



# The Chakma Voice

A bi-monthly newsletter

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Think this for a while. Pench Tiger Reserve in Maharashtra with a total area of 257 sq. km has 14 tigers, and Bhadra Tiger Reserve in Karnataka with a total area of 492 sq. km has 35 tigers. Each of these two tiger reserves has area less than Mizoram's Dampa Tiger Reserve (500 sq. km). But DTR has maximum six tigers. Then, is there a necessity to increase the area of DTR to protect the tiger population? But the Mizoram government is presently, unceremoniously, undertaking a plan to "grab" the lands of Andermanik Village Council, a Chakma inhabited village in Mamit district in the guise of tiger protection.

## Editorial

There is no clarity or transparency. All that is known is the possibility that the state government is willing provide monetary compensation to the evicted families. But firstly, the state of Mizoram owes an explanation to the people about the reasons for extension of the DTR and the proposed rehabilitation and resettlement package. The people of Mizoram expect the present government to be honest, transparent and responsible to its people. MCDF calls upon the Lalthanhawla government to come up with a White Paper on the issue of extension of Dampa Tiger Reserve and its consequences on the minority Chakmas. (Read *The Curious Case.....* at Page 10)

## Chakmas in Delhi protest killings in CHT, Bangladesh

The Chakmas held a protest demonstration at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi on 25 February 2010 to protest the attacks on Chakmas/Jummas in CHT, Bangladesh by the Bangladesh military and Bengali settlers. More reports on Pages 4-7



# Now demand a Middle School in your village

On 22 February 2010, President Pratibha Patil said the **Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009** has been notified and will be effective from 1 April 2010. On 3 March 2010, Mizoram Education Minister Lalsawta stated in Aizawl that the Mizoram government will implement the Right to Education Act from April 2010.

The Right to Education Act 2009 provides “free and compulsory education” to all children in the age group of 6 to 14 years. This means that the Fundamental Right to free and compulsory education will become effective any time soon.

Therefore the Chakma villagers must know the provisions of the Right to Education Act 2009. Here, MCDF provides the major highlights of the Act.

## 1. Free and compulsory education to children:

Section 3 states that every child of age group of 6-14 years shall have “a right to free and compulsory education” in a nearby school till completion of Class VIII. The term “compulsory education” means obligation of the government to:

- Provide free education from Class I to Class VII to every child of the age of six to fourteen years; and
- Ensure compulsory admission, attendance and completion of elementary education by every child of the age of six to fourteen years

The child will not have to pay any school fees or any kind of charges or expenses for receiving education in government schools up to Class VIII.

No school or person shall, while admitting a child, collect any capitation fee and subject the child or his or her parents or guardian to any formal interview. (Section 13)

No child can be denied admission. (Section 15)

No child can be held back in any class or expelled from school till the completion of Class VIII. (Section 16)

No child can be subjected to physical punishment or mental harassment (Section 17)

## 2. Drop out children

Section 4 states that where a child above six years of age has not been admitted in any school or though admitted

could not complete his or her elementary education, then the child shall be admitted in a “class appropriate to his or her age”. Such kind of child shall be entitled to free education till completion of Class VIII even if he is more than 14 years of age.

## 3. Duty of the government and local authorities to establish schools

Under Section 6, the concerned state government and the local authority (e.g. Village Council) are duty bound to establish a school in the area where there is no school “within a period of three years from the commencement of this Act”.

## 4. Duty of parents/ guardians and authorities

It shall be the duty of every parent or guardian to admit his or her child or ward in a neighbourhood school.

It is also the duty of the state government and the local bodies (such as village councils) to ensure that every child goes to school.

## 5. Prior permission to establish schools

No school can be established without obtaining a certificate of recognition from the government (Section 18). No school can be established or recognized unless it fulfills the norms and standards given in the Act.

## 6. School Management Committee

A school shall constitute a School Management Committee consisting of the elected representatives of the local authority, parents or guardians and teachers. At least three-fourth of members of such Committees shall be parents or guardians.

