the hill people.

Taking part in the discussion, former adviser to a caretaker government **Advocate Sultana Kamal** said the government must look into the problems of CHT areas with a humanitarian perspective. She said strong political will and pledges coupled with united effort are required to settle the land and other disputes in the CHT areas. She said the political government must take steps on humanitarian grounds to end the disputes that lasted for decades.

Vice President of Sammilita Samajik Andolon and also leader of Gono Forum **Mr. Pankaj Bhattacharya** suggested holding broader dialogues between the government and the civil society in this regard.

Economist **Prof Abul Barakat** held previous governments responsible for patronizing land grabbers. He said no government took any initiative to recognize the indigenous communities. He said 30 years ago 75 percent of the people in CHT areas were indigenous people but currently the percentage stands at 47, complicating the issue. He suggested that the government should rehabilitate the Bengali settlers on government lands outside CHT areas. He said political will is required to settle the land disputes. He urged the government not to include any people from the anti-liberation war force in the land commission.

Eminent columnist and journalist **Syed Abul Maksud** demanded forming a high-powered commission to settle the land disputes in CHT areas.

Chair of the discussion **Professor Zillur Rahman Siddiqui** said in his closing speech that the entire nation in general and the civil society in particular would remain indebted and guilty so long if they did not provide constitutional recognition and safeguard to the indigenous peoples of the country. The present Caretaker Government should make strong and specific commitment in this regard including just and peaceful solution to the CHT problem by ensuring rights of the indigenous people including their land rights. The civil society should play effective role in realizing the commitments from the Government. He said settling the longstanding land dispute in CHT areas is must. As a nation, the mainstream people would be blamed if they did not ensure indigenous communities' birth rights and if they failed to force the government to implement it. He urged the government to sit with major political parties and have their pledges in this regard.

Recommendations of the discussion

The following recommendations made by the distinguished discussants in their valuable discussion are as follows:

- 1) The Land Commission must be made functional immediately under the leadership of a non-communal, non-fanatic; neutral and enlightened personality of the country and the Commission must recognize the customary and community land rights of the hill people.
- 2) The Government and the civil society must uphold, protect and promote ethnic and cultural diversity of the country.
- 3) The organizers of the discussion and other well wishers of the CHT indigenous people should initiate dialogue with the military authority with an aim to motivate them towards a righteous and peaceful solution to the CHT problem.

- 4) The denigrating use of the word 'Upajati' (tribe) against the indigenous people by the Government and others must be prohibited and 'Adivasi' should be used instead of that word.
- 5) Land based rehabilitation of the Bengali settlers must be stopped in CHT and other regions of the country inhabited by the indigenous people.
- 6) Knowledge based movements and lobbying at civil society, Government and other policy levels must be continued for realizing the rights of the hill people and implementation of the CHT Peace Accord.
- 7) Full implementation of the CHT Peace Accord must be made in letter and spirit.
- 8) The Bengali settlers must be withdrawn from CHT to make the entire nation free from the sin it committed by subjugating the indigenous people for ages.
- 9) No ethnic cleansing could be proved worthy for the nation including those of Bosnia, Palestine and so on. Same theory and treatment in CHT may rather threaten the sovereignty of the country and also hinder the upcoming national election. Hence, the present attitude and policy towards CHT must be changed.
- 10) The lands, hills, gardens, farm houses, forests etc. acquired by the ministers, bureaucrats, military officials, businessmen and other powerful elites from the plain districts must be cancelled immediately.
- 11) The commitment for solving CHT problem by delivering rights of the indigenous people must be realized from the political parties before the upcoming election.
- 12) The state and people must uphold respect to the languages, customs, cultures and ethnic diversity of the indigenous peoples in the country.
- 13) Government must undertake a population census specifically for the indigenous people in CHT and other regions of the country. Inertia by the Government and policymakers in this regard is ill-motivated and unacceptable.
- 14) Islamization in CHT must be prevented and humanism must be instilled in politics including the policies related CHT.
- 15) Government and other policymakers must show strong political will and commitment for implementation of CHT Peace Accord and ensuring rights of the indigenous peoples in line with the international covenants and conventions ratified by the Government so far.
- 16) The ongoing harassments of the indigenous people in plain lands relating to admission in educational institutions, obtaining certificates from the local administration etc. must be restrained. A separate Land Commission should be constituted for the plain land indigenous peoples.
- 17) Government and other actors must take effective measures immediately to stop violation of indigenous peoples' human rights in CHT and other regions relating to land disputes, racism, communalism, administrative favoritism and all forms of disparities perpetrated by administration and mainstream Bengali people.

(19) 3 April 2008: Loss of crops due to Rat Invasion: 50pc people in Rangamati out of food security

RHDC, UNDP to conduct survey of affected people

The Daily Star, Thursday, 3 April 2008

"Only God knows what we will eat after a week. The Tk 1000 given by the government will provide for only seven days' food," said Samor Singh Chakma, an indigenous farmer while receiving the relief money at Thegamukh, a frontier village in Barkal upazila in Tangamati district. "We have nothing to survive as most of the crops including paddy have been eaten up by rats this year", he said.

The government relief is too scanty as there will not be any food crop in the hills in coming months, said Gayana Ranjan Chakma and Bhottya Chakma. They are a few of the scores of victims of the rat invasion in Barkal and other areas in Rangamati and two other hill districts. The loss of crops to rat invasion followed a massive flowering and fruiting of bamboo clusters this year.

The CHT affairs ministry has allocated Tk 7 lakh to face the food crisis in Rangamati. Of the amount, Tk 5 lakh were distributed by Rangamati Hill District Council (RHDC) to 453 families in Hupbang, Thegamukh and Kukichhara in Borahorina union. The rest Tk 2 lakh has been allocated for affected people in Sazek union in Baghaichhari.

Each affected family got Tk 1,000. RHDC chairman Jagat Jyoti Chakma, its member Bihari Ranjan Chakma, along with local Union Parishad (UP) chairmen and members and law enforcers distributed the relief in last few days. Many affected families are still out of relief programmes in different areas.

Sources said only about fifty percent of the hill people could be covered under the current programme taken up by the government in Rangamati. The rest will remain out of food security, they said.

The government's special relief programme in Rangamati covers Sazek in Baghaichhari, Hupbang in Barkal and Borthalipara in Bilaichhari upazila. Other parts of hilly areas in Rangamati, Bandarban and Khagrachhari are still out of the food safety net.

As a preliminary step, UNDP is distributing 20 kilograms of rice, edible oil, one kg of salt and a rat killing tool to each family in some areas. The Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) are training farmers in rat killing, said its official Kajal Kanti Talukder.

Talking to this correspondent, Borahorina UP chairman Binoy Krinchna Chakma said, "I can give only some quantity of rice under VGF (vulnerable group feeding) and VGD programmes. But it is very limited. "After finishing paddy, swarms of rats are now eating banana, ginger, turmeric and other fruits and crops," said Pulin Karbari of Thegamukh. Many families in different areas of Barkal upazila left homes in search of livelihood, he said.

About 35,000 families in inaccessible Sazek union under Baghaichhari upazila of Rangamati district are in utmost food crisis. A famine like situation is prevailing there, the village headman said. At least 200 families in Sazek union left their homes for Mizoram and Tripura of India in search of livelihood, local public representatives told The Daily Star correspondent.

About 35,000 families of five ethnic communities-- Chakma, Tripura, Pankhua, Lusai and Rianglive in 607 square kilometers area in Sazek union. Cultivation and collecting bamboo from forests are their main sources of survival. Earlier, the ministry of CHT affairs allocated Tk 15 lakh for the three hill districts, which has already been distributed among affected farmers.

RHDC executive officer Tarun Kanti Ghosh said a decision has been taken to allocate 700 metric tones (MT) of food grains for food for work programme in Rangamati. Of this, 300 MT will be distributed in Sazek, 200 in Bilaichhari, 150 in Barkal and 50 in Jurachhari upazila. Other development schemes are also on cards, he said.

Jagat Jyoti Chakma said RHDC along with UNDP will conduct a survey soon to assess the exact number of affected families. World Food Program (WFP) is also contemplating resuming RMP (road maintenance project) projects as a long term assistance program for the affected people.

"We also submitted two projects to CHT affairs ministry. One is raising mixed fruit gardens and the other is goat rearing project," he added.

(20) 20 April 2008: Arson attack on indigenous villages in Sajek under Baghaichhari upazila by Bengali settlers in CHT

On 20 April 2008 Bengali settlers with the help of military forces mad an arson attack on Jumma villages at Sajek area under Baghaichhari upazila in Rangamati district. In this incident, seven indigenous villages namely Nursery Para, Baibachara, Purba Para, Nangal Mura, Retkaba, Simana para and Gangaram Mukh of Sajek union were affected and at least 76 houses of indigenous villagers

and 43 houses of Bengali settlers were completely burnt to ashes. It is allegedly reported that Bengali settlers also looted valuables of the houses of indigenous villagers during the attack.

It is worth mentioning that the vast Sajek Union is located at one end of Rangamati district, and mainly comprises of Reserved Forests. Any settlement in this area is considered to be illegal. But many indigenous families have been living in this area for generations in accordance with their customary norms and without any official title deeds. Local residents noted as a cause of the incident that there had been rising tension in the area for about two months. The main reason for this tension was that the Bengali settlers had been erecting houses near or adjacent to the indigenous villagers' houses.

On 20 April the tension sparked when indigenous villagers opposed Bengali settlers to construct the houses. In retaliation to this, the Bengali settlers equipped with sharp weapons started attacking on the indigenous villages on 20 April and which lasted for 4 hours from 9.30 p.m. to 1.30 a.m.

According to the members of Sajek union, total 76 houses of indigenous villagers were completely burnt down. Actual number of burnt houses of Bengali settlers are yet to be determined. However, local sources reported that around 43 houses of Bengali settlers were burnt to ashes.

Follow-up: Arson attack by Bengali settlers on indigenous Jumma peoples in Sajek

Latest report confirmed that the arson attack on indigenous villages in Sajek area occurred on 20 April was led by two leaders of Sama Odhikar Anlodon (Equal Rights Movement), an extreme Bengali nationalist and fanatic organisation in CHT. The two leaders were Mr. Selim Bahari (35), president of Baghaichari branch and Mr. Golam Molla (50), president of Baghaihat branch of this organisation. Golam Molla also holds post of bazar chowdhury of Baghaihat market that basically controlled by military forces. Victims of indigenous villagers also confirmed that military forces of Baghaihat army zone of 33 East Bengali Regiment (2) led by commanding officer Lt. Col. Sajid Imtiaz fully supported the Bengali settlers in setting fire on indigenous villages while a group of army of engineering core from Gangaram Mukh camp, at a stage, prevented Bengali settlers to conduct more attack on indigenous villages and brought the situation under control.

It is also learnt that 33 houses of Baibachara including Shanti Mamber Para and Kachu Adam, 27 houses of Baghaihat Purba Para, 11 houses of Gangaram Para and 5 houses of Retkabachara, in total 76 houses of indigenous villagers were completely burnt to ashes. Witnesses also confirmed that a number of houses of Bengali settlers were also burnt down, but the actual numbers of these houses are yet to be estimated. The Bengali settlers alleged that some miscreants set fire on houses of Bengali settlers. On the contrary, indigenous villagers alleged that Bengali settlers themselves set fire on their houses to make excuse for their brutal attack. It is also learnt that most of the Bengali settlers whose house were burnt down are now staying nearby areas of Baghaihat bazar with the assistance of military forces. However, some Bengali settlers sent their women and children to settler localities of Merung of Dighinala upazila and Longadu upazila.

It is reported that most of relief have been distributed to Bengali settlers. Victims of indigenous villagers are not interested to come army camp to receive relief due to security reason. In addition, army always favour Bengali settlers in providing relief for the victims. Preparation of victim list and distribution of relief are dominated by the military authority of Baghaihat zone. Even, a grant of Taka 100,000 of Rangamati Hill District Council were also handed over to commanding officer Lt. Col. Sajid Imtiaz for distribution.

List of indigenous Jumma villagers whose houses were burnt down at Sajek area in CHT:

On 20 April 2008 at mid-night an arson attack was made by newly infiltrated Bengali settlers with the direct support of Bangladesh military forces at Baghaihat area of Sajek union under Baghichati upazila in Rangamati district in CHT. In this attack, around 76 houses of indigenous Jumma villagers of 7 villages were completely burnt down. It is report that Selim Bahari, President of Baghaichari branch and Golam Molla, President of Baghaihat branch of Equal Rights Movement, an extreme nationalist and fanatic organisation of Bengali settler led the Bengali settlers to conduct this attack with the direct support of military forces of Baghaihat army zone of 33 East Bengali Regiment (2)

led by commanding officer Lt. Col. Sajid Imtiaz, Captain Zabaedur Rahman and RP Habilder Harun. The following list of indigenous Jumma villagers whose houses were burnt down prepared by three members of Sajek union, namely, Kalachoga Chakma, Swapanika Chakma and Jotsna Chakma are as follows:

Daine Baibachara village including Shanti Mamber Para and Kachu Adam:

1. Bimal Kanti Chakma
2. Shanti Bikash Chakma(1)
3. Nayan Ranjan Member
4. Brisha Muni Chakma
5. Chiringo Chakma
6. Subhanga Chakma
7. Dayal Kista Chakma
8. Kina Chan Ckakma
9. Shyamal Kanti Chakma
10. Pratilata Chakma
11. Shanti Jiban Chakma
12. Gobinda Chakma
13. Subolya Chakma
14. Kala Kachu Chakma
15. Jyosna Rani Chakma (Member)
16. Rabi Shankar Chakma
17. Rupayan Master
18. Shakya Bodhi Master
19. Neuton Chakma (Dr.)
20. Rakhi Chakma
21. Nihar Kanti Chakma
22. Nirmal Kanti Chakma
23. Chigon Chiji Chakma
24. Dhabana Chakma
25. Shanti Ranjan Ckakma
26. Kala Chan Chakma
27. Neuton Chakma (Kalabo)
28. Kamini Ranjan Chakma
29. Sushi Ranjan Chakma
30. Rabi Ranjan Chakma
31. Baratya Chakma
32. Shanti Bikash Chakma (2)
33. Suma Chakma (Para Kendra School)

Gangaram Mukh village:

1. Gyana Chakma
2. Sunesh Chakma
3. Kaladhan Chakma
4. Jagadish Chakma
5. Lorbo Chakma

6. Maratshaw Chakma
7. Ajit Chakma
8. Mangal Sadhan Chakma
9. Chiranta Master
10. Suman Chakma
11. Chandra Mohan Chakma

Baghaihat Purba Para village:

1. Jyoti Moy Chakma
2. Kala Maratya Chakma
3. Arun Bikash Chakma
4. Jagadish Chakma
5. Rupan Chakma
6. Bhubati Chakma
7. Sumati Ranjan Chakma
8. Dhana Gula Chakma
9. Nilamoy Chakma
10. Mangal Sen Chakma
11. Dhana Bikash Chakma
12. Gyana Ranjan Chakma
13. Sunil Kanti Chakma
14. Trishankar Chakma
15. Paran Sona Chakma
16. Monu Ranjan Chakma
17. Dulal Chakma
18. Amar Bikash Chakma
19. Rumel Chakma
20. Bangalya Chakma
21. Laxmi Kumar Chakma
22. Samar Kanti Chakma
23. Amar Kanti Chakma
24. Minal Chakma
25. Laxmindra Chakma
26. Indra Raj Chakma
27. Aiub Kanti Chakma

Retaabachara village:

1. Mon Mohan Chakma
2. Ranesh Chakma
3. Kinadhan Chakma
4. Ladu Muni Chakma
5. Goyeshur Chakma

(21) 23 April 2008: BISAC holds demonstration against arson attack on indigenous villages by Bengali settlers in CHT

On 23 April 2008 a demonstration against arson attack on 7 indigenous villages in remote Sajek area was organised by Bangladesh Adivasi Chhatra Sangram Parishad (Bangladesh Indigenous Students Action Council – BISAC) at Dhaka University (DU) campus where more than two hundred students attended. At 11.00 a procession was brought from 'Aparajeya Bangla' of DU campus and ended circumambulating arts building of the campus. Then protest meeting was held with Mr. Karunamoy Chakma, President of BISAF in the chair at 'Aparajeya Bangla'.

