

The Chakma Voice

A newsletter of MCDF

Global Edition 2012



For private circulation only

CONTENTS

Published by:
Mizoram Chakma Development
Forum (MCDF)
Postal Address:
C3/441-C, Janakpuri,
New Delhi-58, India
Email:
chakmavoice@gmail.com
Website:
www.mcdf.wordpress.com

Editorial Board:
Paritosh Chakma
Victor Talukdar
Hemanta Larma
Nalori Dhammei Chakma
Tejang Chakma

Contact the editors at
chakmavoice@gmail.com

Published on 11th January 2013

© MCDF, 2013
No part of this publication can
be reproduced without the prior
permission of MCDF

> Messages from prominent leaders	1-3
> From the Editorial Board	4
MCDF's roles, activities & achievements	
> MCDF's Activities Report (Oct 2009-Dec 2012)	6
Chakma history, culture and heritage	
> Sneha Kumar Chakma's contribution to Indian freedom struggle: an unknown chapter	23
> 50th Chakma king, Raja Tridiv Roy: Obituary	30
> The Process of weaving 'bein' of Chakmas by LB Chakma	33
> Kalindi: The Queen (A True Story) by Raja Devasish Roy	36
Lead Articles	
> Keyboard Layout of Chakma Fonts: A Comparative Study by MAADI, Tripura	41
> Arunachal: Uncertain future awaits the Chakmas of Papumpare district by Paritosh Chakma	45
> Women position in our Jumma society and food for thought by Tandra Chakma	49
Students Column	
> CCSA: The Star of South India	52
> MCSU- Aizawl Zone: Mizoram's pride	53
> BVCSA: The gems of Silchar	55
> Poem: Changma Sawbon by Ven Dhammalankar Bhikkhu	56
News in Brief	57



सत्यमेव जयते

Member

Mizoram Legislative Assembly

Phone: 0389-2314200 (R)/ 09862570100(Mob)

Email: nirupam_chakma@rediffmail.com

Room No.302, Legislators' Home,
Tuikhuahtlang, Aizawl, Pin: 796001, Mizoram.

Date :

Dated, Aizawl, 29th December 2012.

MESSAGE

I am happy to learn that the Mizoram Chakma Development Forum(MCDF), in association with other Civil Society organizations, is conducting a social event " Udonchi – The Chakma Youth Fest" at Borapansury and Kamalanagar from 11th to 14th January 2013 to discuss socio-economic condition and problems of the Chakmas of India. I am also happy to learn that the Global Edition of" The Chakma Voice" will be published to mark the occasion and convey my thanks for inviting me to write a message.

I am delighted to know that the MCDF has chosen " Chakmas's PAST, PRESENT and FUTURE " as the theme of the festival and hope that it will be a learning experience not only to the youth but to the Chakma Society as a whole.

There is no doubt that the Chakma Society is at the crossroads now and with new challenges in all fronts, Chakmas must know how to overcome these multi-faceted challenges, and prepare for the future.

I wish " Udonchi- Chakma Youth Fest" a great success.

(NIRUPAM CHAKMA)

Dangu Hemanta Larma
President, MCDF,
New Delhi.



**CHIEF EXECUTIVE MEMBER
CHAKMA AUTONOMOUS DISTRICT COUNCIL
KAMALANAGAR**

Kali Kumar Tongchangya

0372-2563203 (O)
0372-2563080 (R)

MESSAGE

I congratulate the team of MCDF for their tireless effort to work towards the service of the Chakma community since its inception in 2009. The Forum has been ever growing in stature and to have conceived the idea of "UDONDHI – THE CHAKMA YOUTH FEST" shall definitely add a feather to its cap. I hope this will set a new trend for the youths and serve to inspire them to live for the service of their community.

Today, the Chakma society suffers less from lack of talents and resources but from harnessing them. I believe, if UDONDHI live up to its aim and objective it will be an attempt to address this issue by being a unifying force of ideas and energies.

My goodwill and best wishes to MCDF and all those who are associated with the programme for its success.