## Demand a Middle School in your village:

According to a MCDF survey, there are 75 Chakma inhabited villages which do not have a Middle School. When the Right to Education Act, 2009 comes into force, it is the duty of the Chakmas to put the demand of Middle Schools in their respective villages as a matter of Fundamental Right. If the state government does not fulfill the demand within three years time, the villagers can file petition in the Courts alleging violation of fundamental right to education.

No longer, we can blame the government for lack of access to elementary education in our areas. Now the power is vested upon us to act.

# Mizoram Govt. should sign Education MoU with YCA

MCDF is happy to learn that the state government of Mizoram signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Salvation Army (a Christian religious body) on 4 January 2010 in Aizawl to implement the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) education programme in the remotest parts of the state.

Certainly the social and religious organizations are crucial in the fight to eradicate social evils including illiteracy. It is good that the Mizoram government is doing just that. The state government had signed MoUs on education with NGOs like Young Mizo Association, Mizoram Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl (apex body of Mizo women) and with the largest church body in Mizoram, Presbyterian Church and Baptist Church in 2007.

At the same time the state government must also work with all sections to spread education. On 4 January 2010, on the occasion of signing MoU with the Salvation Army in Aizawl, K Riachho, Education Secretary, government of Mizoram expressed readiness of the Mizoram government to work with anybody who is interested in improving education.

*It is never a fact that the Chakma parents do not want their children to be educated. The fact is the Chakma villagers cry for access to education and better educational facilities in their villages and outside. The state of Mizoram must sign a MoU with the Chakma civil society, in particular Young Chakma Association to spread educational awareness in Chakma inhabited areas.*

## Need to target the Chakma minorities:

In terms of education, the Brus and the Chakmas are the most backward communities in Mizoram. The Census of India 2001, found the Chakma community to be the "most illiterate" community in the state. Mizoram has the second highest literacy rate (88.8%) in India. But compared to Mizos's 95.6%, the literacy rate of the Chakmas is only 45.3%. Only 33.6% Chakma women are literate. This is shameful not only for the Chakma community but also for the Mizoram state and its people. The state has a constitutional obligation to provide basic education to each and every child. Most importantly, the minorities must be primary targets of developmental schemes including schools.

"Why are the Chakmas lagging so behind in education?" should be the primary question the decision makers, bureaucrats, educationalists and social as well as political leaders should be asking now. The solutions must be found.

But before that, the problems need to be identified first. When a patient suffers from any disease the doctor needs to first identify/ diagnose the disease and then only it can be cured.

Some of the problems that plague the Chakmas are: lack of schools, lack of teachers, lack of quality education, lack of higher educational institutions, deep poverty, lack of coordination between the Chakma NGOs and the state government, the insensitivity of the state government, among others.

The state government and the education officials in particular are mistaken when they think that there is lack of enthusiasm among the Chakmas towards education. It is never a fact that the Chakma parents do not want their children to be educated. The fact is the Chakmas cry for access to higher education and better educational facilities in their villages and outside.

The primary problem is non-inclusion of Chakmas in the state's policies.

## Need to sign MoU with YCA:

According to the government of Mizoram's own admission, over 15,000 children mainly belonging to Chakma and Bru minorities do not go to schools. This failure of the State to provide schooling constitutes a violation of the right to education. The state government must try to find out why, and give the answers.

As with the case of Mizo NGOs, the state government of Mizoram must sign an MoU with the influential Young Chakma Association or YCA (the Chakmas' equivalent of Young Mizo Association) to spread educational awareness in Chakma inhabited areas.

Given its hold among the Chakmas, the YCA's official involvement can result in the effective implementation of the educational schemes in Chakma areas and bolster the faith of the Chakmas on Mizoram government.