Representatives of different indigenous students' organizations, namely, Hill Students Council (PCP), Bangladesh Garo Chhatra Sangathan (Bagachas), Santal Students Union, Bangladesh Marma Students' Council (BMSC), Bangladesh Chatra Federation, Bangladesh Hajong Students Sangathan etc. participate in the demonstration. Associate Professor of Mass Communication and Journalism Department of DU Mr. Robayet Ferdaus and Associate Professor of Department of Linguistic of Dhaka University Dr. Saurov Shikdar were also present there and expressed their solidarity with students protest.

It is mentionable that newly infiltrated Bengali settlers with the direct support of Bangladesh military forces attacked on the 7 villages of indigenous Jumma peoples throughout the 4 kilometre long area from Nursery Para to Gangaram Mukh areas of Sajek union under Baghaichari upazila (sub-district) in Rangamati district in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) on 20 April 2008 at mid-night. More than 100 houses of indigenous villagers were burnt to ashes. Bengali settlers beat the Jumma villagers including women and children indiscriminately and looted valuables of the houses during the attack that lasted for almost 4 hours from 9.30 p.m.

Student leaders condemned the arson attack in Sajek terming it as barbaric attack against humanity. They demanded exemplary punishment to the persons responsible, compensation for affected indigenous families and immediate withdrawal of Bengali settler families from Sajek area.

At the beginning of the program Sohel Hajong, General Secretary of BISAC demanded to stop rampant land grabbing by Bengali settlers and eviction of indigenous people from their homeland. He said that demonstration would be carried till the exploitation and repression against the indigenous people is stopped. He demanded to rehabilitate Bengali settlers outside CHT with dignity.

Mr. Pintu Haui of Bangladesh Garo Chatra Songothon (Bagachas) said that this arson attack is nothing but a blueprint to alienate the indigenous people from their own land outlined by the army. He expressed solidarity with the hill people's fight. He threatened to declare hard programme if the indigenous people have been given to live peacefully in their homeland.

Central General Secretary of Pahari Chhatra Parishad (PCP) (Hill Students Council) Mr. Hiran Mitra Chakma threatened that the situation of CHT is very vulnerable. In such situation no one in CHT can stay at home. He urged to the government to bring culprits to justice.

Santal Students Union's representative Mr. Bernard demanded to conduct impartial inquiry to the inhuman incident otherwise Caretaker Government would be controversial.

Mr. Aungyajai Marma of Bangladesh Marma Students' Council (BMSC) expressed his solidarity and urged the indigenous students to be prepared to launch movement against any kind of inhuman atrocities. He added that the land of the indigenous people is being grabbed in the name of establishment of cantonment. He asked to the students to choose "Either freedom or death."

Mr. Shamsujjoha of Bangladesh Chatra Federation expressed his solidarity with the indigenous students. He urged the government to resolve land disputes in CHT by reactivating Land Commission as per CHT Peace Accord.

In his closing speech Mr. Karunamoy Chakma, President of BISAC announced the ends of the programme saying that the students should take preparation for greater movement for achieving the just rights of indigenous peoples.

At the beginning of the demonstration, Mr. Lutherson Zetra, Organizing Secretary of BISAC read out a leaflet circulated by the BISAC on arson attack in Sajek in which they demanded proper compensation for the victims and withdrawal of Bengali settler families from Sajek area.

Follow-up programme

On 24 April demonstration against the arson attack on indigenous peoples in Sajek was also held in Jahangirnagar University campus (Savar, Dhaka) and Chittagong University campus by Hill Students Council (PCP).

(22) 28-29 April 2008: Civil Society Team visited spot of the Sajek arson attack

On 28-29 April 2008 a group of citizens conducted an on-site inquiry in Sajek union under Baghaichari upazila in Rangamati district, following press reports of about 150 houses being burnt down across seven villages in the area.

The civil society team include Pankaj Bhattacharya, Member, Shomilito Shamajik Andolon; Sara Hossain, Advocate, Supreme Court; Syed Abul Maqsd, Writer, Journalist; Ziauddin Tareque Ali, Member, Shonmilito Shamajik Andolon; Robayet Ferdous, Associate Professor, Dhaka University; Rajiv Mir, Assistant Professor, Chittagong University; Shameema Binte Rahman, Journalist; Anirban Saha, Investigator, Ain o Salish Kendra; Abu Ahmed Faizul Kabir, Investigator, Ain o Salish Kendra; Supriyo Chakma, Prothom Alo, Rangamati; Jewel Dewan, Advocate, BLAST, Rangamati and KCing Marma, Student, Chittagong University.

During the on-site inquiry, they spoke to victims and witnesses among both Jummas and Bengalis, other local persons, and to army personnel, to clarify what had happened. They reported that on arrival in the area, in eight villages within the reserved forest area in Sajek Union - Nursery Para, Daney Bhaibachora, Bamey Bhaibachora, Purbopara, Balughatpara, Retkaba, MSF Para and Gongaram Mukh – the mostly Pahari (indigenous Hillman) houses which had been burnt down to the ground remained just as they were. The charred remains of burnt houses could be seen across a four kilometer long area. Many people are still in hiding. Others told us that several persons were injured during this incident. People do not have proper shelter, and some remain under open skies.

Another civil society team also visited spot earlier

Earlier on 27-30 April 2008 another team of fourteen consisting of political activists, a university teacher, a journalist, cultural and student activists and leaders, visited Sajek area. The team was led by Moshrefa Mishu, convenor, Biplobi Oikko Front. From the morning of 27 April to 30 April 2008, they went to the area where the incident took place, and also to other places in Marishya in Baghaichori, Dui Tila, Kobakhali in Dighinala, Sadhana Tila, Lichu Bagan, Moner Manush, Chongranchori as well as surrounding habitations, markets, forest area, garden and hillocks. They spoke to both Jummas and Bengalis, and also to some of the victims of the Sajek incident.

(23) 2 May 2008: Opinion-exchange meeting held by Education and Commerce Advisor in Rangamati

Government undertakes initiatives for building infrastructure to bring CHT under sustainable development programme, says advisor Dr. Hossain Zillur Rahman

On 2 May 2008 a view-exchange meeting was held by Education and Commerce Advisor of Caretaker Government Dr. Hossain Zillur Rahman with public representatives including CHT Regional Council, Hill District Council and Union Council, traditional leaders, government officials, businessmen, civil society members including teachers and development activists at Tribal Cultural Institute (TCI) in Rangamati in Chiitagong Hill Tracts (CHT). Chairman of CHT Regional Council Mr. Jyotirindra Bodhipriya Larma alias Santu Larma, Special Assistant to the Chief Adviser on CHT Affairs and Forest and Environment Raja Devasish Roy attended as special guests at the meeting presided over by Rangamati Deputy Commissioner Md. Nurul Amin.

Among others, opening up border trading in CHT with Indian state of Mizoram, scarcity of capitals and loans for business, establishment of cold storage in Rangamati, inclusion of schools into monthly pay order (MPO), introduction of primary education through mother (indigenous) tongue, providing hill allowance to non-government teachers in CHT, opening honour course with more subjects in Rangamati Government College, relaxation of conditions in registering schools for CHT region considering geographical condition, providing speed boat for inspection of schools in Rangamati district etc were discussed in the meeting.

Commerce and Education Adviser Dr. Hossain Zillur Rahman said that the Caretaker Government has undertaken different development programmes for creating infrastructure to bring CHT under sustainable development programmes. He said that there were potentials for border trading at Sajek and Thega in Rangamati and Nakkyngchari in Bandarban districts. Commerce Ministry will take steps to construct roads in three border areas - one in Sazek union under Baghaichhari upazila, one at

Thegamukh under Barkal upazila in Rangamati district and one in Nikkhyangchhari upazila in Bandarban district to start border trading with neighbouring countries. He added that necessary steps will be taken to help capitalisation by providing loans for setting up industry in CHT. He encouraged farmers to cultivate production of gingers saying that there was scope for more production of gingers in CHT.

He said that boarding schools will be launched in CHT to prevent dropout of children. He said declaring that a speedboat will be provided for the education officers in Rangamati so that they can regularly inspect all the schools and help maintain standard of teaching there. He added that opening up more honours course in Rangamati College, enactment of specific rules to easy recognition and registration of the schools, bank loans for businessmen, hill allowances for non-government teachers etc. will be taken consideration on priority basis.

Dr. Zillur urged the CHT leaders and representatives to visit Dhaka for discussion and address of these issues with him.

Special Assistant to the Chief Adviser on CHT Affairs and Forest and Environment, also Circle Chief of traditional Chakma circle Raja Devasish Roy delivered welcome speech at the meeting. Among others, member of CHT Regional Council Mr. Goutam Kumar Chakma, member of the Rangamati Hill District Council Mr. Ratikanta Tanchangya, chairman of Rangamati municipality Mr. Habibur Rahman Habib, former district education officer Mr. Anjulika Khisa, headmistress of Rangamati Government High School Ms. Nirupa Dewan, principal of Rangamati Women College Ms. Banchita Chakma, members of advisory committee of CHT Affairs Ministry Mr. Molla Shahjahan, president of Rangamati chamber of commerce and industry Mr. Kazi Nazarul Islam, principals of Rangamati BM Academy, Karphuli College and Sijak College, representatives of Rangamati and Khagrachari Teachers' Association, representatives of CHT NGOs spoke at the view-exchange meeting.

Bandarban view-exchange meeting

Before attending the Rangamati meeting, advisor Dr. Hossain Zillur Rahman and special assistant Raja Devasish Roy participated in the opinion-exchange meeting held in Bandarban district in which advisor for culture and women Ms. Rasheda K Chowdhury also attended. Among others, member of CHT Regional Council Mr. K S Mong, former Awami League MP Mr. Bir Bahadur, representatives of civil society and development workers spoke at the meeting presided over by Deputy Commissioner of Bandarban district Mr. Abdul Majid Shah Akond.

Rasheda K. Chawdhury said that the CHT as a backward region is being given priority in development intervention. She also said that primary education through indigenous mother tongue for the children of 11 indigenous ethnic groups will be introduced in CHT.

The opinion-exchange meeting was followed by cultural programme. The advisors visited Bandarban Women College and Faruk Para, a village of indigenous Bawm community.

(24) 5 May 2008: CHTRC delegation calls on Law and Land advisor A F M Hassan Arif

A delegation of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Regional Council (CHTRC), an apex body of the special administration arrangement of CHT region, called on Mr. A F M Hassan Arif, Advisor for Law, Justice and Parliamentary Ministry and Land Ministry on 5 May 2008 at his office of the Bangladesh Secretariat in Dhaka. The delegation of CHTRC was led by Mr. Goutam Kumar Chakma, councillor of the CHTRC. Other members of the delegation were members of the CHTRC Mr. Nurul Alam and Mr. K S Mong and chief executive officer of the CHTRC Mr. Sukriti Ranjan Chakma.

It is learnt that the issues of amendment of the CHT Land (Dispute Settlement) Commission Act of 2001 as per CHT Accord, alteration of the local government acts to insert a provision relating CHT affairs, approval of the Rules of Business of the CHTRC, allocation of adequate fund for the CHTRC and the three Hill District Councils (HDCs), repeal of the Hill Districts (Laws Repeal and Enforcement and Special Provisions) Act of 1989, District Act of 1936 and Bhumi Khatiyon (Parbatya Chattagram) Odhyadesh, 1984 etc. were discussed in the meeting. But no concrete decision has been taken in this regard. However, Mr. A F M Hassan Arif said that he would take necessary measures for consideration of these issues. High officials were also present during the meeting.

(25) 5 May 2008: 3 innocent Jumma villagers arrested in Jurachari

On 5 May 2008, a group of army led by Major Tanvir from Pukirachara camp under Jurachari upazila in Rangamati district arrested three Jummas. It is learnt that army arrested Niranjan Chakma after calling him to the camp. Thereafter, the army conducted operation to Pukirachara village and arrested Ranangan Chakma (23) son of Nishanto Chakma from his own house.

The army tortured them severely and implicated them with false cases after placing one country-made gun and a donation book in their hands. They were handed over to JURachari police station and later sent to Rangamati jail.

(26) 5 May 2008: Civil Society Team held press conference in Dhaka on Sajek arson attack

On 5 May 2008 civil society team comprising, among others, member of Shomilito Shamajik Andolon Pankaj Bhattacharya, advocate of Supreme Court Ms. Sara Hossain and eminent columnist Syed Abul Maqsd held a press conference at national press club in Dhaka on their finding of the on-site inquiry conducted on 28-29 April 2008 to Sajek arson attack. In a press conference, they described miserable condition of the victims. They made following recommendations on the basis of our on-site inquiry, interviews with related persons and an analysis of the situation:

- 1) Establish an independent and impartial Judicial Inquiry Commission, required to publish its report within a fixed time period; prosecute and provide exemplary punishment to those found responsible for the attacks;
- 2) Provide adequate compensation and undertake prompt rehabilitation of persons affected during the arson attacks in Sajek Union, including reconstruction of houses;
- 3) To release the three persons held in the Baghaichari Army Camp;
- 4) To cease all Bengali settlements in Sajek Union and the three Hill Districts;
- 5) In accordance with the CHT Accord 1997
 - a) To activate the Land Commission, to review and settle all land disputes;
 - b) To withdraw army camps from the CHT; and
 - c) To enable full functioning of the civil administration, including through effective functioning of the CHT Regional Council.

(27) 6 May 2008: Army tortured five Jummas who came to enlist voter list in Naniachar

On 6 May 2008, captain Shamim and Sebedar Abdul Kashem from Naniachar zone tortured following five Jummas who came to Morachengi Government Primary School ground to be enlisted as voters. It is learnt that the Jummas stood up in a long queue in the simmering summer heat. The unwelcome abusive language of the army personnel deployed there to help the voter registration officials seemed to have shot up the temperature level beyond any tolerable point. Some of the Jummas protested at such rude behaviour of the army, but of no use. But at a stage, soldiers became furious and beat up five Jummas. The victims were identified as Bir Ranjan Chakma (30) s/o Jharbodhan Chakma, Shanti Ranjan Chakma (35) s/o Sur Sen Chakma and Maya Dhan Chakma (22) s/o Allo Chakma of village North Morachengi, Ms Kalabi Chakma (35) d/o Roghunath Chakma of village South Morachengi and Kalamua Chakma (28) s/o Ah-Mua Chakma of village Karallyachari.