Dated Kamalanagar the 2nd Jan. 2013

(KALI KUMAR TONGCHANGYA)

MIZO NATIONAL FRONT
DISTRICT HEADQUARTERS: KAMALANAGAR



RASIK MOHAN CHAKMA
PRESIDENT

Phone: 9436141884
9863260095
0372-2563811(O)

Date: 2nd January, 2013

Message

I am glad to know that the Mizoram Chakma Development Forum (MCDF) is going to organize a Social Event under the banner 'Udondhi'-The Chakma Youth Fest from 11th to 14th January, 2013. It is more heartening to know that the Forum shall also publish its magazine "The Chakma Voice-Global Edition, 2012" as a corollary of the great Events. No doubt both the initiatives would be a great confluence to open-up a new horizon towards bringing inclusive development of the Chakmas as a whole.

I appreciate the initiatives and wish a grand success both of the events.

(RASIK MOHAN CHAKMA)

From the Editorial Board

We are extremely happy to present before our esteemed readers this third special issue of the *The Chakma Voice—Global Edition*. This publication is being launched on the occasion of MCDF's "Udondhi—The Chakma Youth Fest" being organized at Borapansury and Kamala Nagar, Chakma Autonomous District Council in Mizoram from 11-13 January 2013. The theme of the programme is "Chakma's past, present and future." It will be an occasion to discuss Chakmas' problems and future roadmap. To quote PB Shelley, "If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?". Really, our past and present may be full of hardships, but good days of "Spring" can't be far away. But for this we need to have a clear roadmap, clear understanding of the challenges which lie ahead and work harder for our progress. If we are united and hardworking, we can overcome our problems. As in his message Dangu Kali Kumar Tongchangya, Hon'ble Chief Executive Member, Chakma Autonomous District Council, Mizoram has rightly stated, "Today, the Chakma society suffers less from lack of talents and resources but from harnessing them." Indeed, the "Udondhi" programme will discuss this very aspect and how to overcome the multi-faceted challenges that we face, while keeping our future in mind which should be safe, secure and dignified.

"The Chakma Voice" magazine has really become the "voice" of the voiceless Chakma community, particularly in India and a reference material for everyone who is keen to understand the Chakmas better. MCDF has completed its three years of existence. On this occasion, we have presented the important activities carried out by the MCDF along with their results, in these three years. Undoubtedly, we need to work for the community, with more dedication and positive spirits in the midst of gloomy atmosphere.

In order to give to our readers a myriad range of crucial information on Chakmas, different sections have been added, like the previous year, namely, MCDF's Role and Activities; Chakma History, Culture and Heritage; Lead Articles; Students Column; and News in Brief. Through the Students Column we have tried to give Chakma students/ students organizations opportunity to share with the world their own achievements and vision, and we are happy that many students organizations have participated.

We would like to particularly thank Dangu Dipak Kumar Chakma, Member, Railway Claims Tribunal, Chennai Bench, who have kindly permitted publication of excerpts from his forthcoming book *"The Partition and the Chakmas and Other Writings of Sneha Kumar Chakma"*. These are hitherto unknown information about Sneha Kumar Chakma, who led the people of CHT in the Indian freedom struggle. We hope Mr Chakma's book will help to properly understand the role of Sneha Kumar Chakma and other Chakma freedom fighters from the Chittagong Hill Tracts, and renew the inquisitiveness of historians and researchers to rewrite the history of the Indian freedom movement, and study the adverse permanent impacts the Partition of 1947 had on the Chakma people. We also thank all the writers who have contributed to the making of this year's "The Chakma Voice—Global Edition".

Last but not the least, we take this opportunity to thank three of our prominent leaders from Mizoram, Dangu Nirupam Chakma, Hon'ble Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA), Mizoram, Dangu Kali Kumar Tongchangya, Hon'ble Chief Executive Member (CEM), the Chakma Autonomous District Council, Mizoram, and Dangu Rashik Mohan Chakma, Hon'ble former CEM and incumbent Member of District Council, CADC for their kind support to and appreciation of the works of MCDF and for their good wishes for the "Udondhi" programme.

Editors

MCDF's role, activities & achievements Since inception (2009 to 2012)

MCDF's Activities Report

(October 2009 to December 2012)

On 11 October 2012, the Mizoram Chakma Development Forum (MCDF) turned three years. "Three Years" is a very short period in the sands of time, but the achievements of MCDF during this period are by no means small. The activism which the MCDF has shown are, people say, "very inspiring", and the achievements are "pathbreaking", in the context of the Chakmas in Mizoram. MCDF has not only become a household name but so are its programmes, primarily "The Chakma Voice" magazine and "MCDF Pogodang" (free SMS news service).