# Barbaric attacks on Jummas in Bangladesh

On 19 February 2010, the Bangladesh army personnel and the illegal Bengali settlers under the overall command of Lt Col. Wasim, Commander of the Baghahat zone Army Camp, launched major communal attacks against the indigenous Jumma peoples in 14 Jumma villages in Baghahat area of Sajek Union under Rangamati district in Chhittagong Hill Tracts (CHTs) of Bangladesh. From 19-23 Feb, over 300 Chakma houses were burnt down at Gangaram Doar, Retkaba, Hajachara, Guchchha Gram, Balughat, Simanachhara, Baipaichhara, Suranganala, Kerekkaba, Jarulchhari, Dane Bhaibachhara, Bame Bhaibachhara, MSF Para and Purbapara villages under Sajek Upazila. In addition, at least seven shops in Ladumani bazaar, a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)-sponsored village centre at Gangaram Doar village providing assistance to the indigenous villagers, one church and one Buddhist temple have been burnt to ashes in these attacks.

On 23 February 2010, the Chakmas were attacked in Khagrachari district.

Although the Bangladesh army had been deployed following the imposition of Section 144 (curfew), the Bengali settlers were still roaming the streets in groups holding sharp weapons and sticks and burning down the Jummas' houses.

On the night of 4 March 2010 the settlers launched fresh attacks on the Jummas burning down half a dozen more houses and one UNICEF-run community school at Daney Baibachara village in Rangamati district.

The Bangladesh government has failed to bring the culprits to justice. It has also refused to investigate the alleged roles of army officials in the attacks. All it has done is to transfer two army officials from the riots affected areas.

The Chakmas held protest rallies across the world and sought the intervention of the governments and the international community. Protest demonstrations were held in New York (US), London (UK), Paris (France), Tokyo (Japan), Seoul (S. Korea), Dhaka & Chittagong (Bangladesh), Sydney & Adelaide (Australia), Colombo (Sri Lanka), Bangkok (Thailand), New Delhi, Agartala, Kumarghat in Tripura, Chawngte in Mizoram & Kolkata (India), Geneva (Switzerland), Canada, etc.



*The dead body of Laxmi Bijoy Chakma killed by Army*



*A Chakma house burnt to ashes*



*Attacks on religion: A burnt Buddha statue*



*A Chakma house in flames in Khagrachari town*

# World-wide protests by Chakmas

The entire Jumma world erupted in anger and protested against the attacks on Jummas in CHT, Bangladesh by the Bangladesh army and illegal Bengali settlers since 19th February 2010. The Chakmas organized protest rallies across the world condemning the attacks on the Chakmas and other indigenous Jummas in CHT. Herein, MCDF brings to its readers, especially living in remotest corners without internet access, these pictures of protest across the globe.



NEW DELHI: Huge protest at Jantar Mantar, 25 Feb 2010



TRIPURA, INDIA: Huge protest rally in Agartala, 28 Feb 2010



MIZORAM: Huge protest rally held at Kamalanagar, CADC, 4 Mar 2010



UK: Protest in London, 24 February 2010



AUSTRALIA: Protest in Adelaide, 26 February 2010



AUSTRALIA: Protest in Sydney, 26 February 2010



THE US: Protest by Jummas in front of UN Headquarters, New York, 1 March 2010



KOREA: Protest at Seoul, 24 February 2010



SRI LANKA: Protest by Buddhist monks in Colombo,



JAPAN: Protest in Tokyo



BANGLADESH: Huge protest in Dhaka, 22 February 2010



SWITZERLAND: Huge protest in front of UN in Geneva, 15 March 2010. At the background is the famous "Broken Chair". Mr Dilip Kanti Chakma from Mizoram participated in this protest.





FRANCE: Protest in Paris, 6 March 2010

## European Union condemns attack

On 26 February 2010, the European Union strongly condemned the attacks on Jummas in Bangladesh. “The EU is aware of allegations that the incident involved army personnel and labourers employed by the army,” the spokesperson of Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy said in an official statement, and demanded an “independent investigation” into the attacks.

## Read The Chakma Voice regularly

*The Chakma Voice* is the only printed magazine exclusively dealing with the Chakma related news and is primarily brought out for the Chakmas of Mizoram. However, it has wide readership in India and abroad.

