

## **Follow Up of the CHT Indigenous Jumma Association meeting with Hon Bob McMullan MP and Margaret Watt Chief of Staff held on 31 July 2008 in Sydney**

Present: Kabita Chakma, Saikat Khisa and Dibos Dewan

(Please note that we have inserted either follow up or remarks following the agenda of the meeting on 31 July 2008)

Follow Up: 3 February 2009

### **Agenda:**

#### 1. Introduction to CHT

Remarks: Bob and Margaret showed great interest in knowing about the CHT and its peoples. Bob mentioned a possible visit to Bangladesh. We asked him to include the CHT in his up-coming trip to Bangladesh.

#### 2. Existing Projects

- Australian Development Scholarships for CHT Indigenous Students (discuss: extending these beyond 2011, and diversifying fields and levels of study; offering scholarships to other indigenous peoples from the plains).
- Australian Humanitarian Aid to rat flood victims (discuss continuing support)

Remarks: It was indicated that there is a fair possibility of further support from Australia on both accounts.

2a. Thank you to the Australian Government for past support (scholarships and humanitarian aid for rat flood victims)

#### 3. New Projects

- Seek advice for advancing the Kaptai Lake project (Improving Water, Sanitation, Health and Environment of the Kaptai Lake)

**Follow up: Bob McMullan mentioned the World Bank. With the World Bank Operational Directive 4.20 on Indigenous Peoples (1991, replaced by O.P./B.P. 4. 10 in 2006) we have confidence in the World Bank. If there is any response/ contact/ interest from the World Bank we will be encouraged. Any advice from AusAID at any stage regarding this project would also be**

**appreciated.** (We are attaching the Kaptai Lake file, which we tabled in the meeting; we are also reviewing and updating the paper)

- Seek support for Indigenous Educational Institution (Moanoghar) through ANCP (possibly partnering Oxfam with AusAID)

**Follow up: At this stage, Moanoghar is in touch with OXFAM Great Britain, the partner organization of OXFAM Australia, in Bangladesh. We also made initial contact with OXFAM Australia. Lord Eric Avebury (of UK) has expressed his keen interest to support Moanoghar by contacting OXFAM Great Britain if it is required at any stage.**

**Moanoghar is also in touch with Caritas Bangladesh. In Australia, we made initial contact with Caritas Australia to sort out a possibility to develop projects with Moanoghar and submit an ANCP grant application.**

**We will update Bob McMullan on any further development with Oxfam and Caritas regarding Moanoghar.**

**In addition, BODHI, an Australian NGO, is in discussion with Moanoghar to support a small health project. BODHI also intends to work on drug abuse among youths (a recent phenomena in the CHT) and inquire into the situation of HIV/AIDS in the CHT (which has not yet been explored in the region) in the near future.**

- Apply through the International Seminar Support Scheme (ISSS) for an international Conference on Peace Journalism/Reconciliation and Peace in the CHT, preferably in Bangladesh, in collaboration with the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies (CPACS) at Sydney University.

**Follow up: We are continuing talks with CPACS on this. USAID may be involved in this endeavour.**

**With the recent change of government in Bangladesh we are also discussing with Diplomacy Training Program (DTP), University of New South Wales, about a possibility to organise a conference, preferably in Bangladesh, under ISSS to facilitate the implementation of the CHT Peace Accord as the newly appointed Awamileague Government made an election promise to fully implement the CHT**

**Peace Accord. The Bangladesh Government has expressed its interest in fulfilling its election promise.**

We are attaching encouraging reports from Bangladesh media on this.

- Make Australian Government aware that CHT Indigenous Jumma Association are discussing with the Diplomacy Training Program the possibility of developing a course for the Jumma community in Australia.

**Follow up: Recently, on 29 January we discussed with DTP officials about possible time and nature of a course for the Australian Jumma, Burmese and Nepalese advocates**

- Make Australian Government aware we are encouraging young indigenous business entrepreneurs to apply for the AusAID Enterprise Challenge Fund (ECF) South East Asia.

**Follow up: Bob McMullan was correct: the Enterprise Challenge Fund South East Asia does not include Bangladesh. We ask your department to consider extending it to the CHT so that many indigenous Jumma entrepreneurs who are having considerable difficulties, particularly with funds and strategies, have the opportunity to apply for the Enterprise Challenge Fund.**

4. Request that the special recognition given to indigenous peoples in Australia be reflected in overseas policies, particularly in recognition of indigenous peoples of the CHT in AusAID's country strategy on Bangladesh.

- Is it possible to provide input to the AusAID country strategy on Bangladesh and DFAT NGO consultation meetings re CHT situation (e.g. provide brief reports)?

5. Political Support for bringing peace to the CHT

- Seek advice on best course of action.