MCDF's main achievement, however, remains in the fact that it could instill a sense of confidence in the hearts of the people that "There is always a ray of hope".

MCDF is happy to provide a glimpse of its activities which made impacts during the last three years (2009–2012).

1. Campaign to make Borapansury primary health centre functional

a. Introduction to Borapansury PHC

The Borapansury village in the Chakma Autonomous District Council (CADC) is extremely backward and extremely remote. Being a border area with Bangladesh, the Borapansury area is strategically very important for the country, yet, this area remains one of the most neglected areas in Mizoram. The Borapansury Primary Health Centre (PHC) is the only PHC in the entire CADC. The first building of the Borapansury PHC was constructed way back in 1992 by the Mizoram health department. But it was never operationalized. After lying abandoned for 18 years, the government spent Rs 90,50,500 from National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) funds to rebuild the Borapansury PHC buildings in 2010. But till date, no doctor or medical staff has been posted and the buildings are lying in a state of disuse.



The Primary Health Centre at Borapansury village in CADC, Mizoram, first constructed in 1992, then rebuilt in 2010 out of National Rural Health Mission scheme. But this PHC has been lying vacant for the last 20 years, depriving the people of basic healthcare facilities.

Interestingly, in official records, the Borapansury PHC is being shown as “functional” one. For example, in the Census of India 2001 as well as in the records of the Mizoram Health & Family Welfare department.

Lack of healthcare in the region is a cause of great difficulty, hardship and pain to thousands of impoverished tribals. As per the 2001 Census, the population of the affected villages was 9,871 persons belonging to 1,739 households from 23 villages. After a decade, the affected population is now over 12,000. Several people die of preventable diseases every year. The poor health service is compounded by bad road connectivity, forcing people to take a 16-hour mountain road to the state capital of Aizawl to seek medical help (Due to bad road it takes two days to reach Aizawl if one is lucky to get transport). That too, only the well-to-do families can afford medical treatment in towns. As per MCDF's estimate, about 2,500 people have died in this area due to lack of medical facilities during the last 20 years.

b. What do the law/health guidelines say?

As per the Indian law, right to access basic healthcare facility is a fundamental human right. As per the Indian Public Health Standards (IPHS) Guidelines for Primary Health Centres revised in 2012 (available at the website of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, http://mohfw.nic.in/NRHM/IPHS_Revised_Guidelines_2012/Primary_Health_Centres.pdf), a PHC should have at least 13-18 staff including at least one Medical Officer (MBBS), one Pharmacist, three Nurse-Midwife, One Health Worker (Female) and One Health Assistant (Male), One Health Assistant (Female) etc.

The IPHS Guidelines for PHCs revised in 2012 further provides that, “Select PHCs, especially in large blocks where the CHC is over one hour of journey time away, may be upgraded to provide 24 hour emergency hospital care for a number of conditions by increasing number of Medical Officers, preferably such PHCs should have the same IPHS norms as for a CHC.” Therefore the Borapansury PHC should have been upgraded to “provide 24 hour emergency hospital care” but for the last 20 years the Mizoram health department has failed to make the PHC functional!

c. MCDF's campaign for Borapansury PHC

On 25 July 2012, Mizoram Health Minister Lalrinliana Sailo admitted in the State Assembly that Borapansury PHC is one of the 12 PHCs in Mizoram where no doctor is posted. In a petition dated 1 August 2012, MCDF informed Mizoram Health Minister that Borapansury PHC is not only without a doctor but also not functioning at all; but the Mizoram government refused to take any action to activate the Borapansury PHC.

Earlier, on 26 July 2012 MCDF launched an online campaign at <http://www.change.org> (<https://www.change.org/en-IN/petitions/health-minister-mizoram-appoint-doctors-and-staff-at-borapansury-phc>). The online petition received support from across the world.

On 28 July 2012, MCDF submitted a petition to Hon'ble President of India, Shri Pranab Mukherjee (Ref No. PRSEC/E/2012/10311). On 1 August, President's Secretariat forwarded the petition to Shri Vanhela Pauchau, Chief Secretary, Mizoram to take cognizance of it.