*The Chakma Voice* is a bi-monthly publication, meant for private circulation only. This is a non-profit initiative to highlight the different problems as well as the hopes, aspirations and achievements of the Chakmas for the global audience. The main aim is to create awareness about the Chakmas’ problems in Mizoram state of India and to try to find a solution to these problems.

MCDF will bring to your doorstep the exclusive interview with Chief Executive Member (CEM) of Chakma Autonomous District Council (CADC) in Mizoram, Mr K K Tongchangya in the Next Issue. So don’t forget to read the Next Issue, coming in May 2010.

You can read the Chakma Voice online at: <http://mcdf.wordpress.com/newsletter>

### Distributor

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**Kamalanagar –I, CADC, Mizoram**

## Bizu Greetings

# Happy Bizu

### Message from MCDF:

Mizoram Chakma Development Forum (MCDF) wishes all of you “Happy Bizu 2010”. We hope this Chakma new year will bring everlasting happiness, peace and prosperity to the Chakma community and others all over the world.

*The message in Chakma:*

“Oh echey aamaar Bizu Din... Echey aamaar Bizu...Miley-morot begeh mily Bizu Gulo hebong geh. Benyeh phottye udi bong noh noh saat uri bong. Aadaam eh aadaam eh berey bong, Bizu Utsob gory bong.”

Bizu olo deh aamaar Chakma Jaat-or begor tun bej daangor utsob or din. Bizu oktot ami bekkun ne mily ney, ham-haaj pheley ney, duk-hojtoh phurypheley ney rongo-rohichyo goriy. Bizu Din ot, miley-morot, guro-buro, maajon-gorib, beg soamaan babeh, ek logey mily ney naach gaan goriy. Bizu Din not hono daangor-sigon ney, bek ek somaar eh mod-jogora hey. Aye din not hono maajon-gorib or moddey pharok nei, bekkun ne ghoreh-ghoreh bera-bery goriy. Aye din ot sotru bo yo mitro oy. Aye din nor dokkey hono huzir din ney. Aye say Bizu Din oh bozor baginey dokkey, aaro aye bozor oh elo. Bizu Phek ko dogorer Bizu-Bizu, aama reh edot tuly der-ejo begeh mily ney maaney Bizu...Happy Bizu, Happy Bizu to all of you. Bizur upolokkey bekkun or eh Paturu-Turu

# A message for unification

**By- Nalori Dhammei Chakma**

THIS is always how it goes for me: “Hello! I am Nalori. I’m from Mizoram”. And every time the reply goes like this - “Oh! So you are Mizo?” And I reply, “No, I’m not Mizo. I belong to the CHAKMA tribe”. Wherever and whenever I utter the word ‘CHAKMA’ I always receive a confused look with a big question mark all over the face, from the person I’m being introduced to. Studying in Delhi for the last 10 years I became used to the idea of people from other communities not knowing anything about Chakma tribe and honestly I have to admit that I didn’t give much thought about it until now. For ten years I have been answering these three questions to all different people from different communities : A) where does the Chakmas originally come from? B) whether Chakmas are refugees? C) how do we happen to be in Mizoram? And till now I haven’t met one person from other communities who knows much about our Chakma community. They generally have the notion that all Chakmas in India are refugees.

I am sure there are many of you who might be thinking there is nothing new in it. May be like me even you all are now used to the idea of people not knowing our tribe. My fellow friends let’s not get used to it. Let’s all wake up and realise that if we do not take a step towards a change right now, we, as a tribe will never be able to stand in equal grounds with other communities or better yet to form a secure platform for the future Chakma generation. We will fail to safeguard our heritage otherwise, which will be such a shame for the fact that we have so much to offer to our future generation. As you all know that we have a script of our own which I am very proud of but unfortunately I cannot read nor can I write. And I know there are lots among you all who cannot read or write the script. In the present Chakma generation, there are very few who can actually read and write the scripture. There are very few ethnic tribes who have their own scripts. I think this makes us unique as a tribe. I want to protect this script of ours before it gets too late. And I have to admit that I cannot do it alone unless we all become one. We, as a ‘Chakma’ are a scattered lot, each of us trying to find our real homes , our own land; I fear that in the long run we will merge with the majority race and the world will forget that there was even a clan called “the Chakmas”. Dear friends, lets not wait for that day to come, and I assure you all that it will come a day as such where no one will recognize us until and unless we do not consider the word “unity”.