(28) 7 May 2008: Army conduct searching operation at Soileshchari in Naniarchar

On 7 May 2008 two group of army from Longudu and Naniachar zone raided the village of Soileshchari village under Burighat union in Naniarchar sub-district. In this raid, army encircled the village and gathered the villagers at a corner of the village. Four innocent Jumma villagers have brutally been tortured. The victims have been identified as Samiran Chakma (35) s/o Dulalya Chakma, his brother Mona Chakma (28), Ranjan Chakma (30) s/o Dhana Mohan Chakma and Dev Ranjan Chakma (18) s/o Pitto Ranjan Chakma.

(29) 10 May 2008: Bengali settlers continue to occupy land in Sajek

Despite prevailing tension following Sajek arson attack on 7 Jumma villages, Bengali settlers continue to occupy land in Sajek area in Baghaichari sub-district. It is learnt that since 10 May 2008, Bengali settlers have even been cleaning the ashes and charred beams of the burned houses of the Jummas allegedly to occupy homestead of Jumma villagers. Besides, Bengali settlers started to construct houses on occupied land since mid-May. On the other, a few Jumma villagers also started to build houses on their land. However, most of Jumma villagers are still passing days fearing further attack.

(30) 11 May 2008: Sama Odhikar Andolon holds seminar to conceal its recent barbaric activities

On 11 May 2008 military-backed extreme Bengali nationalist and fanatic organisation of the Bengali settlers so-called 'Sama Odhikar Andolon' (Equal Rights Movement) organizes a seminar at National Press Club in Dhaka. As it is, the speakers of this seminar urged the caretaker government to re-set up army camp at all sensitive spots in CHT areas for establishing so-called equal rights for Bengali settlers.

Kapaeeng Watch believes that this seminar is nothing but to conceal recent arson attack on 7 indigenous villages at Sajek union under Baghaichari upazila in Rangamati district of Chittagong Hill Tracts region led by the leaders of Sama Odhikar Andolon Mr. Selim Bahari, President of Baghaichari branch and Mr. Golam Molla, President of Baghaihat branch with the direct support of military forces of Baghaihat army zone of 33 East Bengali Regiment (2) led by commanding officer Lt. Col. Sajid Imtiaz last 20 April. In this attack, around 76 houses of indigenous Jumma villagers of 7 villages were completely burnt down.

The Sama Odhikar Andolon under the leadership of detained BNP lawmaker Abdul Wadud Bhuiyan is active communal and fanatic activities and opposition of the CHT Peace Accord since its inception on 15 February 2004.

(31) 13 May 2008: A returnee PCJSS member held by the army in Dighinala following the Sajek arson attack

Mr. Anunay Chakma alias Manas (55) s/o Nalini Kanta Chakma, a returnee member of PCJSS as per CHT Peace Accord was arrested by the army at Dighinala check post in Khagrachari district on 13 May 2008 while he was returning home from Rangamati. He was taken first to Dighinala cantonment and after keeping there a night, he was handed over to Dighinala police station. A case was filed against him under section 16(2) of the Emergency Power Rules 2007 with Dighinala police station. The army had falsely shown a recovery of UPDF's leaflet from him during the arrest. He was sent to Khagrachari jail.

It is mentionable that following the incident of arson attack on 7 indigenous villages in Sajek union under Rangamati district, a group of Bengali settlers also encircled his shop at Baghaihat bazaar on 21 April at around 10.30 a.m. However, other shopkeepers of the market saved him from physical assault by the Bengali settlers. After this incident, he wanted to go Rangamati, but zone commander Lt. Col. Sajid Imtiaz did not allow him to leave Baghaihat bazaar without showing any reason. However, he went to Rangamati at the end of last month to participate in a wedding ceremony of his relative. On 13 April he was just returning home after attending the wedding ceremony. He has a restaurant at Baghaihar bazaar.

(32) A NGO 'DORP' occupies orchards of the indigenous people in Bandarban

Date: 19 May 2008

Very recently a non-government organisation named Development Organisation of the Rural Poor (DORP) run by non-indigenous Bengali outsiders occupied the orchards of the indigenous Tripura community at Tongo Jiripara of Soroi union under Bandarban sadar upazila in Bandarban district.

It is learnt that the DORP set fire on orchards around 35 acres after cutting its trees planted by the indigenous villagers and hang up a signboard 'Swasthagram DORP' (Health Village Dorp) on that land. DORP is opposing indigenous villagers to enter to this area and threatening, otherwise, to lodge

case with police station. Local Tripura villagers are passing days with fear. DORP claimed that the lands have been leased out to the DORP. However, chairman of the Bandarban Hill District Council (HDC) Mr. Thanzama Lusai and district administration said that there is no opportunity to give leasing out any land as per CHT Peace Accord.

It is worth mentioning that indigenous Tripura villagers have been living in this area alongside of Sualok-Lama road 20 kilometers away from Bandarban district headquarters. Though some villagers have title deed, but most of the indigenous villagers have been using these lands for generations as per their tradition and customs without government registration.

Kshetra Tripura (65), an indigenous villager said that he got settlement of 2 acres of paddy land in 1982 and built up a mix-variety orchard on 10 acres of its surrounding grove land. DORP occupied all the paddy and grove land, he added. Another villager Rongsaha Tripura said that he built up orchard on 5 acres of land 5-6 years ago. Now he became nervous seeing his orchard has completely been burnt to ashes. All the villagers including Jilya Moni Tripura, Rangkoma Tripura, Bikram Moni Tripura informed that their lands and orchards have been occupied by the DORP.

Regarding setting fire, Mr. Nurul Alam, a labourer of the DORP said that they 20-25 labourers set fire on the orchards after cutting its plantation as per direction of the DORP executive director Mr. A H M Noman, field officer Mr. Iyub and Mr. Malek. As a day labourer, they have nothing to do.

Referring to this incident, executive director of DORP Mr. A H M Noman said that they got lease around 150 acres of grove lands including this land. Accordingly, DORP undertook plan to build up an orchard and hospital on this land. He claimed that this land is not owned by Tripura villagers.

It is found after scrutiny of the land documents at deputy commissioner's office that 25 acres land has been leased out in the name of a group of Bengalis including coordinator of DORP Babul Kumar Odhikari, A H M Noman and Nurul Islam in 2000. However, according to the CHT Peace Accord of 1997, no lease can be made without prior approval of the concerned HDC. According to the HDC Act of 1998, any lease without prior approval of HDC is completely illegal. Chairman of the Bandarban HDC Mr. Thanzama Lusai said that CHT Affairs Ministry has been asked to cancel all these leases given after CHT Peace Accord without prior approval of the HDC. He added that necessary actions would be taken after conducting inquiry on this DORP incident.

Officer-in-charge (OC) of Lama police station Mr. Abul Kasem said that he heard this incident that DORP occupied land of the Tripura community. It is being looked into, he added. Chairman of the Soroi union Mr. Mohammad Ali said that DORP incident is nothing but to occupy the land of the Tripura villagers.

(33) 20 May 2008: PCP observes its 19th Founding Anniversary

On 20 May 2008 the Chittagong Hill Tracts Hill Students' Council (PCP) observed its 19th founding anniversary at Dhaka University campus. Marking this glorious day PCP has organized rally and brought out a procession on the campus.

Before bringing out the rally, organizing secretary of PCP Udayan Tripura gave the welcome speech while general secretary of Bangladesh Student Union Manabendra Dev, organizing secretary of Bangladesh Socialist Student Front Janardan Dutta Nantu, cultural secretary of Bangladesh Indigenous Students Action Forum (BISAF) Pintu Hauwi gave the solidarity speech congratulating all PCP members on this founding anniversary. They all express their strong determination to cooperate in any movement of PCP for establishing self-determination rights of Jumma people.

Speakers also demanded to withdraw state of emergency, unconditional release of all PCP and PCJSS arrested leaders and activists, stopping land grabbing by settlers in CHT and full implementation of CHT Accord. The rally was conducted by Hiran Mitra Chakma, acting general secretary of PCP and presided over by Sui Prue Marma, Senior vice president of PCP. Later, rally was brought out on the campus. Representatives and members from all PCP existing unit participated in this rally and procession.

In the second session, a discussion meeting was held at CBCB center, Mohammadpur, Dhaka. Central leaders of the organization, representative from Rangamati, Khagrachari and Bandarban district unit, Chittagong University unit, Chittagong Metropolitan unit, Dhaka Metropolitan unit, Dhaka college unit and representatives from some other institutions were also taken part in this discussion session. Presided over by Sui Prue Marma, the discussion was also addressed by Mr. Sanjeeb Drang, general secretary of Bangladesh Adivasi Forum and Mr. Mangal Kumar Chakma, senior JSS leader.

It is mentionable that PCP was established at 20th May 1989 following the Longadu massacre. From the very beginning of its establishment, PCP is struggling for ensuring the rights of Jumma students as well as self-determination rights of Jumma people.

(34) 21 May 2008: Relief provided by Sultana Kamal for victims of Sajek arson attack

On 21 May 2008 on behalf of "Relief Management Committee for the Victims of Sajek-Gangaram Arson Incident", former advisor to the caretaker government and eminent human rights activist Ms. Sultana Kamal distributed relief to the victims of Sajek arson attack. The arson attack was committed by Bengali settlers with the help of military forces of Baghahat zone on 7 Jumma villages on 20 April 2008. Ms. Sultana Kamal was accompanied by a group of human rights activists, journalists and health workers including convenor of Relief Management Committee Ms. Tadra Chakma and indigenous rights activist Ms. Chaitali Tripura.

They distributed Taka 500, potato, soap, book for students etc. for each family to the 78 affected Jumma families. They also distributed relief to affected Bengali settler families.

On the other, Gono Swastha, a national NGO, distributed relief to 78 Jumma families and 115 settlers. It is mentionable that according to local public representatives, only 43 shacks of Bengali settlers were burnt down. However, Gono Swastha distributed almost triple more than actually burned.

Among others, Medicine Shun Frontier (MSF), Students of Chittagong University etc. also distributed relief to the victims. The relief includes rice, cloths, dry fish and paste, cash, etc.

Various organisations and authorities provided relief to the victims. There is no coordination in providing relief. It is learnt that government relief is being distributed by Baghahat army zone authority led by Lt. Colonel Md. Sajid Imtiaz who are mastermind of this heinous attack. Tk 10,000 for each affected family was granted from Chief Advisor's fund. Though Bengali settler families have been provided this grant, however, most of affected Jumma families have not yet received. It is learnt that Jumma families are not interested to receive this grant from army zone authority.

Bengali settlers gain profits by receiving Tk. 10,000 compensation of army chief

During the visit of the spot of arson incident of Sajek under Baghaichari upazila in Rangamati, Army Chief Gen Moeen U Ahmed declared to provide a financial grant of Tk. 10,000 for each affected family as compensation. It is learnt that the grants were already reached there and are being distributed to the affected families.

However, one Jumma villager requesting not be named alleges, "Cow and goat were given same price. The houses of Bengali settlers were merely a shack. There was nothing except four temporary hedge-rows. On the contrary, the houses of the Jumma villagers were almost permanent abode. There were valuables including furniture, utensils, cloths, rice, even some had TV and CIT sheets." He says, Bengali settlers gained more profits by receiving lump sum Tk. 10,000 alone.

One woman from Rangaram Mukh village whose house was completely burnt to ashes says, Bengali settlers even earned profits by looting the houses of the Jumma villagers before setting fire on them. She claims, she witnessed looting of valuables of her neighbouring house by the Bengali settlers. However, same relief were distributed to them (Bengalis), even some cases they are receiving relief more than one time.

In this arson attack on 7 indigenous villages committed by Bengali settlers in presence of military forces on 20 April, total 76 houses of indigenous people and 43 houses of Bengali settlers were burnt to ashes.

(35) 25 May 2008: Arrested PCJSS member placed police remand

On 25 May 2008 arrested PCJSS member Mr. Anunay Chakma alias Manas (55) was taken for one-day police remand to Dighinala police station. After interrogation at Dighinala police station, he was again taken to Khagrachari jail. Following Sajek incident, he was arrested by the army at Dighinala check post in Khagrachari district on 13 May 2008 under section 16(2) of the Emergency Power Rules 2007 which suspends the right to bail.

(36) 26 May 2008: Indigenous rights organisations holds protest meeting against arson attack and land grabbing in CHT

On 26 May 2008 a protest meeting against arson attack and land grabbing at Sajek of Rangamati and at Lama of Bandarban was organised by Bangladesh Adivasi Odhikar Andolon (BAOA) and Bangladesh Indigenous Student Action Forum (BISAF) at Liberation War Museum's auditorium in Dhaka.

Secretary of BAOA Professor Mesbah Kamal chaired the meeting and general secretary of BISAF Sohel Hajong presented a paper on arson attack and land grabbing in Rangamati and Bandarban. Among others, presidium member of Gono Forum Pankaj Bottachariya, indigenous rights activist Uddipan Chakma, organising secretary of BAOA Ms. Kerina Hasdak, vice president of BISAF Khokoneswar Tripura, press secretary of BAOA Rakhi Mrong, member of BAOA Soumitra Dev, organising secretary of Centre for Manipuri Studies Pari Chingthum spoke in the protest meeting. Ms. Jannat-e-Ferdousi, a senior activist of BAOA conducted the whole programme.

Speakers of the protest meeting condemned the land grabbing in Lama upazila (sub-district) in Bandarban hill district by an NGO named Development Organisation of the Rural Poor (DORP) and recent arson attack on 7 indigenous villages at Sajek in Baghaichari upazila under Rangamati hill district by Bengali settlers. They demanded proper rehabilitation of Jumma victims and to return back their lands grabbed by DORP and Bengali settlers.

Speakers said that about 150 houses were burnt down in the arson attack on April 20th at Sajek under Rangamati hill district. Taking part in the discussion Pankaj Bottachariya said that all temporary military camp should be withdrawn from CHT in urgent basis as per CHT Accord. In his speech he also demanded to ban all activities of DORP, a NGO working in Bandarban hill district, as it is doing harm to Tripura community, an ethnic group of the Jumma peoples. He urged the progressive sections of the citizens to come forward and join the struggle to establish fundamental rights of Jumma Peoples. He also said that at present suppression on the PCJSS leadership is going on in CHT. Dozens of leaders of PCJSS were arrested and several false cases were lodged against them. He urged the government to invite PCJSS to the ongoing dialogue as its candidate had won parliamentary seats soon after the independence of the country.

Professor Mesbah Kamal expressed that political leaders are doing repeated mistake regarding the CHT issues. Sajek arson attack on indigenous villagers and land grabbing by DORP are direct result to the wrongdoing of political leaders. He urged government to take proper initiative to implement CHT Peace Accord. He also demanded to provide rehabilitation and compensation to the victims of these incidents.