On 1 August, MCDF submitted a written petition to state health minister Mr Lalrinliana Sailo. His personal secretary informed MCDF that the matter was taken “seriously” by the minister.

On 22 August, Ms Esther Lal Ruatkimi, Secretary, Health and Family Welfare, Mizoram, wrote an email to MCDF stating seriousness of the health minister in the Borapansury PHC issue.

On 30-31 August, MCDF launched “Call the Mizoram Health Minister” campaign, in which activists from different parts of India telephoned the Mizoram Health Minister urging him to take action on the Borapansury PHC. The callers wanted to know: (1) When the Borapansury PHC will be made functional? And (2) What measures are being taken to immediately appoint doctors and other health staff at the PHC?

MCDF also created public awareness by distributing printed leaflets, and through big banners.

Petition before the NHRC, India

Having exhausted all the local mechanisms, MCDF knocked the door of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) for justice on 10 September 2010. MCDF prayed for the following directions:

To the State government of Mizoram:

Direct the Mizoram Health and Family Welfare department to: Immediately activate the Primary Health Centre at Borapansury, CADC and submit action taken report within a month to the NHRC; Submit the **present status report** of the Borapansury PHC, including number of staff officially appointed, if any, and funds released and spent towards the PHC since 1992, within a week of receipt of the NHRC direction; Immediately appoint all the staff as per the Indian Public Health Standards (IPHS) Guidelines for Primary Health Centres revised in 2012 and post them on permanent basis at the Borapansury PHC; Upgrade Borapansury PHC to provide “24 hour emergency hospital care” by having the same IPHS norms as for a CHC as stipulated in the Indian Public Health Standards (IPHS) Guidelines for Primary Health Centres revised in 2012; Ensure availability of all essential medicines and medical equipments at the Borapansury PHC as per IPHS Guidelines for PHCs revised in 2012; and Take any other measures which the NHRC deems fit and proper.

To the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India: Direct the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to: Sanction all the necessary fund as sought by the Mizoram government towards the Borapansury Primary Health Centre, CADC, Mizoram; and Take any other measures which the NHRC deems fit and proper.

The NHRC registered the complaint as Case No. 17/16/6/2012 and on 27 October 2012 issued notice to the Secretary, Health and Family Welfare, Government of Mizoram, calling for a report in the matter within four weeks.

Media coverage:

MCDF used the media effectively. MCDF’s campaign was announced on the radio by All India Radio, Aizawl. Print and electronic media gave a good coverage including by The Tribune (National), The Statesman (national); The Seven Sisters Post, Meghalaya Times, Shillong Times, Mizo News.net (Regional); The Mizoram Post. The Lawngtlai Post (State), etc

MizoNews: “Chakma Forum tells Mizoram Govt to make PHC functional” <http://www.mizonews.net/mizoramnews/chakma-forum-tells-mizoram-govt-to-make-phc-functional/>

The Seven Sisters Post, Border PHC lying sick for 20 years, 3 August 2012, <http://sevensisterspost.com/?p=27804>

The Tribune: “Prez Intervenes to open PHC lying defunct for 20 yrs” <http://www.tribuneindia.com/2012/20120804/nation.htm#10>



A huge banner put up by MCDF as part of its campaign at Kamala Nagar, CADC headquarters, Mizoram

The Mizoram Post, 5 August 2012

The Statesman: “Chakma Tribe wants proper Medical Care” http://www.thestatesman.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=418775%3Achakma-tribe-wants-proper-medical-care-&catid=36%3AIndia&from_page=search

North East Today: “President asks Mizoram to activate Chakma Health Centre” <http://www.northeasttoday.in/our-states/mizoram/president-asks-mizoram-to-activate-chakma-health-centre/>

Kangla Online: “Primary Healthcentre lying defunct for the last 20 yrs in Mizoram” <http://kanglaonline.com/2012/08/mizoram-primary-health-centre-lying-defunct-mizoram-chakma-development-forum-press-release/>

The Meghalaya Times, 4 August 2012: President asks Mizoram to activate Chakma health centre, http://meghalayatimes.info/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=26934:president-asks-mizoram-to-activate-chakma-health-centre&catid=36:state&Itemid=29