The Chakma tribe has always been a peace loving community and somewhere I feel because of this nature we are facing problems from every corner, be it in Bangladesh, where the Chakmas are constantly being threatened and harassed or the Chakmas in Mizoram where there is so much discrimination against them despite the fact that Chakmas have been granted some degree of autonomy under the Chakma Autonomous District Council (CADC), created on 2 April 1972. The CADC is one pillar, where, we the Chakma students can actually take a step forward and be versatile in our thinking. As a student belonging to Chakma tribe, I want to raise my voice to tell you all that we shouldn’t just sit and wait for a change to come. We are the ‘ones’ who can bring change by joining our hands together.

There can only be a change if there is unity. As we all say that, we, Chakmas, as a tribe do not have unity, so the question arises, why there is no unity among us? What is unity? Ask from yourself and u will find unity within you. We the people as a whole form a unity. Unity is being in togetherness. Unity is oneness. Seeing our present condition from every aspect, the word “unity” is all we got, to step forward. The constantly used phrase, “united we stand divided we fall” is rightly put. It may sound cliché to some but it’s a fact and we will fall if we don’t stand together now.

Let us all come forward and put together our hands to protect our heritage, culture and identity as a tribe. Sometimes we can’t do things on our own. More people agreeing on something and standing together can result in more strength than one person will have alone. We all need to join hands. Success is assured if you have a united consolidated group of people. To achieve or even to destroy, we need unity. Unity is needed desperately in our community. It is needed in our actions as well as in our intentions. Unity will bring creativity in our thinking simply because combination of ideas brings out the beauty of creativity. By being creative in our thinking, we can bring out ample amount of solutions to our problems we are facing today as a Chakma. By being united, doors of opportunity will be open for us. Then only we will be able to share our woes and joys together as ONE family.



## They made us all proud

The Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) has selected **Mr Shyamal Bikash Chakma**, final year student of BA Social Work, for Endeavour Student Exchange Scholarship to study at Victoria University in Australia. He is one of the three students selected from TISS. The scholarship is provided by the Australia government. Currently Mr Chakma has enrolled in Victoria University. Shyamal Bikash Chakma hails from Silsury Village, Mamit district.



**Mr Dilip Kanti Chakma**, a final year student of National Law School, Bangalore has been selected for internship with a reputed international human rights NGO in Geneva, Switzerland. He is currently in Geneva for the 2-month internship programme. Dilip Chakma is from Marpara Village, Lunglei district.



### Chakma girls are school swimming champs!

Two Chakma girls made history by winning medals in first Inter Higher Secondary School Swimming Championship Competition held on 11 December 2009 in Aizawl, Mizoram. Miss Rekha Chakma and Miss Debashree Chakma, students of LR Higher Secondary School, won gold and bronze medals respectively in their respective 20 meters freestyle and 20 meters backstroke Swimming competition.

## My first two days in Melbourne

**By Shyamal Bikash Chakma**

*[In this article Shyamal Bikash Chakma, a BA Social Work student of TISS, shares his early experiences after landing in Australia on a government scholarship to study in Victoria University]*

I am happy to tell you that I have received a scholarship from the government of Australia to study at Victoria University. I landed at the Tullamarine Airport, Melbourne at 11.30 P.M (Australia time) on Sunday 7 March 2010. It was an 13 hours journey from Mumbai. Kenan Chakma whom I had befriended through Orkut and his friend received me at the airport. I have been since then staying at their house.