Replying to the allegation of land grabbing, DORP consultant Mr. Osman Goni said that they took lease this land in accordance with the regulations and controversy would be resolved legally. He alleged that unnecessary tension has been intensified regarding this issue by certain quarters.

No sooner his speech, the audiences protested against his comments. They accused DORP arguing that the leasing of the land was done in violation of traditional rights of indigenous peoples and the provisions of the CHT Peace Accord.

Finally the following points have demanded from the meeting:

- Conduct judicial enquiry to the Sajek arson attack and punish the culprits involved to this incident.
- Ban the activities of DORP in Bandarban hill district
- Withdraw all temporary military camp from CHT

- Make the Land Commission functioning as per CHT Accord
- Establish separate land commission for plain land IPs
- rehabilitate recently settled Bengali migrants outside CHT
- Implement CHT Accord immediately in letter and spirit.

(37) 29 May 2008: 4 Jumma villagers arrested from Sajek released on bail

On 29 May 2008 arrested 4 innocent Jumma villagers namely Sushil Chakma (26) s/o Asomi Chandra Chakma, Sangram Chakma (22) s/o Ashok Kumar Chakma, Ratna Bikash Chakma (22) s/o Gunodhar Chakma and Rabindra Chakma (23) s/o Shashi Mohan Chakma were released on bail. They were arrested by military from Simanachara village in Sajek union falsely accusing of setting fire to settler house.

(38) May 2008: National political parties demand to invite PCJSS to the on-gong dialogue

Some national level progressive and secular political parties demanded before caretaker government to invite Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti (PCJSS), CHT-based regional political party of indigenous Jumma peoples to the on-going dialogue between the government and political parties.

Among others, Workers' Party, Jatiya Samastantrik Dal (JASAD), Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB), Bangaldesher Samastantrik Dal (BASAD) etc. raised this issues before caretaker government during their separate dialogues in the end of May 2008 with the government. The leaders of these political parties argued that PCJSS is a recognised political party as it signed peace accord with the Government of Bangladesh and its leader M N Larma was elected as a Member of Parliament (MP) of Bangladesh national parliament. According to reports of the national dailies, government assured them to do so.

(39) 3 June 2008: Army frequently conducts searching operation and tortures villagers in Bilaichari

On 3 June 2008 a group of army led by Lt. Tanvir from Dhupchari camp in Bilaichari upazila in Rangamati district raided the village of Down and searched for Bimal Kanti Chakma. The army stripped Riton Chakma (26) s/o Kandara Chakma naked and then beat him up severely. He is a resident of Dujuri Para village in Kaindyia in Rangamati sadar upazila.

Thereafter, the army took Bishwa Sagor Tanchangya (35) s/o Roma Kanti Headman to the camp along with his licensed gun, stripped him naked and tortured. He was set free the following day. The seized gun was also returned.

On 4 June 2008 Lt. Tanvir and his soldiers took 4 innocent Jummas of Down village to the camp and beat them up alleging that they are engaged with terrorist activities. The army released them after torture. The victims have been identified as:

- 1) Anil Karbari (52) s/o Dhulon Chandra Chakma,
- 2) Ranjan Chakma (50), s/o Dhulon Chandra Chakma
- 3) Kanchon Tonchongya and
- 4) Shanti Kumar Chakma (60).

On 6 June 2008 Lt. Tanvir tortured another three Jummas. This happened at around 9 a.m. when he detained them at the camp gate. He took them inside the camp and beat up after stripping them naked. The victims have been identified as:

- 1) Chandra Chakma (45),
- 2) Jibon Chakma (25) and
- 3) Subhash Chakma (30).

They were on their way from Bogakhali to Balaichari to collect relief being provided to the rodent-hit Jum cultivators by Belaichari TNO and UP chairmen. The army released them after torture.

On the same day at about 12 noon, another Jumma named Shanti Muni Chakma (18) s/o Jonokdhan Chakma was subjected to physical torture. Mr. Chakma is orally challenged. He was on his way from his village Shalbagan to the village of Down when the incident took place.

On 12 June 2008 at around 11 a.m. Lt. Tanvir also raided the village of Down and conducted searches into seven houses of the Jumma villagers.

The army broke into the houses of following villagers before searching. The doors of the houses were latched as all their family members were away to their jum fields. They were also inhumanly tortured. The victims were:

- 1) Bishwa Sagor Tanchangya (36) s/o Roma Kanta Headman and
- 2) Priti Moy Tanchangya (30) s/o Roma Kanta Headman.
- 3) Nanda Moy Tanchangya (45) s/o Badhu Chandra Tanchangya
- 4) Indrajit Chakma (45), (head teacher of Dujuripara Government Primary School) s/o Jonmajoy Chakma
- 5) Rupayon Chakma (25) s/o Jonmajoy Chakma,
- 6) Jotonphu Tanchangya (35) s/o Rai Charan Tanchangya and
- 7) Allyabo Tanchangya (50) s/o Rotia Tanchangya.

(40) 4 June 2008: Army conducts searching operation in Naniachar

On 4 June 2008 a group of army from Naniachar zone led by Adjutant Nazmul Hassan conducted searching operation in shops belonging to the Jummas at T&T area of Naniachar upazila in Rangamati district. But nothing has been found in this operation. It is learnt that military operations were conducted in Kudukchari, Naniachar, Barkal and Bilaichari areas in Rangamati district in the name searching terrorists.

(41) 4 June 2008: Implement CHT Accord to solve problems of indigenous Jumma people in CHT

- Speakers tell book publication ceremony in Dhaka

On 4 June 2008 a publication ceremony of the book titled 'Jum Paharer Jibon' (Life in the Hill Tracts) published by Community Development Library (CDL) was held at the Cirdap auditorium in Dhaka with CDL Chairman Mohiuddin Ahmad in the chair. Eminent economist Prof Muzaffer Ahmad unveiled the cover of the book. Special Assistant to Chief Adviser Raja Devasish Roy was present at the inaugural function as the chief guest. Among others, chairman of the CHT Regional Council Mr. Jyotirindra Bodhipriya Larma, eminent litterateur Ms. Selina Hossain, teacher of Dhaka University Dr. Sadeka Halim, indigenous women leader Ms. Choitali Tripura and general secretary of Jatiya Adivasi Parishad Mr. Rabindranath Soren were present at the programme as discussant.

Speakers of the publication ceremony said that Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) problems should be solved with the implementation of the CHT Peace Accord. They said the main problem of the area is the land-related problem. It should be solved according to the guidelines of the constitution and focusing the peace accord. They further expressed that development programmes in the hilly areas should be taken after consulting with the local people so that the environment of the areas is not hampered.

Prof. Muzaffer Ahmad also chairman of Transparency International-Bangladesh said that writers of the book masterly narrated the current lifestyle of the indigenous people in the hill areas. He called for preserving culture, heritage and mother tongues of the ethnic minorities. He added that taking the main spirit of the Accord, the next elected governments should solve the problems of the people of hill tracts. He urged the government to include a clause in the National Women Development Policy for the development of indigenous women.

In his speech as chief quest, Raja Devasish Roy also circle chief of Chakma circle said that some acts were passed according to the Peace Accord, but still many provisions of the Accord are not recognised in the state policies. He said if the development programmes in the hilly areas do not focus on the environment of the area, people will face scarcity of water and other problems will also rise further.

Mr. Jyotirindra Bodhipriya Larma also president of the PCJSS said that changes should be made in the social structures to establish indigenous peoples' rights as the feudal thoughts are still in our

society. He said books should be written on the life of the indigenous people of the plain lands. He further expressed that when the CHT Accord was signed, the government promised to execute it but now it is not showing any sign of executing the Accord. He added that the indigenous peoples will become gradually extinct if their basic rights are not ensured with implementation of the peace accord.

Selina Hossain said that the indigenous people have always become victims of disparities in all levels. Their rights have been denied all times. She also demanded that the government should insert a provision into the national women development policy for the development of indigenous women.

The book, a compilation of essays written by academics, human rights activists and ethnic minority people, was published by Community Development Library.

(42) 8 June 2008: Eliminate state terrorism for crime-free educational institution in the country

- Santu Larma says at the death anniversary of Sabequnnahar Sony in Dhaka

Chairman of the CHT Regional Council Mr. Jyotirindra Bodhipriya Larma alias Santu Larma said that state-terrorism should be eliminated first in order to achieve crime-free educational institution in the country. "Without elimination of the state-violence, violence-free environment cannot be achieved in the educational institutions".

Mr. Larma, also president of PCJSS, was speaking at a discussion meeting organised on the occasion of the 6th death anniversary of Sabequnnahar Sony, a female student of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet), at the Institution of Engineers' auditorium in Dhaka on 8 June 2008.

Mr. Larma said that without assuming in the state power by the progressive, secular and democratic forces, movement against violence and terrorist activities cannot be successful. He urged the progressive, secular and democratic forces to launch united movement against those evil forces which are pushing students to crime and violence on the campuses and to form a progressive, secular and democratic government in the country for the same.

The discussion meeting on the occasion of the 6th death anniversary of Sabequnnahar Sony was organised by Sony Memorial Foundation and Bangladesh Chhatra Forum with eminent jurist and president of Gono Forum Dr. Kamal Hossain in the chair. Former adviser to caretaker government SM Shahjahan, noted educationist and former VC of Jahangirnagar University Prof Zillur Rahman Siddiqui, women leader Shirin Akhter, Sony's father Habibur Rahman Bhuiya, scientist Dr. Abed Chowdhury and president of Bangladesh Chhatra Forum Bijoy Shankar Talukder also spoke in the discussion.

(43) 12 June 2008: HWF organises human chain on occasion of 12th abduction anniversary of Kalpana Chakma in Dhaka

On occasion of 12th abduction anniversary of Kalpana Chakma, on 12 June 2008 Hill Women's Federation (HWF) organised human chain at Dhaka University demanding immediate publication of inquiry reports and exemplary punishment to the kidnappers.

The human chain with placards started at 10.30 in front of Fine Arts Institute of Dhaka University with HWF president Ms. Shaswati Chakma in the chair. Around 200 students, leaders of the student organisations, women rights activists, human rights activists, environment activists etc participated in the programme. Among others, president of Sammilita Nari Samaj Ms. Farida Aktar, presidium member of Workers' Party Ms. Hajera Sultana, women affairs secretary of Bangladesh Awami League Dr. Dipu Mani, president of Karmajibi Nari and presidium member of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JASAD) Ms. Shirin Aktar, leader of Samajtantrik Forum Ms. Tahera Begum Joli, leader of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad Ms. Fatema Khatun, former president of HWF Ms. Choitali Tripura, teacher of Department of Mass Communication and Journalism of Dhaka University Mr. Robaet Ferdous and Ms. Kaberi Gain, teacher of Department of Linguistic of Dhaka University Dr. Sourav Sikder, teacher of Department of History of Dhaka University and general secretary of Bangladesh Adivasi Odhikar Andolon Mr. Mesbah Kamal spoke at the programme. Besides, leaders of the Hill

Students Council (PCP), Bangladesh Nari Progoti Sangha (BNPS), Garo Indigenous Michik Association (GIMA), Ain O Salish Kendra, Sampriti Manch, nari Grantha Probartana, Samajtantrik Chhatra Front, Bangladesh Adivasi Student Action Council, Parinesh Bachaon Andolon, Ubinig, and Nagarik Sanghati etc. extended solidarity by attending the programme. The programme was facilitated by Ms. Nishi Dewan, assistant general secretary of HWF.

In her speech, Ms. Farida Akter said that demanding of the punishment to the kidnapers of Kalpana Chakma is not only demand of HWF, but demand of all women movements of the country. The abduction of Kalpana Chakma is an example of military violence against indigenous women in the CHT. We all should unitedly stand against such atrocity.

Hajera Sultana said that no sooner of the incident, we demanded judicial inquiry and accordingly government formed an inquiry committee. But till to-date the report of the committee is not published. She demanded immediate publication of inquiry report and exemplary punishment of the culprits.

Shirin Akter also demanded to publish white paper on this incident. She urged masses to participate hill people movement against land grabbing and violence on indigenous women.

Dr. Dipu Mani said that like abduction of Kalpana Chakma, human rights violations are going on unabated in CHT. These incidents should be investigated and perpetrators should be brought under trial.

Choitali Tripura said that after the abduction of Kalpana Chakma, many elected and non-elected government assumed to the state power, but no initiative has been taken to publish inquiry report. She demanded immediate implementation of CHT Accord and inclusion of special provisions for indigenous women to recently adopted national women development policy.

Tahera Akter Joli urged all the women across the country to participate united movement against state violence on indigenous women in CHT. She alleged that government did not punish Captain Ferdous involved to the abduction of Kalpana Chakma, rather awarded him promotion.

Dr. Sourav Sikder alleged that government formed inquiry committee only for eye-wash. Robaet Ferdous said that since 1971 military rule has been continuing in CHT. He opined that Bangladesh is not only for Bengali Muslims, but is a multi-ethnic country.

It is mentionable that on 12 June 1996 prior to 7th parliamentary election, Ms. Kalpana Chakma (23), organising secretary of HWF was abducted from her home of New Lalyaghona village of Baghaichari upazila under Rangamati district by a group of army and VDP personnel from Kojoichari camp led by captain Ferdous. Due to tremendous pressure from national and international community, the government formed an inquiry committee. But the report of the inquiry committee is yet to be published. It is feared that she might have been killed.

(44) 17 June 2008: PCJSS member Anunay Chakma Manas again shown arrested at Khagrachari jail

On 17 June 2008 returnee PCJSS member Anunay Chakma Manas was again shown arrested at Khagrachari jail with an old murder case. It is reported that yesterday Chief Judicial Magistrate Mr. Abul Basar Munchi of Khagrachari district court issued his release order by pronouncing him not guilty.

Following Sajek incident, Anunay Chakma was arrested by the army at Dighinala check post in Khagrachari district on 13 May 2008 and a case was filed against him under section 16(2) of the Emergency Power Rules 2007 with Dighinala police station. According to the sources, investigating officer sub-inspector Khokan Chandra Debnath of Dighinala police station submitted report to the court stating that Anunay Chakma was fully innocent. In accordance with the police report, Chief Judicial Magistrate issued his release order during the last hearing held yesterday.

Sources also informed that no sooner issuance of court release order, military forces of Dighinala zone sought arrest order against Anunay Chakma with an old murder case lodged in 2006 with Dighinala police station from the court, but it was rejected as he was not enlisted as defendant to this

case. However, joint forces shown arrested him today mourning at Khagrachari jail when all the procedures have been completed to set him free.

It is mentionable that joint forces frequently arrest those indigenous activists in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) who get release or bail from the court, in order to keep them detention month after months.

(45) 18 June 2008: Follow-up: Sajek arson attack

On 18 June 2008 Bengali settlers destroyed 5 houses of Jumma villagers at recently blazed area in Sajek union under Baghaichari upazila of Rangamati district. Sources said that the Bengali settlers with the help of military forces are opposing Jumma villagers to build houses on their land. On the other, Bengali settlers are occupying land of Jumma villagers.