The Shillong Times, 5 August 2012,: Mizoram PHC in Chakma region lies idle for 20 years, <http://www.theshillongtimes.com/2012/08/05/mizoram-phc-in-chakma-region-lies-idle-for-20-years/>

The Shillong Times, 8 August 2012: “Poor health service in remote North East” <http://www.theshillongtimes.com/2012/08/08/poor-health-service-in-remote-north-east/>

The Lawngtlai Post (Mizo), 7 Aug 2012: Boropansury PHC hmantheih thuai tur a hmalaturin hriattir, <http://thelawngtlai-post.blogspot.in/2012/08/boropansury-phc-hmantheih-thuai-tur.html>

2. Campaign to implement the RTE Act – follow up

Background:

On 22 October 2010, MCDF had filed a complaint before the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) against the denial of access to elementary education to the Chakma children in Mizoram due to lack of schools. In 2009, MCDF conducted a survey in the Chakma inhabited villages in Mizoram to document the schools. As per the survey, over 72 per cent of Chakma inhabited villages in Mizoram still did not have Middle School, and over 96 per cent did not have High School. Acting on MCDF’s complaint, the NCPCR on 29 December 2010 passed the order to the Chief Secretary, Government of Mizoram to get the matter investigated and take further necessary action. The NCPCR specifically asked the Mizoram government to submit a factual report, along with authenticated copies of the relevant documents, and the report should include information on following points: i. The denial of access to elementary education to the Chakma tribal children in Mizoram due to lack of schools is in clear violation of section 6 of Right to Education Act which requires the local authority to establish the school in areas or neighborhood limits where there is no such school as prescribed in the act; and ii. Kindly ensure that schools in all Chakma inhabited villages are established in accordance with the RTE Act 2009.

The Mizoram government refused to provide the requisite information to the Commission. On 10 February 2011, the NCPCR sent a reminder asking the Chief Secretary, Government of Mizoram to submit “the requisite report within 20 days of the date of issue of this letter.”

Follow up in 2012:

F. Lalthuamluai, Under Secretary to the Mizoram government, School Education Department, vide their letter No. B.17011/15/2011-EDN(RTE) dated 2/4/2012 submitted reply to the NCPCR. On 11 July 2012, the NCPCR shared the report, seeking the comments from MCDF. In its response (Ref No. MCDF-RTE02/NCPCR/072012) dated 18 July 2012 to the NCPCR, MCDF expressed dissatisfaction with the Mizoram government's response. MCDF argued that Mizoram's response was "absolutely incomplete, inadequate and it does not address the pertinent issues raised by the MCDF in its complaint dated 22 October 2010 as well as by the NCPCR in its letter F.No. M-18833/RTE/3922 dt 29/12/2010 to the Mizoram Chief Secretary."

"What the Under Secretary, School Education, Mizoram government has submitted is a mere "time frame for construction of School buildings" for the whole of MIZORAM state. This does not address the denial of access to elementary education to the Chakma children simply because the Mizoram government does not specifically states as to whether Mizoram government is taking any action to construct schools in Chakma inhabited villages in Lunglei, Mamit and Lawngtlai districts where there is no Middle School as of date. Further, the Mizoram government sets no date as to when the newly constructed schools shall be made functional with adequate staff, infrastructure etc." – MCDF stated.

Further, MCDF pointed out that the Mizoram govt failed to investigate and submit factual report as directed by the NCPCR.

3. Re-start of "MCDF Pogodang"

"MCDF Pogodang" (literally meaning, breaking news in Chakma language) is a daily news service through SMS started by the Mizoram Chakma Development Forum (MCDF) way back in 2009. If you are a subscriber, 'MCDF Pogodang' is sent directly to your mobile phone. Thus, in the comfort of your room, or wherever you are, you can receive important news/information on varied range of subjects on your mobile phone, daily and, free of cost. Isn't this wonderful?

By 2011, MCDF had over 10,000 subscribers across India. But this has to be stopped due to restrictions imposed by Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), Govt of India, on bulk SMSes.

MCDF has sent 'MCDF Pogodang' on different issues such as: admission, career guidance, results, scholarships, job vacancies, politics, economics, religion, Border Fencing, various schemes/programmes like Border Area Development Programme (BADP), New Land Use Policy, etc besides MCDF's own activities. It has also been found extremely useful in times of medical and other emergencies.