On Monday it was Labour Day, a public holiday and I slept whole morning. As I woke up at around 12 Noon the food was ready for me. I meet Subir, his wife and his child. We discussed the conditions of Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura and Bangladesh. They also asked about my family, schooling and college life.

At 4.00 p.m Kenan asked me to get ready to go to Flinders Street to show my college and to attend a party at Reservoir in Mr. Tapas' family where the Chakmas students in Melbourne will also be coming. Kenan explained me each and every detail about the travelling system, ways of life here and dos and don'ts.

At the party people were over excited to see a new face in me. "Oh...you're Shyamal from India, welcome. You're the first Chakma from India we've meet in Australia". In the party I had to explain the social, political and economic conditions of the Chakmas in India.

The next day, my Chakma friends gave me many cents so that I could ring them up from PCOs whenever I may in trouble in their absence with me. I went college and meet the concerned officials in the office. Later, I went to open a bank account and public travelling concession.

# The curious case of extension of Dampa Tiger Reserve in Mizoram

By Paritosh Chakma

I sense something utterly fishy about the way the state government of Mizoram is going ahead with its plan to extend the existing area of the Dampa Tiger Reserve (DTR), the largest and the most celebrated wildlife sanctuary in Mizoram. The DTR having an area of 500 sq km is situated in Mamit district bordering Bangladesh and symbolizes Mizoram's environmental and wildlife protection commitments. Notified as Dampa Wildlife Sanctuary in 1985 it was declared a tiger reserve in 1994. Hundreds of people, mainly Chakma and Bru minorities had been evicted from their habitats with little rehabilitation benefits when the DTR was notified.

There are 10 villages around the DTR with a population of roughly 10,000 tribals mostly Mizo, Chakma, and Reang (Bru) tribes. (1) The latest ambition (though officially not declared) of the Forest Department is to extend the area of the DTR by including a few surrounding Chakma villages namely Andermanik, Rajiv Nagar, Silsury and Hnahva villages. Of these, Hnahva and Andermanik villages are settlements established by Chakmas who had been evicted from the DTR area.

Yet, interestingly the Mizoram Forest Department has of late renewed its claim over the Andermanik village, which is a duly recognized Village Council, as "core area" of the DTR. As stated earlier, the villagers of Andermanik had been "resettled" here after they were evicted from the notified DTR area. So, how can Andermanik village area be inside the DTR? I have heard that the state government has even issued a "Notification" with regard to the acquisition of the Andermanik village council area to be brought under the DTR. But I am yet to lay my hand on this so-called "Notification".

No, the Chakma villagers are not complaining. Why should they be complaining when the state government has allegedly verbally promised them Rs 10 lakhs per family if they shifted to other site? In August 2009, Mizoram's Deputy Speaker and local MLA John Rotluangliana along with other political leaders visited Andermanik village and impressed upon the villagers to find new life *beyond Andermanik*. Poor and illiterate people seldom complain when their leaders tell them what *ought to be good for them*.

The golden question which still remains a mystery is: who will fund this eviction programme? There are over 100 families in Andermanik and if the state govern-

ment sticks to its assurance it will have to shelve out at least Rs 1,000 lakh as compensation plus rehabilitation in their new village. Mizoram has received Rs 97.34 lakhs during 2004-05, Rs 65.1560 lakhs during 2005-06, Rs 115.16 lakhs during 2006-07, Rs 82.90 lakhs during 2007-08 and Rs 241.45 lakhs during 2008-09 (2) and Rs. 128.00 Lakhs as the 1<sup>st</sup> installment during 2009-10 under Project Tiger from the Central government. (3) Does it mean the Central government will fund a programme in Mizoram that will evict over 100 families of backward tribals (who are ethnic minorities) and put them in uncertain future?

I see a hidden agenda. *Is it to grab the lands (and forests) of the Chakmas in the name of nature conservation?* The basis of my suspicion is on the following grounds.