For instances, on 3 June 2008, a Bengali settler named Alam (30) planted banana saplings on the land of Niharu Chakma (36) at Balughat village. On 4 June 2008, another settler named Md. Jamal (35) (elephant keeper) and his four labourers planted banana saplings on the land of Kiron Chakma (37) s/o Natun Chandra Chakma of Balughat village. The same day, Shaha Alam (40) planted various kinds of saplings including banana on the land of Pattor Moni Karbari. Another settler named Mr. Kamal (known as Lambaya among the Jummas) planted jackfruit and other fruit tree seeds on the land of Lalu Chakma (55) at Gongaram Mukh village.

It is learnt that most of the affected Jumma villagers did not take Tk. 10,000 for construction of house declared by army chief General Moeen U Ahmad protesting against direct involvement of military forces of Baghaihat army zone with this arson attack on 7 indigenous Jumma villages committed on 20 April 2008 at Sajek union in Baghaichari sub-district that left 78 houses of Jumma people burnt to ashes. Report has also been received that military forces conducted operation through out the affected areas to gather affected Jumma villagers at Baghaihat army zone for distribution of this government grant. Sources conformed that a few affected Jumma villagers were caught up by the army and compelled to receive the grant.

It is also learnt that an innocent affected Jumma villager named Sneha Kumar Chakma (38) who was also gathered at Baghaihat zone for distribution of Tk. 10,000 for house construction was arrested by Baghaihat army on 1 June 2008 with an old case. He was handed over to Baghaichari police station and sent to Rangamati jail.

The army implicated him in a criminal case filed previously against unnamed persons on 13 January 2008 under sections 143/144/149/224/332/34 of the Bangladesh Penal Code. It is believed that Sneha Kumar Chakma was arrested because he was vocal against land aggression and expansion of illegal Bengali settlement in Sajek. At present, the victim is being provided legal aid by BLAST in Rangamati.

Sources also informed that Bengali settlers declared road blockage programme at Baghaihat bazaar for indefinite period in order to blockade transportation of agricultural products of Jumma villagers to other markets. It is mentionable that indigenous Jumma people have been boycotting Baghaihat bazaar since 20 April following the arson attack. Most of shopkeepers and dwellers of Baghaihat bazaar are Bengali settlers who committed 20 April arson attack on Jumma villagers.

On 14 June 2008 a group of army from Baghaihat zone arrested four innocent Jumma villagers from their homes in an overnight raid in Sajek union. The arrested villagers are identified as:

- 1) Mr. Sunil Bikash Chakma (32) s/o Subhash Bashu Chakma of village Gongaram Doar in Sajek
- 2) Phorakaji Chakma (28) s/o Rojonya Chakma from Daney Baihachara village in Sajek
- 3) Sumon Chakma (30) from Daney Baihachara village in Sajek, and
- 4) Badichan Chakma (35) s/o Dhonnya Ram Chakma of village Kobakhali in Dighinala.

It is learnt that they were arrested from villages at around 11 p.m. They were taken to Baghaihat zone and tortured inhumanly. The following day, the army released Phorakaji Chakma and Badichan Chakma, but handed the other two over to the police implicating them in false cases.

The reason for the arrest could not be known. However, the Jummas have been demanding the withdrawal of the settlers from Sajek. They are enforcing a boycott of Baghahat bazaar to force the government to accept this demand.

(46) 21 June 2008: Consultation on PRSP held in Rangamati

On 21 June 2008 a consultation on Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) was held at conference hall of Deputy Commissioner's office in Rangamati district. The consultation was organised by General Economic Relation Division and Planning Commission with Deputy Commissioner of Rangamati district Md. Nurul Amin in the chair. Public representatives, government officials, civil society members, development activists, media persons etc attended the consultation.

Chairman of the CHT Regional Council Mr. Jyotirindra Bodhipriya Larma said that CHT is a home of multi-lingual ethnic peoples. So, problem of this region is also multiplex. He urged government to undertake development initiatives considering this distinctiveness and reality of this region in order to achieve poverty reduction in this region.

A keynote on draft 2nd PRSP has been presented by Zafar Ahmed Chowdhury, Secretary of Finance and Planning Ministry. Participants raised the issues of land rights and settlement of land disputes, protection of indigenous peoples' rights over land and forest, undertaking social safety net and food assistance programme during disaster, environment-friendly development initiatives etc. It is mentionable that government is formulating 2nd PRSP for next three years.

Indigenous leaders alleged that government organised this consultation through Deputy Commissioner's office bypassing the apex body of CHT governance institutions i.e. CHT Regional Council and HDCs. The office bearers of these institutions have only been invited as general participants. They said that it is nothing but to indirectly paralyze the special governance system in CHT.

(47) 27 June 2008: PCJSS leaders deliberately charged with murder case in Bandarban

On 27 June 2008 the local leaders of Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samiti (PCJSS), a political party of indigenous Jumma peoples in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), south-eastern part of Bangladesh, were purposely charged with murder case in Bandarban district following the killing of the Priya Tanchangya.

It is learnt that Priya Tanchangya, a businessman and allegedly source of military forces was shot death at around 1.30 a.m. on 27 June at his house of Ghanau Para of Kuhalong union under Bandarban sadar upazila by a group of armed miscreants. No sooner of the incident, joint forces led by army conducted searching operation at no. 3 Rubber Bagan area, two kilometers away from the spot. In this operation, 7 innocent Jumma villagers were arrested and brutally tortured by military forces. Among the arrested villagers, following persons were identified as:

- 1) Joy Moni Tanchangya (40) s/o Merikya Tanchangya;
- 2) Sneha Kumar Tanchangya (22)
- 3) Rupan Tanchangya (19) s/o Sharat Kumar Tanchangya.

Among them, Joy Moni Tanchangya was produced before district judicial magistrate court on 28 June. He was placed 5-days police remand. The other arrested were released later. It is also learnt that on that night the joint forces also conducted operation at no.1 and no. 2 Rubber Bagan areas from where 17 innocent Jumma villagers were also arrested, but released later after inhumanly beating.

A murder case against Rajan Chakma (40) and 20/25 unknown persons was filed with Bandarban police station by the deceased wife Ms. Chikan Bala Tanchangya on 27 June. In the deposition of the case, she charged ten persons including following PCJSS leaders of Bandarban district to have been involved with this killing.

- 1) K S Mong, assistant general secretary of central committee of PCJSS and also member of CHT Regional Council,

- 2) Sadhuram Tripura, president of Bandarban district committee of PCJSS and also member of CHT Regional Council,
- 3) Dr. Nilu Kumar Tanchangya, central member of PCJSS and also member of CHT Regional Council,
- 4) Bimal Kanti Tanchangya, leader of Bandarban sadar upazila branch of PCJSS and
- 5) Shambu Kumar Tanchangya, leader of Rowangchari upazila branch of PCJSS.

PCJSS leaders of Bandarban district denied to have involved with this incident. They also claimed that charging them with this incident is nothing but politically motivated.

Sources also informed that a UPDF supporter named Ashok Kumar Tanchangya from Balaghata under Bandarban sadar upazila was arrested by joint forces on 7 July. But he was mysteriously released later. It is also learnt that next day on 8 July an armed cadre of UPDF belong to Chakma (name is not available) with arm who came there from Kaukhali upazila under Rangamati district was arrested from Balaghata area in Bandarban by joint forces and as per his statement Ashok Kumar Tanchangya was again arrested. A reliable source also confirmed that they were handed over to Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) and taken to Rangamati district.

Update of Priya Tanchangya killing

It is learnt that rest of the 6 villagers arrested from no. 3 Rubber Bagan area were released. Following the killing of Priya Tanchangya on 27 June allegedly by a group of armed miscreants, 7 Jumma villagers from no. 3 Rubber Bagan area were arrested by joint forces. Among them, Joy Moni Tanchangya was sent to Bandarban jail and other 6 villagers were released later.

Sources also informed that a UPDF supporter named Ashok Kumar Tanchangya from Balaghata under Bandarban sadar upazila was arrested by joint forces on 7 July. But he was released later. It is also learnt that next day on 8 July an armed cadre of UPDF belong to Chakma (name is not available) who came there from Kaukhali upazila under Rangamati district was arrested with arm from Balaghata area in Bandarban by joint forces and as per his statement Ashok Kumar Tanchangya and Bindu Tanchangya were arrested later. A reliable source also confirmed that they were handed over to Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) and taken to Rangamati district.

Sources said that five PCJSS leaders, namely, Mr. K S Mong, assistant general secretary of central committee of PCJSS and also member of CHT Regional Council; Mr. Sadhuram Tripura, president of Bandarban district committee of PCJSS and also member of CHT Regional Council; Dr. Nilu Kumar Tanchangya, central member of PCJSS and also member of CHT Regional Council; Mr. Bimal Kanti Tanchangya, leader of Bandarban sadar upazila branch of PCJSS and Shambu Kumar Tanchangya, leader of Rowangchari upazila branch of PCJSS who were deliberately charged with the killing of Priya Tanchangya by deceased wife Ms. Chikan Bala Tanchangya were granted ad-interim anticipatory bail by High Court on 13 July 2008 to submission of charge-sheet.

(48) 29 June 2008: M N Larma honoured Sidhu-Kanhu-Fulmni Award

On 29 June 2008 Bangladesh Adivasi Odhikar Andolon (BAOA) honoured Manabendra Narayan Larma, founder of the Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti (PCJSS) and champion of national awakening in CHT, for his sacrifice for the causes of the indigenous peoples. Mr. Larma was assassinated by his rivals in 1983.

The Sidhu-Kanhu-Fulmni award was handed over to Jyotirindra Bodhipriya Larma, younger brother of Manabendra Narayan Larma in a discussion meeting at the BIAM auditorium in Dhaka held on 29 June to mark the 153rd anniversary of Santal Revolution. A panel of speakers highlighted the significance of the Santal Rebellion Day.

The award was introduced to pay respect to Santal leaders Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu and Fulmani who had mobilised the rebellion against the British rule and laid down their lives fighting against the colonial rule more than 150 years ago.

(49) 1 July 2008: District and session judge's courts start in CHT

On 1 July 2008 District Judge Courts started in the three hill districts of CHT region. It is mentionable that on 24 February 2008 the High Court directed the government to set up civil and criminal courts run by judicial officers in the CHT within a year to implement the CHT Regulation (Amendment) Act, 2003. Though judicial power of the administrative officials ended with separation of the judiciary from the executive on November 1 last year, the Deputy Commissioners of three hill districts still retain the civil judges' posts while the divisional commissioner acts as district and sessions judge as per the CHT Regulation, 1900. An amendment to the Regulation in 2003 made it mandatory for the government to establish district and session judge's courts in the CHT, but that has yet to be implemented.

In the CHT Regulation 1900, a three-tier social court headed by three hill circle chiefs (or king) and their subordinate headman and Karbari is mandated to resolve only some social and family conflicts in the ethnic communities.

(50) 4 July 2008: Workshop on indigenous peoples and PRSP held by CIPRAD in Mymensingh

On 4 July 2008 Centre for Indigenous People's Research and Development (CIPRAD), an NGO, working to uphold rights of indigenous people organised a workshop titled 'Plain Land Indigenous Peoples' Rights and PRSP: Strategic Advocacy' at CARITAS auditorium in Dhaka with Chairman of Tribal Welfare Association (TWA) Advocate Promod Mankin in the chair.

Speakers of the workshop demanded to the government to set up a separate ministry for indigenous people of plain lands to uphold their rights. Speakers said indigenous people of plain land outnumbered their brothers in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) by four times. Still then the people of CHT are enjoying more facilities than indigenous people of plain land, they said. The government should take steps to set up a separate ministry titled, 'Ministry for Plain Land Adivasis,' for upholding their rights, speakers said.

(51) 7 July 2008: GOC of 24th infantry division calls on CHTRC chairman

On 7 July 2008 General Commanding Officer (GOC) of 24th Infantry Division of Chittagong Cantonment Major General Mohammad Shamim Chowdhury called on Chairman of CHT Regional Council Mr. Jyotirindra Bodhipriya Larma alias Santu Larma at his office in Rangamati district of CHT. Sources said it is a courtesy visit after his appointment as GOC of 24th Infantry Division in last June.

Sources also reported that Mr. Larma raised the issues of implementation of CHT Accord and execution of CHTRC and HDC Acts for establishment of good governance and rule of law and holding free, fair and accepted election in CHT. Among others, member of the CHTRC Goutam Kumar Chakma was also present during the meeting.

(52) 7 July 2008: Custodian death in army custody in Belaichari

On 7 July 2008 one Jumma villager named Niranjon Chakama (40) s/o Lalit Kumar Chakma of Nareychari under Kangarachari Union has been tortured to death in army custody in Belaichari under Rangamati district. The soldiers took him to the camp and beat him mercilessly, resulting in his death.

(53) 18 July 2008: PCMS and HWF organise roundtable on national women dev policy and indigenous women's rights

On 18 July 2008 Parbatya Chattagram Mahila Samiti (PCMS) and Hill Women's Federation (HWF) jointly organised roundtable conference on national women development policy and indigenous women's rights at VIP Lounge of national press club in Dhaka. Presided over by vice president of PCMS Ms. Jyotiprova Larma, the roundtable was attended by president of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad Aiyasha Khanam, general secretary of Bangladesh Economics Association Abul Barakat, Dhaka University teacher Dr. Sadek Halim and Dr. Meghna Guhathagurta, women affairs secretary of Bangladesh Awami League Dr. Dipumoni, president of Karmajibi Nari Ms. Shirin Akhter, human rights activist Rosaline Costa, president of Parbatya Chattagram Mahila Samity Madhabi Lata Chakma, general secretary of Bangladesh Indigenous Peoples Forum Sanjeeb Drong and president of Dhaka Journalist Association Shah Alamgir as discussant.

On behalf of PCMS and HWF, Nishi Dewan read out a paper on national women development policy and indigenous women's rights. General Secretary of HWF Ms. Shashwati Chakma conducted the roundtable.

The speakers of the conference urged the indigenous women to launch a united movement with the mainstream organisations to establish the rights of the indigenous women. They urged the major political parties to incorporate the issue of rights of the ethnic minority groups in their respective manifestos. The speakers criticised the government for not taking into consideration the indigenous women's rights while formulating the National Women Development Policy 2008.

The PCMS and HWF placed a 10-point charter of demands that included followings-

- (1) To insert a separate clause in the National Women Development Policy specifying the rights of the indigenous women;
- (2) To take opinions from indigenous women's organisations for the same;
- (3) To reserve seat in the parliament for the indigenous women;
- (4) To introduce reserved seats in the local government bodies for indigenous women;
- (5) To ensure participation of the indigenous women in local and national developments;
- (6) To undertake special measure for education of indigenous women and introduce primary education through mother tongue for indigenous children;
- (7) To generate employments for indigenous women;
- (8) To provide special training to promote interpreters for indigenous women and provide loans with less interest or without interest;
- (9) To take special measure for stopping violence against indigenous women; and
- (10) To implement policy agenda of PRSP with an aim to ensure socio-economic development of indigenous women.

(54) 25 July 2008: Rat Invasion: Hill people still suffer from food shortage

The Daily Star, Friday, 25 July 2008

Indigenous people in many remote villages in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) will have to suffer from lack of food grains for at least two more months until the next harvest if the government does not provide them with food. Many families in the CHT districts including Bandarban, Khagrachhari and Rangamati are now living on wild potato, arum and green leaves after rats invaded the areas last year and early this year and destroyed all their crops leading to this famine-like situation.