Popularity and impacts:

The popularity of 'MCDF Pogodang' and its impacts have been unmatched. Apart from raising awareness on social and political issues, MCDF has successfully helped hundreds of students get their results instantly, information on admissions, colleges etc and connect to the people in the remotest areas and reporting about their conditions.

Due to its accuracies and timely information, 'MCDF Pogodang' emerged as a very effective tool in the social engineering of Chakma society. It is therefore taken seriously by serious people.

Such was the popularity that one of India's most respected magazines, TEHELKA (Hindi edition), in its 31 August 2011 issue carried a story titled "Breaking news se badal rahi duniya' ('Pogodang' is changing the world).

'MCDF Pogodang' restarted!

Now, after a lull of several months, 'MCDF Pogodang' has once again started rolling from 26th June 2012. As MCDF does not have enough funds, the Pogodang was started with voluntary contributions made by the core members of MCDF who have kindly agreed to contribute some percentage of their salaries. MCDF has framed strict guidelines to avail this service. In order to be eligible, the subscriber will have to provide the following information (all mandatory): 1. Full Name. 2. Father's Name, 3. Original place of belonging (eg, Kamala Nagar, Mizoram), 4. Present residence: (eg, Kolkata), 5. Occupation: (eg Student, BSc (Physics) 2nd year at Presidency College), and 6. One reference: (Name with mobile Number) Your identity will be verified with the reference person. If anyone is interested, kindly send your details at 0-8375924990; chakmavoice@gmail.com, or Chakma Voice facebook inbox.

4. Campaign for implementation of RTE Act in CADC

On 29 August 2012, MCDF wrote a petition to the CADC CEM regarding lack of implementation of Right to Education Act in CADC, including in his own constituency. MCDF stated that the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act of 2009 (in short, the RTE Act) came into force throughout the country on 1st April 2010. But several villages within the Chakma Autonomous District Council area were still without a Middle School in blatant violation of the RTE Act. Proper implementation of the RTE Act was not taking place even in constituency of Fultuli (from where the CEM is elected) as 50% of the villages within this constituency were still without Middle Schools. MCDF pointed out that Fultuli, Silosora and Boroituli villages did not have any Middle Schools although the populations were substantial. Effectively, the children of these villages are being deprived of their fundamental right to education.



Primary school children at Devasora village, CADC (photo: MCDF photo archive)

5. Intervention with the Supreme Court Commissioners to restore food supply to remote areas of Mizoram such as Parva and neighbouring villages

On 22 December 2010, MCDF got a telephone call from local contacts that the people of Parva I, II, III and Kamtuli villages in Chakma Autonomous District Council (CADC) in Lawngtlai district of Mizoram were starving for several weeks. Rice under Public Distribution System have not been delivered to the Below Poverty Line families since October 2010. MCDF quickly verified these reports and on 23 December 2010 submitted petitions, by fax, to the Chief Secretary, Government of Mizoram and the Deputy Commissioner of Lawngtlai district seeking their urgent interventions to restore food supply to these villages. There are 332 families in Parva I, 165 families in Parva II, 103 families in Parva III and 208 families in Kamtuli village. Parva I, predominantly inhabited by Chakmas, is the largest of these villages. Parva II is inhabited mostly by Bawms while Parva III is dominated by Brus.

Since MCDF was not satisfied with the actions taken by the state government of Mizoram, it approached the Office of the Commissioners of the Supreme Court on the Right to Food (for details kindly visit <http://www.scccommissioners.org/>) on 28 December 2010. The Supreme Court Commissioners (appointed to monitor implementation of a series of judgements passed by the Supreme Court in CWP 196/2001, PUCL v. UOI and others) took strong cognizance of MCDF's complaint. MCDF stated that no food grain under the Public Distribution System had been distributed to the poorest of the poor families since October 2010 and yet the authorities of CADC and the state government of Mizoram failed to act when the matter was brought to their attention. These affected villages are located in far flung areas near to the Indo-Myanmar border and they do not have access to food grain even in the open market.

In a first of its kind order to the Mizoram government, the Commissioners of the Supreme Court on 5 January 2011 directed the Mizoram government to feed the starving families of



Parva I village in CADC which borders Myanmar and Bangladesh



Parva I, Parva II, Parva III and Kamtuli villages. In fact, the order went beyond PDS ration to include several livelihood schemes.