There are very less number of tigers in DTR which is as follows (4) :

1993 – 7 tigers  
1995 – 4 tigers  
1997 – 5 tigers  
2001-2002 – 4 tigers

In January 2010, the Chief Wildlife Warden L R Thanga stated that there are only 6 (six) tigers in the Dampa Tiger Reserve. (5)

But then what is the necessity of extending its area at the expense of the livelihood of the people? This question should be asked again and again, for, the affected once again are the Chakma minorities.

Apart from the six tigers the important species found in DTR are elephant, Sambar, Barking deer, Hoolock gibbon and variety of birds. It is no denying the fact that environment conservation and protection of the endangered species are important issues in today's world. But these precious species, in particular the tigers can also be protected and looked after within the existing area of DTR (500 square km).

There are other Tiger Reserves less in area than Mizoram's Dampa Tiger Reserve but have much higher tiger population. Take for example, Pench Tiger Reserve in Maharashtra with only 257 sq. km has 14 tigers and Bhadra Tiger Reserve in Karnataka with a total area of 492 sq. km has 35 tigers.

Clearly, there is absolutely no necessity to extend the area of Dampa Tiger Reserve for the preservation of its tigers, whose total population is only maximum 6. It is not a fact that the tigers in the Dampa Tiger Reserve are finding limited space to move freely.

However, the state government of Mizoram has other motives. For one, it wants to convert the Dampa Tiger Reserve into a National Park. It is clear from a 2006 evaluation of the Dampa Tiger Reserve commissioned by the Project Tiger Directorate, Ministry of Environment and Forests in which evaluator M K Ranjitsinh opined as follows:

*“The TR still has a sanctuary status. This is surprising, since all rights have been extinguished within the sanctuary, the human habitation shifted, there is no grazing and there is no reason why the Dampa should not join the other two magnificent national parks of Mizoram – Murlen and Blue Mountain - as the state’s third National Park. The state government should take urgent action in this regard.” (6)*

Since then the Mizoram government has been overlooking the interests of the people living on the peripheries of DTR to convert the tiger reserve into a National Park. It will be good to have another National Park in the state but the state government will have to put the welfare of the people first. I love tigers and environment, but I do not support bad policies when they affect the innocent people, more so if these policies are arbitrarily imposed on them.

### Lure by money:

The state government knows well that it cannot evict the Chakma tribal villagers of Andermanik as their rights are protected under the Forest Rights Act, 2006. Hence, it is using money as bait. The political leaders’ shadowy defence that it is up to the villagers whether to accept the state government’s offer or not is not convincing and outrageous to say the least. Instead of alluring them with a lot of money the villagers must be counseled about their present, and future. The political leaders and the government must think of the long term interests of the people, not evict them *needlessly*. If the concerned people belong to minority communities more care should be taken so as not to harm their interests. But Mizoram government seems not to think that way.

If today the state government is softly allowed to acquire the villagers land in Andermanik by offering handsome money, it will not hesitate to ‘buy’ other nearby villages at the cost of their very existence.

The state government of Mizoram and forest officials must concentrate on measures to protect the endangered tigers rather than endangering the people in particular the Chakma minorities.

### Footnotes:

1. [http://www.incredibleindia.org/newsite/cms\\_Page.asp?pageid=298](http://www.incredibleindia.org/newsite/cms_Page.asp?pageid=298)
2. <http://projecttiger.nic.in/funds.asp>
3. Letter of National Tiger Conservation Authority, Ministry of Environment and Forests, No. 4-1 (24)/2009-PT, available at [http://projecttiger.nic.in/sanction/S2009/Sanction\\_Dampa\\_1st\\_2009\\_10.pdf](http://projecttiger.nic.in/sanction/S2009/Sanction_Dampa_1st_2009_10.pdf)
4. <http://projecttiger.nic.in/populationinstate.asp>
5. Mizoram to conduct tiger census, The Telegraph,

Kolkata, 22 January 2010, available at [http://www.telegraphindia.com/1100122/jsp/northeast/story\\_11995826.jsp#](http://www.telegraphindia.com/1100122/jsp/northeast/story_11995826.jsp#)

(6) “Evaluation Reports of Tiger Reserves in India”, Project Tiger Directorate, Ministry of Environment and Forests, GOI, 2006, [http://projecttiger.nic.in/Report-2\\_EvaluationReportsofTRinIndia.pdf](http://projecttiger.nic.in/Report-2_EvaluationReportsofTRinIndia.pdf)



## MCDF’s logo

MCDF thanks **Mr Sadhan Chakma** for helping to design the logo of MCDF free of cost. Mr Chakma is a professional web designer based in Delhi.