The government and donor agencies provided them with rice immediately after the rat invasion, but that was adequate for only a month or two, they said, adding that the next harvest is due in October. "It has become very hard for us to buy rice at Tk 30 per kg as we do not have any income here," said Thiam Khub, a woman from Ruma Thanchi village.

People in Darjeelingpara, a woman village at the foot of the Keokradong, are living on boiled pumpkin leaves and rice. The family of Karbari (the village chief) said none in the villages can afford boiled leaves and rice more than twice a day. They said initially they bought rice selling their cattle and poultry. But now most of them have nothing left to sell.

Following bamboo blossoming last year rats invaded many CHT areas and destroyed almost everything edible. This forced many indigenous people to leave their villages. Talking to the people from Ruma Thanchi, Sungsangpara, Anandapara, Wykangpara, it was learnt that rats ate all their rice, ginger, maize, turmeric, peppers, pumpkins, oil seeds and cotton.

The government provided each family with 15 kg rice while the UNDP and World Food Programme provided 30 kg rice per family in the affected areas, the locals said. But the aid exhausted within two months or just one month in the case of a bigger family, they said.

Mostly Bawm, Marma, Tripura and Murung communities live in these remote villages. These people generally grow everything they need and just have to buy kerosene and salt from the market.

Thiam Khub now works in the jum and weaves. He said he can weave a "thurang" in two days and sell it for Tk 100 at Ruma Bazar, about eight hours' walk from his village. But with this amount he can hardly buy 3 kgs of rice. "I am having a very hard time because if I weave thurang, I cannot work on jum," he said. "We have already sold most of the cattle in our village to buy rice. Many of us now have nothing to sell and are living on wild potatoes, arum or other wild roots," said Chandiram Tripura of Anandapara.

About the relation between rat infestation and bamboo blooming, wildlife expert Dr Reza Khan said rats lose their habitats when bamboo plants die after blooming. "So, the rats come out of the bamboo bushes and attack crops," he said.

As bamboo generally blooms in 20-40 years, he suggested cleaning the bamboo bushes accordingly so that bamboo cannot bloom.

(55) 2 August 2008: Bengali settlers blockade Sultana Kamal at Baghaihat in Rangamati

On 2 August 2008 the Bengali settlers blockaded former advisor to the caretaker government of Bangladesh and eminent human rights activist Ms. Sultana Kamal while she was returning from Sajek after distribution of relief to the victims of Sajek arson attack at Baghaihat bazaar under Sajek union of Baghaichari upazila in Rangamati district.

It is learnt that the Bengali settlers with the patronisation of the security forces halted Sultana Kamal's vehicle while she, accompanied with indigenous and human rights activist, reached at Baghaihat bazaar. Bengali settlers shouted slogan against Sultana Kamal and at a stage they threw bricks and hit with stick on her vehicle. They blockaded Sultana Kamal and her colleagues for an hour. At that time, a group of military forces from Baghaihat zone and personnel of intelligent agencies were present there. But they did not come forward to help Ms. Kamal. It is alleged that authorities played active role behind the scene to organise Bengali settlers to blockade Ms. Sultana Kamal.

It is mentionable that an arson attack was made by Bengali settlers with the help of military forces of Baghaihat zone on 7 Jumma villages on 20 April 2008 which left 78 houses of 7 Jumma villages and 43 temporary hedge-rows of Bengali settlers completely burnt to ashes. This is the second time Ms. Kamal went there to distribute relief to the victims. She, on behalf of "Relief Management Committee for the Victims of Sajek-Gangaram Arson Incident", distributed two and half bundle of CIT sheet, 50 kgs of rice, 1 kg edible oil and 1 kg sidol (dry fish paste) for each family of 80 Jumma families. She also tried to distribute relief to 20 families of Bengali settlers. However, Bengali settlers refused to accept this relief arguing that there were 105 affected families and hence this relief was inadequate for them.

(56) 5 August 2008: 8 Islamic militants held in Bandarban

On 5 August 2008 eight Islamic militants belong to 'Islami Samaj' aged between 18 and 50 years were arrested by intelligence officials when they were distributing leaflets at Bandarban District and Sessions Judge's Court premises. They were handed over to Bandarban police station and sent Bandarban jail.

The arrested militants are identified as Solaiman Kabir, Syed Ahmed Kabir, Abu Bakar Siddique, Nazmul Haque Rana, Abul Bashar, Khaled Saifullah Mamun, Habibur Rahman and Abu Hanif who came from Comilla, Sherpur, Noakhali, Shariatpur, Jamalpur and Tangail districts. They said they joined Islami Samaj a few months ago. They also added that they do not obey any man-made law and will not seek permission to distribute leaflets. They said that they were visiting different districts taking permission from Allah.

The militants said that they held a meeting earlier in the day with a teacher of Bandarban College and gave him some leaflets for distributing among the teachers and students. However, they claimed that they have no connection with the militants of Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) who kill people.

It is mentionable that the state policy of Islamisation in CHT helps to grow strong underground base of Islamic extremists in hilly region of CHT. By taking the advantage of state policy of Islamisation, Islamic extremist group including JMB, Huji and Rohingya separatists set up base camps and training centres in the deep forest of CHT, particularly Naikkyongchari, Lama and Alikadam upazilas under Bandarban district without facing hard difficulties. The militants, who were arrested from CHT after the bomb blast through out the country in August 2005, admitted that there were several training camps and hundreds of members in three hill districts of CHT and thousands of jihadis had been trained from these training camps.

(57) 6-9 August 2008: International Indigenous People Day observed in Bangladesh

BIPF's Press Conference in Dhaka

On 6 August 2008 Bangladesh Indigenous Peoples Forum (BIPF) organised a press conference to mark international day of world's indigenous peoples at national press club in Dhaka. President of BIPF Mr. Jyotirindra Bodhipriya Larma alias Santu Larma read out a written statement while its general secretary Mr. Sanjeeb Drong conducted the conference.

In the written statement, Santu Larma said that indigenous people in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) are now under threat from large-scale displacement due to land grabbing, setting up of parks and social forestation. He said that the oppression of the indigenous peoples has continued even under the present caretaker regime too. He also mentioned the death of Chalesh Richhil, an indigenous leader of Modhupur, under law enforcers' custody, filing of false cases against at least 50 indigenous activists who raised their voices for implementation of the CHT Accord and their land rights and strengthening the settler rehabilitation programme in the CHT.

He mentioned that in accordance with the UN declaration, BIPF declared the social and economic rights of indigenous peoples as main theme of the day. He declared elaborate programmes including discussion, seminar, rally, fair, film show, photography exhibition and traditional dance programmes to observe the day to be organised by BIPF.

BIPF's Inaugural programme held at central Shahid Minar in Dhaka

On 9 August 2008 at 10.00 a.m. BIPF organised inaugural programme to mark international day of world's indigenous peoples at Shaheed Minar in Dhaka. Presided over by president of BIPF Mr. Jyotirindra Bodhipriya Larma alias Santu Larma, the day-long programme was inaugurated by advisor to the caretaker government of Bangladesh on the charge of Ministry of Primary & Mass Education and Culture Ms. Rasheda K Chowdhury.

Among others, president of CPB Manzurul Ahasan Khan, president of Workers' Party Rashed Khan Memon, presidium member of Gono Forum Pankaj Bhattacharja, president of Samyabadi Dal Dilip Barua, eminent theatre artist Mamunur Rashid, leader of Jatiya Party G M Kader, agricultural secretary of Awami League Dr. Md. Abdur Razzaque, teacher of Dhaka University (DU) Dr. H K S Arefeen, teacher of DU Dr. Nim Chnadra Bhoumik, teacher of DU and general secretary of BAOA Prof. Mesbah Kamal, president of Mahila Parishad Ayeshe Khanom, teacher of DU Dr. Sadeka Halim, eminent human rights activist Barrister Sara Hossain, general secretary of Jatiya Adivasi Parishad Rabindranath Soren, women rights activist Chaitali Tripura, Pankoj Kondo, Element Hajong and Lelena Talang delivered solidarity speech at the inaugural.

In her inaugural speech, Rasheda K Choudhury said, everybody should work on the issue of land ownership and ensure education of the indigenous peoples living in the country. She said the government was planning to establish boarding schools in the CHT to ensure quality education for the children of the indigenous peoples in their first language and would set up separate cultural institutes for different ethnic groups.

Santu Larma said that the indigenous peoples were still deprived of their rights. They have to fight for equal rights in politics, economics and over the land issues as they can contribute equally to the development of our country. He added that the government should remember that the participation of indigenous peoples in every sector is necessary as they are an integral part of the country.

Speakers said the indigenous peoples could not exercise their rights in the country. They said this government was ignoring the incidents of arson in the Sajek valley, which reflected its attitude of neglect towards the ethnic minorities.

Hundreds of the indigenous peoples of almost all ethnic communities from different parts of the country gathered at the Central Shaheed Minar to mark the Day. The inaugural programme was followed by a colourful rally from Shaheed Minar to Shahbagh area of the city.

BIPF's Discussion at Engineers' Institution in Dhaka

In the afternoon session, at 4.00 p.m. of 9 August BIPF organised discussion at Engineers' Institution in Dhaka. Presided over by president of BIPF Mr. Jyotirindra Bodhipriya Larma alias Santu Larma, the discussion was attended by advisor to the caretaker government of Bangladesh on the charge of Ministry of Law and Land A F Hassan Arif as chief guest and special assistant to the chief advisor of caretaker government Raja Devasish Roy.

Among others, Danish ambassador in Dhaka Einar H Jensen, former adviser to the caretaker government Sultana Kamal, charge d'affaires of the European Commission Delegation to Bangladesh Brian Forey, head of CHTDF of UNDP Mr. Shooting, teacher of DU Dr. Dalem Chandra Burman and executive director of Manisher Jonno Foundation Ms. Shaheen Anam addressed the discussion.

In his speech, AF Hassan Ariff said that lands of indigenous peoples were being grabbed in the absence of adequate legal measures. He promised some steps, both long- and short-term, to ensure equal rights of indigenous peoples and to protect their culture. He stressed the need for sensitising every quarter to the democratic rights of indigenous peoples.

Raja Debashish Roy said there is no difference between rights of indigenous peoples and the country's interest. He added that as long as the country ensures the rights of indigenous peoples, it remains democratic.

Jyotirindra Bodhipriya Larma said the country can never gain a development momentum or become democratic if all the ethnic groups living in the country do not get equal treatment and opportunity.

Indigenous peoples' day observed in different districts

Rajshahi: On 9 August 2008 Adivasi Students Association of Rajshahi University (ASARU) brought out a colourful procession. Adivasi students urged the government to give constitutional recognition to the indigenous people. They demanded formation of a separate land commission and a separate ministry for indigenous peoples to deal with their problems. Prof Dulal Chandra Bishwas was present at the meeting as the main speaker. ASARU met RU acting vice chancellor Prof Manunul Keramat at his office and submitted a memorandum with 12-point demand including more quota for indigenous students at RU.

At a discussion and cultural programme at Rajshahi Shishu Academy auditorium, indigenous leaders demanded ensuring democratic, social, economic and cultural rights for indigenous people and ethnic minorities.

Another discussion meeting was jointly organised by Centre for Capacity Building of Voluntary Organisation, Rajshahi Press Club and Adivasi Gram Samaj Sangathan at Rajshahi Public Library to mark Day. Mizan Uddin, a sociology professor of Rajshahi University, attended the meeting as chief guest. Speakers at a discussion meeting said the indigenous people in the country were being deprived of enjoying their constitutional rights.

Earlier, the members of Jatiya Adivasi Parishad brought out a procession in Rajshahi city in the morning and paraded different roads.

Tangail: On 9 August Tribal Welfare Association, Karitas and Bangladesh Garo Chhatra Sangathan jointly organized the programme at a discussion at Bhasani Hall in Tangail town. Indigenous peoples reiterated the demand for ensuring their land rights and protecting their culture.

Earlier about one thousand indigenous people including Garo (Mandi) and Koach people of Modhupur, Sakhipur and Ghatail upazilas brought out a colourful procession in the town. Indigenous

leaders at a discussion at Mymensingh town said the government should take proper steps to protect the rights of the indigenous people.

Khagrachhari: Different local NGOs in the name of 'Adivasi Dibas Udjapon Committee' organised discussion at Tribal Cultural Institute in Khagrachhari to mark the Day with Nomita Chakma, chairperson of NGO Pajuriko in the chair. Chairman of Khagrachhari Hill District Council Monindra Lal Tripura was present at discussion as chief guest. Speakers in a discussion demanded constitutional recognition to the indigenous people of the country. They said that facing discrimination both from outsiders and by administration, indigenous people are losing lands, orchard and properties. Speakers suggested appointment of indigenous language-speaking teachers in primary schools to ensure schooling based on mother tongue, introducing teachers training on indigenous languages in CHT.

Rangamati: different local non-government organisations (NGOs) in Rangamati arranged different programmes to observe the Day. Indigenous people from far flung areas gathered on the premises of Hill District Council in the morning and held a meeting where speakers urged the government to ensure constitutional recognition to the indigenous people.

(58) 9 August 2008: Jumma village attacked by Bengali settlers at Gangaram Duar in Sajek

On 9 August 2008 at around 11.00 p.m. a group of Bengali settlers numbering 12/15 persons made an attack on Jumma houses at Gangaram Duar of Sajek union under Baghaichari upazila in Rangamati district. Bengali settlers beat the villagers and looted the valuables of houses. At least 6 Jumma villagers were wounded in this attack. One of wounded persons got admitted first at MSF hospital at Sajek with serious injuries. The following Jumma villagers were wounded-

- 1) Mr. Buddhadhan Chakma (60) s/o Surendra Chakma was beaten and his house was looted.
- 2) Mr. Kaloketu Chakma (68) s/o Rajendra Chakma was beaten.
- 3) Mr. Joyanta Chakma (70) s/o unknown was brutally beaten.
- 4) Mr. Tungkala Chakma (42) s/o Rai Mohan Chakma was beaten.
- 5) Mr. Mukul Kumar Chakma (50) s/o Suresh Swapan Chakma was beaten.
- 6) Mr. Hriday Ranjan Chakma (70) s/o Ramani Mohan Chakma was chopped by sharp lethal weapon and one of his hands was broken. He got admitted at MSF hospital. His house was also looted.

It is learnt that at day time a quarrel was happened between Bengali settlers and Jumma villagers at Baghaihat bazaar. In retaliation to this incident, the Bengali settlers along with few army personnel attacked the said village. The attack was led by (1) *Habilder* Shariful from Baghaichari army zone, (2) Md. Nasim Dactor, shopkeeper of Baghaihat bazaar, (3) Md. Rafiq, shopkeeper of Baghaihat bazaar, (4) Rahman, shopkeeper of Baghaihat bazaar and (5) Ali, shopkeeper of Baghaihat bazaar.

Wife of Hriday Ranjan Chakma filed a General Diary with Baghaichori Police station.

(59) 10 August 2008: Land owned by Jumma occupied by Bengali settlers in Bandarban

On 10 August 2008 a group of Bengali settlers occupied land owned by Jumma people at Kyaching Karbari Para under Bandarban sadar upazila in Bandarban district.