**Follow up: In response to Bob McMullan's comment that Australia is only a middle power: We believe that Australia's role in building peace in the international arena should not be underestimated. Australia's continuing role in bringing democracy and peace in East Timor is outstanding (of course, there is a long way to go). In the past, Australia's role in building peace in Cambodia, particularly ex-Foreign Minister Senator Gareth Evan's contribution has been exemplary (many would believe that Foreign Minister Evans should have been awarded with the Nobel Peace Prize for his work) as was Evatt's work in building of the UN, and so on.**

**We believe that Australia would be more appropriate to approach Bangladesh to talk about the CHT (CHT Peace Accord is already on the table for its full and meaningful implementation).**

**With the new democratically elected government and its expressed determination to fully implement the CHT Accord, there is a good chance for building peace in the CHT. We ask support from the Australian Government to encourage the Bangladesh government to fulfil their commitments regarding the Peace Accord.**

**Finally, we urge Bob McMullan to continue to pursue Foreign Minister Stephen Smith to further extend political support from his office in building peace and bringing justice in the CHT.**

CHT Indigenous Jumma Association Australia

---

## **MEDIA REPORTS FROM BANGLADESH**

January 31, 2009

### **CHT peace accord to be implemented**

BSS, Dhaka

State Minister for Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs Dipankar Talukder has said the Mohajote government under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is determined for speedy implementation of the unfinished task of CHT peace accord.

The peace accord was signed in 1997 to solve the longstanding problems of three hill districts, an official handout said.

Talukder said this while presiding over a meeting of Advisory Council of the ministry held at the conference room of the Ministry of CHT Affairs on Thursday.

The government of BNP-Jamaat Alliance described the peace accord as black one, he said adding they did not take any step to implement it, rather they tried to cancel the accord."

The State Minister further said the Land Commission for resolving the land related problems of the hill region would be reconstituted soon.

He sought all out cooperation from all concerned for the development of the hill region.

Chairman of Regional Council of the CHT Jotirindra Bodipriya Larma, lawmaker Jatindra Lal Tripura, chairmen of district councils of three hill districts, Raja of Mong Circle Shasing Pru Chowdhury, representative of Bomang Raja and other two members of the committee spoke on the occasion.

Secretary of the ministry Jamil Osman and concerned high officials were present, the handout added.

Web link - <http://nation.ittefaq.com/issues/2009/01/31/news0038.htm>

Monday, February 2, 2009

**Govt to resolve CHT land disputes**  
***Law minister tells EU envoys***

Staff Correspondent

Law Minister Shafique Ahmed yesterday said the government is weighing measures to settle the land disputes between indigenous communities and Bangla-speaking settlers in Chittagong Hill Tract (CHT) areas.

He also said the government will closely monitor the matters concerned so that no conflict takes place between the members of parliament and the upazila chairmen during discharging their responsibilities.

"As per laws concerned, there are specific [separate] functions for parliament members and upazila chairmen. They will discharge their respective duties defined by the laws," he added.

The minister said this at a meeting with nine European Union (EU) diplomats, led by Swedish Ambassador Britt F Hagstrom, at his secretariat office.

Other members include Swedish Dutch envoy Bea Ten Tusscher, Italian Ambassador Itala Maria Marta Occhi, EU Commission Ambassador Dr Stefan Frowein, Danish envoy Einar Hebogard Jensen, German envoy Frank Meyke, Charge d' Affaires of France Patrick Branco, Charge d' Affaires of Spain Edward Romero and Acting British High Commissioner Duncan Norman.

Shafique told the EU envoys that a separate secretariat would be set up under the Supreme Court for the judiciary to work independently, according to an official of the ministry.

Replying to a query on what facilities the opposition parties in parliament will get, the minister said they will enjoy all the facilities as per the rules of the constitution and the laws.

On the government stance on 'extrajudicial killings', Shafique told the EU delegation that the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) would be strengthened to look after the issue.

"The democracy will not be restored unless the rule of law is established," he added.

The envoys assured the minister of extending all-out cooperation to strengthen the NHRC and to modernise the case management system.

After the meeting, the Swedish envoy told reporters that they did not discuss the trial of war criminals, but they were observing what the government was doing over the issue.

Later, a five-member delegation of Bangladesh Judicial Service Association, led by its president M Abdul Gafur, called on the Law Minister at his office.

Web link - <http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=74036>

Monday, January 26, 2009

**Reform in land commission soon: Dipankar**

Unb, Dhaka

State Minister for Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs Dipankar Talukdar yesterday said the Land Commission would be reformed soon to permanently end the existing land problems in the CHT region.

"Land commission will be reformed through the ministry concerned for permanent solution to the longstanding land problems," Dipankar said this during a meeting with Indian High Commissioner Pinak Ranjan Chakravarty at his secretariat office yesterday. He said the incomplete work of the CHT Peace Treaty would be implemented as per the prime minister's instruction.

Web link - <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=72966>

Monday, January 26, 2009

## **Implement AL manifesto on CHT**

### ***Speakers ask MPs from hill dists***

Staff correspondent

CHT Adivasi Society accorded a reception to State Minister for CHT Affairs Dipankar Talukder, lawmakers Jatindra Lal Tripura and Bir Bahadur and Member of National Human Rights Commission Dr Niru Kumar Chakma at Shakkyamuni Buddhist Temple in Mirpur on Saturday.

Chief of Chakma Circle Raja Devasish Roy chaired the programme addressed by Additional IGP NBK Tripura, Pragyanonda Mahathero, Abhilash Tripura, Kirti Nishan Chakma, Prasenjit Chakma and Lelung Khumi.

The speakers urged the state minister and lawmakers to play proactive role in implementing the Awami League's manifesto on the Chittagong Hill Tracts and the indigenous people.

They also said the indigenous people will extend full cooperation to the government in making any initiative for the welfare of indigenous people and protection of their rights.

The programme ended with a colourful cultural programme.

Web link- <http://www.thedailystar.net/story.php?nid=73016>