## Important Announcements

1. Henceforth, *The Chakma Voice* has been made bi-monthly, which means that it will be published once in every two months. The next issue (March-April) will therefore be brought out in May 2010.
2. Miss Nalori Dhammei Chakma, a student of Delhi University, has joined the Editorial Board as Assistant Editor.
3. MCDF has started two news services—“*Bajpada Hobor*” and “*MCDF Pogodang*” (Breaking News) through SMS. Through this unique initiative MCDF team has been sending important News Updates through SMS reaching the remotest corners in Mizoram. Rural areas do not have internet access but most villages have mobile network. Anyone wishing to receive News Updates on mobiles may send their names, address and mobile phone number to MCDF.

## Corrections/clarifications

MCDF follows a policy to correct any mistake committed inadvertently in its reporting. In a few places in Issue 2, Mizoram’s Chief Secretary Vanhela Pachuau has been erroneously referred to as “then Chief Secretary”. It is clarified that he is the current CS of Mizoram. —Editor

## News in Brief

### MLA visits Silsury Village, Mamit district

Mr Lal Robiaka, Honb'le Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) from 2-Dampa Assembly Constituency, delivering a lecture during his visit to Silsury Village under Mamit district in the last week of January 2010. On his left is his wife (clad in Chakma traditional 'hadi'). Sitting extreme right is Silsury VCP (village head), Mr Surjyo Sen Chakma



### 119 persons died of malaria in Mizoram in 2009

According to health officials, a total of 119 persons died of malaria in Mizoram during 2009. Malaria is a "common" disease and continues to be a major killer. On 19 February 2010, National Vector Borne Diseases Control Programme (NVBDCP) Director PL Joshi termed the malaria situation in Mizoram as "alarming" (*The Sentinel, 20 February 2010*)

### New Year 2010 celebration in Delhi

On the night of 31 December 2009, Mizoram Chakma Development Forum organized a New Year party at Janakpuri in New Delhi to welcome 2010. A total of 39 Chakma youths—both boys and girls—participated in the event.



### Mizoram to implement Education Act in April

On 3 March 2010, Mizoram Education Minister Lalsawta stated in Aizawl that the state government will implement the Right to Education Act 2009 from April 2010. The Act provides "free and compulsory education" to all children in the age group of 6 to 14 years.

### Trade centre at Demagiri soon

In September 2009, at foreign minister level talks held in New Delhi, India and Bangladesh agreed to open a land custom station at Demagiri-Thegamukh on the Mizoram border for bilateral trade. During Sheikh Hasina's visit to India in January 2010, both countries agreed to open new trade routes through Tegamukh-Demagiri and Sabroom-Ramgarh border points.

The Mizoram government has already acquired land measuring 3,01,333 Sq meters (2424.99 bhigas) at Kawrpuichhuah near Demagiri for setting up Indo-Bangladesh Border Trade Centre. The government of India has released a sum of Rs. 1.13 crore for construction of the Border Trade Centre at Demagiri.

### Editorial Board

Editor: Mr Paritosh Chakma

Asst. Editor: Miss Nalori Dhammei  
Chakma

Asst. Editor: Mr Victor Chakma

Asst. Editor: Mr Hemanta Chakma

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**Acknowledgement:** MCDF acknowledges all the contributions made towards the publication of this issue of The Chakma Voice. MCDF further encourages all to write articles, letters to the editor, etc.