It is learnt that on that day at around 3.00 a.m. Bengali settlers led by Kazi Mujibur Rahman, secretary of district Awami League and also vice president of army-backed extreme Bengali nationalist and fanatic organisation named Sama Odhikar Andolon constructed 12 houses on land of Kyaching Karbari. Following the forcibly occupation of land, Kyaching Karbari filed a case with judicial magistrate court of Bandarban district on 11 August. In addition, he also lodged a case against the Bengali settlers with Bandarban police station. Officer-in-Charge (OC) of police station called both parties i.e. land owner Kyaching Karbari and Bengali settlers. But astonishingly he, instead of eviction of Bengali settlers from forcibly occupied land, only ordered Bengali settlers not to further expand occupation land and construction of house.

It is mentionable that Bengali settlers constructed at least 150 houses occupying around 4 acre of land owned by Kyaching Karbari during last 3 years. Kyaching Karbari lodged a case against the land grabbers at that time. Court ordered to maintain status quo. But violating the court order, the Bengali settlers constructed 12 houses further occupying land of Kyaching Karbari. It is also reported that a mosque and a school were constructed in this area with financial help of Bandarban army brigade 6 months ago. Kyaching Karbari has around 30 acre of land in this area.

(60) 14 August 2008: CHT Commission urges government to speed up CHT Accord execution

On 14 August 2008 in a press conference held at national press club in Dhaka, the CHT Commission (CHTC) urged the government to speed up the implementation of the CHT Accord of 1997 and to take early measures to activate the land commission and the refugee rehabilitation task force.

It is mentionable that the twelve-member CHTC was re-constituted in a meeting held on 31 May and 1 June 2008 in Copenhagen, Denmark. There are three co-chairs of the newly constituted CHTC. They are member of the Upper House of the UK Parliament and vice chair of the Parliamentary Human Rights Group of UK Lord Eric Avebury, former advisor to caretaker government of Bangladesh and eminent human rights activist Ms. Sultana Kamal and indigenous people expert from Denmark Dr. Eda Nicolson.

CHTC visited three hill districts of the CHT from 7-10 August 2008 to observe the prevailing situation of the region and help promote human rights, democratic practices and land rights of indigenous people. They talked to the advisors to the caretaker government, chairmen-members of the CHTRC and three HDCs, civil and military officials, representatives of permanent residents of CHT both indigenous Jumma and Bengali peoples, leaders of Bengali settlers, political and traditional leaders, civil society members, public representatives in CHT and Dhaka during the visit. They also visited Baghaihat and Sajek area under Baghaichari upazila where arson attack was made on 7 indigenous Jumma vilages by Bengali settlers, land dispute areas of Karalyachari under Mahalchari, Twi-tilla and 4 Kilometre area on Dighinala-Baghaichari road and Baragram in Dighinala.

After completing the visit, CHTC organised this press conference where its co-chairs Lord Eric Avebury and Ms. Sultana Kamal, its members Ms. Victoria-Tauli Corpus, Dr. Swapan Adnan, Dr. Muhammad Zafar Iqbal and Barrister Sara Hossain, and its resource persons Dr. Meghna Guhathakurta, Ms. Yeneki Arens and Tom Erickson.

Lord Eric Avebury read out the written statement of the commission. He said that this was a familiarisation trip to gather and establish a database on information received during and after the first mission. The commission will make recommendations to the government, political parties and stakeholders in the light of gathered information.

Lord Avebury also added, "The commission is still at an initial stage of its operations. In the coming months, it will gather and establish a database on information received during and after this mission." He said that individuals or groups looking to contribute to the recommendations can do so before November 30 by contacting the CHTC secretariat. He expressed that there was a common view about the urgent need for peace in the region and for implementation of the CHT Accord, although there were diverse views on the possible means available. They also received reports on ethnic tensions and disharmony surrounding land disputes.

Co-chair of the commission and former adviser to the caretaker government Sultan Kamal and its members educationist Zafar Iqbal, Sara Hossain and Swapan Adnan attended the briefing. They also answered to question of journalists in the conference.

It is mentionable that CHTRC was formed in 1990 and operated till 2001. It published a report on land and human rights of CHT people titled 'Life is not Ours' and updated it four times.

(61) 15 August 2008: Massive military operation is going on in Rowangchari

Since 15 August 2008 massive military operation is going on through out Rowangchari upazila in Bandarban district.

It is learnt that Brigade commander of Bandarban brigade ordered to launch operation through out Rowangchari upazila in the name of kicking out terrorist from the area. He also ordered to destroy Jum houses constructed by Jum cultivator for temporary use alleging that the terrorists hide at these houses. The army deployed to this operation ordered Jum cultivator not to make hedges of the houses. However, Jum cultivators alleged that they would not leave without hedges of the houses.

(62) 19 August 2008: One Jumma villager killed by Bengali settlers in Sajek

On 19 August 2008 one Jumma villager named Ladu Mani Chakma (50) s/o Kuji Kumar Chakma of Retkaba village of Sajek union under Baghaichari upazila in Rangamati district was killed by a group of Bengali settlers.

It is learnt that on that day around 10.00 p.m. a group of Bengali settlers led by Mohammad Ali encircled the house of Ladu Mani Chakma. Of them, three Bengali settlers, with their faces under cover, entered the house while the others remained outside. They caught Ladu Mani Chakma and brought out him from his home. Victim's wife Ms. Chikanpudi Chakma (alias Shanti Bala) (45) was also hit on her head with a knife when she tried to prevent Bengali settlers from bringing out her husband. Then Ladu Mani Chakma was taken into the place nearby his house where he was brutally chopped to death. Bengali settlers also tried to rape victim's daughter. But her mother Chikanpudi pulled her away. Soon after kidnapping her husband, Chikanpudi with my son and daughter fled into the forest.

Bengali settlers who entered the house were identified as Mohammad Ali (28) s/o Nachor Ali, Jahar Ali (24) s/o Achaniya Ali and Nurul Alam (24) s/o Julfu Ali. It is also reported that at some distance, there were a few dozen army personnel providing protection to Bengali settlers.

The deadbody of Ladu Mani Chakma was recovered from the place barely 50 yards from the army camp at Gangaram area. The military forces immediately seized the deadbody and sent it to Khagrachari hospital. It is learnt that military forces had cordoned off the hospital during the postmortem and no Jumma was allowed to enter it.

It is also learnt that Chikanpudi Chakma filed a murder case against Bengali settlers including Mohammad Ali, Jahar Ali and Nurul Alam with Baghaichari police station under Rangamati district. Police arrested Mohammad Ali, but other culprits including Jahar Ali and Nurul Alam were not arrested. They were staying at Baghaihat bazaar openly and have been threatening Jumma villagers for severe actions.

(63) 22 August 2008: Council of PCP of CU and Ctg. Metropolitan Unit and HWF of CU held in Chittagong

On 22 August 2008 the council of Hill Student Council (PCP) of Chittagong University unit, PCP of Chittagong Metropolitan unit and Hill Women's Federation (HWF) of Chittagong University unit was held at Buddhist Foundation Auditorium in Chittagong. PCJSS representatives Ananda Joyti Chakma, Uddipan Chakma and Chironjib Chakma were present in this council. On behalf of PCP central committee, its president Mongsingneo Marma, general secretary Hiran Mitra Chakma and organizing secretary Udayan Tripura were also present. More than 150 representatives and observers have taken part in this day long council. Finally the council elected the new committees headed by the following individuals for the next 2008-2009 tenure respectively.

Chittagong University Unit PCP: Palash Tanchangya as President, Avilash Chakma as General Secretary and Ajit Chakma as Organizing Secretary.

Chittagong University Unit HWF: Eco Chakma as President, Muktasree Chakma (Swathi) as General Secretary and Paimrasong Marma as Organizing Secretary.

Chittagong Metropolitan Unit PCP: Sharat Joyti Chakma as President, Usongnue Marma as General Secretary and Ratul Chakma as Organizing Secretary

Ms. chanchana Chakma, organizing secretary of HWF Central committee and Udayan Tripura, organizing secretary of PCP Central Committee conducted the oath taking ceremony for their respective organization.

(64) 23 August: PCP organises protest rally at DU campus against the killing of Ladumoni Chakma

On 23 August 2008 Dhaka Metropolitan Unit of Chittagong Hill Tracts Hill Students' Council (PCP) organised a demonstration at Dhaka University (DU) campus against the barbarous killing of Ladumoni Chakma.

It is mentionable that on 19 August 2008 at 10 p.m. a group of Bengali settlers killed Ladumoni Chakma alias Jadhu Mani chopped to death at Gangaram Mukh in Sajek under Rangamati district. His wife, Shantibala Chakma was also seriously injured while she tried to save her husband. It is also noteworthy that during the visit of the CHT Commission in CHT from 7-10 August, Ladumoni Chakma gave valuable information about land grabbers and grabbing. Local people suspect that this is the main reason behind on his murder.

The protest rally started from Aparajeyo Bangla at DU at 10:30 a.m. a good number of students from different universities of Dhaka City joined the rally. After moving round arts building twice, the rally stopped at Aparajeyo Bangla. President of Dhaka Metropolitan Unit PCP Korunamoy Chakma presided over the meeting while Rigan Chakma, general secretary of Dhaka Metropolitan Unit PCP conducted the meeting. Sohel Hajong, general secretary of Bangladesh Indigenous Students' Action Forum (BISAF), and Litus Chiran of Bangladesh Garo Students' Association (BAGACHAS) delivered solidarity speech on behalf of their respective organization. Dhaka University teachers, namely, Dr. Sourav Sikder of Linguistic Department, Robayet Ferdous of Mass Communication and Journalism, Wahiduzzaman of Institute of Education and Research and Mohammad Samad of Social Welfare department also delivered solidarity speech in the protest. Later on Mongsingneo Marma, President of PCP central committee, expressed his concern on the present situation and demanded proper investigation and punishment of perpetrators of Ladumoni killing in his speech. Rigan Chakma put forward the following demand at the end of the meeting-

- 1) To conduct proper investigation of the incident and to punish Bengali settlers involved with the killing of Ladumoni Chakma.
- 2) To provide adequate treatment for the injured people.
- 3) To implement CHT Accord soon.
- 4) To stop fresh land grabbing by Bengali settlers
- 5) To withdraw all temporary army camps as per CHT Accord.
- 6) To form a judicial investigation committee to properly investigate all the genocide and communal attack occurred so far against hill people.

(65) 29 August 2008: 17th Council of PCP of Dhaka branch held

On 29 August 2008 upholding the slogan "stand against all exploitation and oppression", the 17th council of Dhaka metropolitan branch of Hill Students' Council (PCP) was held at Saint Christina Church auditorium in Dhaka. The council was presided over by Karunamoy Chakma, the former acting president of Dhaka metropolitan branch of PCP. Ushatan Talukdar, Secretary for Students and Political Affairs of PCJSS was present as chief guest in the council.

Mangal Kumar Chakma, Secretary for Information and Publicity Department of PCJSS; Uddipan Chakma, Staff member of PCJSS; Sohel Hajong, General Secretary of Bangladesh Indigenous Students' Action Forum (BISAF); Chanchana Chakma, Organizing Secretary, Hill Women's Federation, Riton Chakma, President, Rajshahi Metropolitan Branch of PCP; Mong Sing Neo, President, Central PCP also spoke in the conference. Among others, Hiran Mitra Chakma, Acting General Secretary; Udayan Tripura, Organizing Secretary and Pallab Chakma, Secretary for Education, Literature and Culture of PCP, Central Committee were also present there.

Rigan Chakma, the former general secretary, Dhaka Metropolitan Branch of PCP has presented the organizational report of the last committee. The members of 16th committee of PCP also spoke in the meeting. They said that it is the duty of every Jumma students to rejuvenate with Jumma nationalism. They added that the women should also contribute well enough to the evolution/progress of the society along with men. To ensure this contribution they appealed assistance from PCP in order to strengthen HWF.

At the last, Rigan Chakma, Bablu Chakma and Jyotishman Chakma were elected as President, General Secretary and Organizing Secretary respectively in the council.

(66) 5 September 2008: PCP organises farewell and reception in Chittagong University

On 5 September 2008 Chittagong University (CU) unit of Hill Students' Council (PCP) organised a farewell to out-going students and reception to new students at Chittagong University campus. University teachers, students, guardians have participated in this programme. More than 150 out-going students and new comer students have taken part in all events of this programme. Chairman of CHT Regional Council (CHTRC) Mr. Jyotirindra Bodhipriya Larma alias Santu larma has graced the function as chief guest while Professor Gazi Saleh, Dean, Social Science Faculty of CU; Professor Hossain Kabir, Chair, Department of Public Administration; Mr. Sanjeeb Drong, General Secretary, Bangladesh Adivasi Forum and Mr. Mongsingneo Marma, President, PCP Central Committee were present as special guest. The whole programme was presided over by Mr. Palash Tanchangya, president, PCP, Chittagong University Unit and conducted by PCP, CU Unit secretary Mr. Avilash Chakma.

During discussion, the chief guest Mr. Jyotirindra Bodhipriya Larma said that students are the future of our nation. They have to face the challenges of modern age. That's why they have to study hard and gain knowledge through different curricular and extra curricular activities. He also explained the duties and responsibilities of students towards their respective communities. Mr. Larma urged the students not to forget the roots of own. The out-going students would contribute for their respective communities and new students would learn leadership skills during their university life which would let them to lead the nation in coming days, he added. He hoped that the university authority would consider the problems of indigenous students regarding seat in the hall and other concern.

In his speech Mr. Sanjeeb Drong said, Student should not think what the state have done for them rather think what he or she would do for the state. He expected the Jumma students and activists of PCP would take all necessary steps to establish their just rights. Professor Gazi Saleh and Professor Hossain Kabir said that they would do every possible way from their side to solve the problems of indigenous students. In this regard they needed cooperation from CHTRC.

It is mentionable that, during the same program in 2005, then VC of CU had given the ward that CU authority would provide land in campus if any authority of CHT would build dormitory for CHT indigenous students. Finally the CU students staged an attractive cultural show.

(67) 10 September 2008: Commercial afforestation by Destiny-2000 by occupying IP's land in Bandarban

Destiny-2000, a multi-level marketing company in Bangladesh, undertaked afforestation programme for commercial purposes in Bandarban district by purchasing lands that was leased out to non-residents of CHT. It is also alleged that Destiny also occupied private lands owned by indigenous Jumma villagers.

It is learnt that on 10 September 2008 local people droved out Destiny workers while they were cleaning land by setting fire with kerosene on existing forest and orchard owned by indigenous Jumma villagers at Chemi Dalupara area under Bandarban sadar upazila (sub-district). After driving out from there, they later tried to occupy the land owned by one Bengali permanent resident named A K M Jahangir. Following this incident, complain has been lodged with the headman court.

Khiyang Adivasi leader Mr. Bachha Khyang, Karbari of Chemi Dalu Para Mr. Achhomong and villager of Gungurumuk Para Mr. Chinghla Khiyang said that they opposed the workers of Destiny when they came to occupy their lands. A Bengali resident Mr. Jahangir also alleged that the workers of Destiny occupied and set fire a portion of his orchard. Contractor of Destiny who is involved in afforestation confessed ablaze of a portion of Jahangir's orchard.

It is worth mentioning that CHT Peace Accord signed in 1997 between the government of Bangladesh and indigenous people's political party PCJSS stipulates, "Out of the lands allotted to non-tribal and non-local persons for rubber and other plantations, the lease (allocation) in respect of the lands of those who did not undertake any project during the last ten years or did not properly utilize the lands

shall be cancelled." It is also mentionable that almost all the leases were not utilized. However, though eleven have passed after signing of the Accord, no allotment (lease) has yet been cancelled.

(68) September 2008: Follow-up of Bengali settlement programme in Sajek

In September 2008, Lt. Col. Sajid Imtiaz, commanding officer (CO) of Baghahat army zone was transferred from Baghahat zone and a new CO has been appointed there. The new CO stopped providing fund and ration to the Bengali settler families since mid-September 2008. He also ordered the settlers to give back lands to the Jumma people except the lands purchased ones in the meantime. Consequently, many families of the settlers returned to their own houses at Muslim Block Para of Baghaichari upazila and Hajachara of Dighinala upazila.

It is important to note here that Ladu Moni Chakma alias Jadu Moni of Retkaba village of Sajek union was brutally killed by Bengali settlers on 19 August 2008 and the CHT Commission raised the incident of it with the Chief Advisor Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed of Caretaker Government of Bangladesh in September 2008. In addition, the UNPO (Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organisation) submitted a report on CHT to the UN Human Rights Council in September 2008 on which Bangladesh Government is supposed to face hearing in February 2009. It is speculated that the present Caretaker Government, in order to have favourable position on the situation in Baghahat area under Sajek union in particular, took up such a soft stance.

(69) Sept-Oct 2008: Judge Court grants bail for indigenous activists in Khagrachari

Very recently, newly introduced judge court in Khagrachari district granted bail to some indigenous activists. Among them, PCJSS central leader Mr. Tatindra Lal Chakma got bail on 25 September 2008, PCP leader Mr. Bholash Tripura on 7 October 2008 and Anunay Chakma Manas on 14 October 2008. They all were arrested after the promulgation of state of emergency.

(70) 3 October 2008: Bengali settlers tried to commit communal attack in Baghaichari

On 3 October 2008 at mid-night Bengali settlers of 4 mile area of Baghaichari upazila under Rangamati district set fire on some 10-15 houses of them and immediately informed the nearest BDR camp authority of it falsely alleging that tribal miscreants burnt down their houses. A group of BDR rushed there and found makeshifts on ablaze, but all the household belongings were intact at the outsides. The BDR authority inquired about the incident and found it a false play.

However, on 6 October 2008 Bengali settlers under the banner of Sama Odhikar Andolon (SOA), an extreme Bengali nationalist and communal organisation of Bengali Muslim settlers, brought out procession at Baghaichari upazila headquarters demanding to take necessary action against tribal people and to provide compensation to them. They also had intention to fall upon the Jumma people and their houses at the upazila headquarters. The BDR and the police prevented them from approaching towards Jumma localities. At a stage, the settler women clapped BDR and police personnel with their slippers and others felted stone. Some leaders of SOA were arrested from the spot and taken to the police station. Of them, Selim Bahari, president of the Baghaichari branch of SOA was sent to the Rangamati jail and others were set free.

It is notable that the said area of the hilly range between Kassalong valley of Baghaichari upazila of Rangamati hill district and Maini valley of Dighinala upazila and Khagrachari hill district belonged to the Jumma people of the said upazilas. Since the beginning of 2006, they cut down bushes, fired and cleared. They planted trees and fruit trees there and few of them made houses as well. As soon as state of emergency was promulgated in January 2007, the authority of Dwitila army camp under Dighinala region collected and if necessary, compelled Bengali Muslim families from Muslim Block Para of Baghaichari union of Baghaichari upazila and from Bachamarong and Betchari cluster villages of Merung union under Dighinala upazila to forcibly occupy the said area.

It is learnt that the army authority granted an amount of Taka 7,000 to each family for making hut and provided ration as well. By September 2008, around 100 makeshift were made by the Bengali Muslim settlers.

Further it is learnt that in the meantime a few families of Bengali settler families those who have cultivable land went back to their previous houses in Dighinala and Baghaichari upazilas. Many others who have good sources of income also want to return to previous locations. But the army authority is yet to allow them.

(71) 18 October 2008: PCJSS member harassed by police and intelligent personnel in Khagrachari

On 18 October 2008 police of Khagrachari police station and intelligent personnel arrested PCJSS members namely Buddha Kinkar Chakma Samichin and Priti Chakma for half an hour at Khagrachari police station in charging for photocopying of the "Report of the eminent citizens' visit to Chittagong Hill Tracts". They were released after confining them for half an hour at police lockup of Khagrachari police station.

(72) 20 October 2008: PCJSS submits registration form to EC

On 20 October 2008 PCJSS, a leading political party of indigenous Jumma peoples in CHT, submitted registration form to Bangladesh Election Commission. A delegation of PCJSS comprising political affairs secretary Mr. Ushatan Talukder, information and publicity secretary Mr. Mangal Kumar Chakma, staff member Mr. Uddipan Chakma, PCP leaders Hiron Mitra Chakma and Pallab Chakma submitted handed over the registration to EC deputy secretary Ms. Jesmine Tuli.

(73) 21 October 2008: Unite to realise constitutional rights of indigenous people- Shantu Larma urges students

The Daily Star, 22 October 2008

It is the time for the students of indigenous community to get united to realise their constitutional and basic rights, said Jyotirindra Bodhipriyo Larma alias Shantu Larma, chairman of Chittagong Hill Tracts Regional Council, yesterday.

At a freshers' reception at the Teacher-Student Centre (TSC) of Dhaka University, he said members of the indigenous community are deprived of their constitutional rights and victims of harassment and suppression.

The reception was organised by Bangladesh Adivasi Chhatra Sangram Parishad to receive all indigenous students who were admitted to different educational institutions including Dhaka University in the city this year.

Speaking as chief guest at the programme, Shantu Larma said, "We the members of indigenous community should continue our fight against communalism alongside our efforts to establish a democratic and progressive state," he added. Criticising the country's higher education system he said it helps students become communal instead of democratic and progressive.

Dr Harun-ur-Rashid, dean of social science faculty, who attended the programme as special guest, said to ensure higher education of the indigenous students Dhaka University fixed one percent admission quota for them from this year.

"All political parties should make their stand clear about the rights of indigenous people in their political manifestos," said Prof Mezbah Kamal of history department.

He also criticised the caretaker government for holding a meeting with Jamaat Secretary General Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojahid.

Criticising the deployment of military in Chittagong Hill Tracts, Prof Sadeka Halim of sociology department said the government should withdraw them from the area as local administration is there to control the law and order situation.

The programme was also addressed by Prof Mohammad Samad of Social Welfare Institute, Robaet Ferdous, associate professor of mass communication and journalism department, and Sanjib Drong, general secretary of Bangladesh Adibashi Forum.

(74) PCJSS rejected registration by EC

Bangladesh Election Commission rejected registration application of PCJSS. In November 2008 EC sent a letter to PCJSS informing denial of registration. EC argued that Manabendra Narayan Larma was elected as member of parliament as independent candidate in 1973, but not a nominee of PCJSS. That is why, EC was unable to register PCJSS with the EC. However, EC did not query any clarification from PCJSS.

It is mentionable that PCJSS mentioned in its registration form that M N Larma was elected in 1973 as member of parliament as a candidate of PCJSS. In fact, though M N Larma contested as independent candidate, but his candidature was shown as party (PCJSS) candidate during the campaign.

(75) 10 November 2008: 25th Death Anniversary of M N Larma observed in Dhaka and CHT

On 10 November 2008 National Committee on Celebration of 25th Death Anniversary of Manabendra Narayan Larma organised half-day programme to mark 25th death anniversary Manabendra Narayan Larma, pioneer of the indigenous Jumma peoples of Chittagong Hill Tracts and former Member of Parliament at National Press Club in Dhaka. The programmes include placing flowers at the portrait of MN Larma, memorial meeting, reciting poetry, lighting and cultural programme.

Presided by eminent academic Prof. Kabir Chowdhury, the memorial meeting was discussed by eminent teacher of Dhaka University Prof Serajul Islam Chowdhury, President of Communist Party of Bangladesh Manjurul Ahsan Khan, presidium member of Gono Forum Pankaj Bhattacharja, politburo member of Workers Party Haider Akbar Khan Rano, teacher of Dhaka University Prof Sadeka Halim, eminent columnist Abul Moksud, general secretary of Bangladesh Adivasi Odhikar Andolon (BAOA) Prof. Mesbah Kamal, executive director of Nijera Kori and human rights activist Ms. Kushi Kabir, information and publicity secretary of PCJSS Mangal Kumar Chakma and secretary general of Bangladesh Indigenus Peoples Forum Sanjeeb Drong. Member secretary of National Committee Prof. Ajoy Roy delivered welcome speech while Journalist Kamal Lohani delivered the MN Larma memorial lecture at the programme. Discussion was moderated by Associate Professor Robayet Ferdous of Dhaka University and editor of Mqwrur Mr. Dipayan Khisa. Among others, Former adviser to the caretaker government Advocate Sultana Kamal, eminent writer Selina Hossain, Prof Dalem Chandra Barman of Dhaka University, president of BAOA Prof. H K S Arefin, eminent human rights activist Ms. Rosaline Costa, executive director of ALRD Shamsul Huda and attended the programme.

Participants including academics, politicians and rights activists at a commemorative meeting paid rich tributes to M N Larma. Speakers said that M N Larma was not only a leader of the ethnic minority communities but also a leader of all those who were denied their rights as he represented their voice. He had dedicated himself to establishing the rights of deprived people whoever they may be a member of indigenous ethnic community or a mainstream Bengali people.

Prof Kabir Chowdhury said M N Larma was not only the best leader of hills people but also the leader of all deprived people. He was a man whose name still inspired the younger generation years after his death. The killers thought they would wipe out his name from history. But the reality is different. He is remembered by all. But people pronounce the names of his killers with extreme hatred.

Prof Serajul Islam Chowdhury said that we could not yet achieve the freedom we wanted and M N Larma dreamt of, because we could not try the war criminals and recognise the ethnic minority people. The non-recognition of the indigenous peoples in the constitution proves that Bangladesh is yet to become a democratic country. He said the country needed a united struggle to realise the dream of M N Larma, the dream of the people as a whole.

Before the discussion, different organisations namely National Committee on Celebration of 25th Death Anniversary of Manabendra Narayan Larma, PCJSS, BASAD, Bangladesh Indigenous Peoples Forum, Communist Party of Bangladesh, Gono Forum, Workers' Party, BAOA, Hill Students' Council (PCP), BISAF, HWF, Indigenous Students of Dhaka College, BAGACHAS, GIMA, Hill Students' Hostel, Biplobi Workers' Party including academics, media workers and rights activists placed flowers at the portrait of MN Larma. The memorial meeting was followed by lighting at the

portrait of MN Larma and cultural programme performed by indigenous artists and Udichi Shilpigosthi. National Committee also published a booklet and a poster.

Demands of National Committee: Earlier on 8 November 2008 National Committee, in a press conference held at Dhaka Reporter's Unity, put forward a charter of demands to the government, which includes renaming of the Chittagong-Rangamati Road after Manabendra Larma, setting up of his statue in either Dhaka or Chittagong and inclusion of his life sketch in national curriculum.

In CHT: PCJSS observed the 25th Death Anniversary of M N Larma in three hill district headquarters in CHT on 10 November. The programmes on this occasion include placing flower-wreaths at the portrait of MN Larma early in the morning, lighting and soaring of paper-balloon at the evening. President of PCJSS Mr. Jyotirindra Bodhipriya Larma paid tribute in Rangamati.

(76) Report on Parliamentary Election in CHT

Like other parts of the country, 9th parliamentary election was also held in CHT without major untoward violence on 29 December 2008. Candidates of the Awami League-led Grand Alliance won the polls in the three constituencies of CHT. The results of the three constituencies are as follows:

299 Rangamati constituency

Name of the candidate	Vote obtained
Mr. Dipankar Talukder, AL	114,972
Ms. Moitri Chakma, BNP	56,429
Mr. Ushatan Talukder, independent/PCJSS	51,833
Mr. Jasim Uddin Kabir, independent/Sama Odhikar Andolon	2,565
Ms. Alo Rani Aich, Jatiya Jukta Front	475
None of the above' ('no vote')	32,067

300 Bandarban constituency

Name of the candidate	Vote obtained
Mr. Bir Bahadur U Shoi Sing, AL	78,949
Mr. Saching Prue Jeri, BNP	59,174
Mr. K S Mong, independent/PCJSS	16,286
Mr. Chotan Kanti Tanchangya, independent/UPDF	629
None of the above' ('no vote')	354

298 Khagrachari constituency

Name of the candidate	Vote obtained
Mr. Jatindra Lal Tripura, AL	122,803
Mr. Samiron Dewan, BNP	62,977
Mr. Ujjal Smriti Chakma, independent/UPDF	60,410
Md. Jahedul Alam, independent (AL dissident)	16,561
Mr. Daudul Islam Bhuiyan, independent	12,403
Mr. Pranjibir Chakma, Progressive Democratic Party (PDP)	1,725
Mr. Jahed Ahmad Tutul, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD)	1,133
Mr. Pradip Kumar Mutsuddi, Jaker Party	691

Mr. Arun Shanti Chakma (Bhikkhu), National Peoples' Party	435
None of the above' ('no vote')	643

It is reported that UPDF forced Jumma voters in remote areas of Rangamati constituency at gun point to cast 'no vote'. This was happened particularly in Naniarchar upazila and several areas of Baghaichari, Kaukhali, Jurachari, Bilaichari and Longadu upazilas. On other hand, it is alleged that UPDF held rigging in Khagrachari constituency. At least 17 polling centres were captured by the UPDF armed cadres in Khagrachari district.

It is also alleged that candidates of Awami League in three constituencies of CHT distributed huge money for purchasing votes. It is also reported that in many places, the military forces forced voters, particularly Bengali voters to cast their vote for Awami League. For instance, army blockaded the Bengali voters who were BNP supporters to enter polling centre at Chitmaran polling centre under Kaptai upazila in Rangamati district.

It is learnt that UPDF armed cadres attacked villagers for casting vote for Ushatan Talukder, PCJSS-supported independent candidate in Rangamati district. For instances, a villager from Balukhali village under Rangamati sadar upazila was brutally beaten by UPDF men. He got admitted at Rangamati general hospital with serious injuries. In addition, the UPDF threatened 30/25 youths in Jurachari for conducting campaign for Ushatan Talukder.

On 30 December 2008 UPDF armed cadres kidnapped Mr. Prabhat Chakma Jimit s/o Jama Charan Chakma of Nunchari under Dighinala upazila for conduction campaign in favour of Awami League candidate in Khagrachari constituency. He was kidnapped from Naraichari area of Dighinala upazila. He was not released till today. His relatives suspected that he might be killed by the UPDF.