Photo (left): MCDF members inspecting rice bags at retailer godown at Parva I village, CADC and collecting samples. Out of 10 bags, 2 bags of rice were found unfit. Later, after discussion, the Lawngtlai District Civil Supplies Officer ordered the concerned Store Keeper to replace the bad quality rice bags.

Orders of the Supreme Court Commissioners:

In their letter dated 5th January 2011 addressed to Vanhela Pachuau, Chief Secretary of Mizoram, Dr N.C. Saxena, Commissioner and Harsh Mander, Special Commissioner of the Supreme Court asked the Chief Secretary to “investigate these reports, and share the reasons for non-supply of grain” to the villagers.

Further, the Supreme Court Commissioners directed the State Government of Mizoram to ensure immediately adequate food grain supply to the food godown, ensure that all Below Poverty Line (BPL) and Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) card holder families should be provided their quota of grain for the present month and backlog from the month of October 2010, ensure that all persons who don't have ration cards should be provided ration cards at the earliest.

The Supreme Court Commissioners also directed the Mizoram government to “*undertake a survey in all these villages and identify the families who suffer from acute malnutrition, identify starvation & hunger related deaths (if any) and share information on the full coverage of all these residents of all food and livelihood schemes such as ICDS [Integrated Child Development Scheme], MDM [Mid Day Meal scheme], NREGA [National Rural Employment Guarantee Act] and pensions in the district Lawngtlai. Please also send us a copy of instructions that would be issued in this direction and an action taken report within one month.*”

The Supreme Court Commissioners order is available at <http://mcdf.files.wordpress.com/2011/01/sc-commissioners-order-to-mizoram-starvation.pdf>

Action taken by the Mizoram Government:

Immediately after receiving the Supreme Court Commissioners' letter, the State Government of Mizoram swung into action. On 25 January 2011, Mizoram government submitted its response to the Supreme Court Commissioners. Mizoram government stated that it took the complaint received from MCDF very seriously and District Civil Supplies Officer (DCSO) Lawngtlai, KT Mathew visited Parva on 25th December 2010 (Christmas Day), three days after receiving MCDF's complaint. The findings of the DCSO corroborated the allegations of MCDF.

Again on 19th January 2011, the DCSO Lawngtlai visited Parva with the newly appointed Store Keeper of Damdep Food Godown, Mr K Vannawla and called a meeting with the Village Council leaders. The DCSO told the villagers that all the facilities including regular supply of ration, ration cards, etc will be provided in compliance with the Supreme Court orders.

Further, the Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Lawngtlai, Mr Thlamuana visited Parva along with the DCSO, Mr KT Mathew on 11th February 2011.

As per the reply of Mizoram government to the Supreme Court Commissioners, the state government took the following actions, among others:

- The Lawngtlai DC and the DCSO were instructed to immediately dispatch food grain to Damdep Godown from where Parva and surrounding villagers draw their ration, and also distribute APL, BPL and AAY rice to the villagers immediately;
- S. Zoramsanga, Store Keeper of Damdep Godown was suspended and departmental investigation initiated against him
- T.C. Lalsiammawii, Store Keeper of Vaseikai Supply Godown was transferred and departmental enquiry initiated against her
- Retailership of Pradip Kumar Chakma, retailer of Parva I was terminated, and
- The Under Secretaries of four departments namely Social Welfare Department, Rural Development Department, School Education Department and Health & Family Welfare Department have been asked to investigate and submit reports relating to implementation of schemes like Mid Day Meal, Integrated

Child Development Scheme, Old Age Pension, NREGS (job scheme) etc .

The report of the District Civil Supplies Officer (DCSO), Lawngtlai is self-explanatory as to what ails the PDS system. In the words of Mr K T Mathew, DCSO Lawngtlai, "One [Damdep godown] is being looked after by a drunken store keeper and another [Vaseikai Supply Godown] is being looked after by the least experienced store keeper".

MCDF's Fact Finding Mission

This was enough to drive the MCDF to undertake a fact finding visit to Parva and other areas. MCDF visit from 28 February 2011 and 12 March 2011 which covered Lawngtlai and Lunglei districts uncovered systemic failure of the PDS, Mid Day Meal, and other welfare schemes in these areas. This is the first ever Fact Finding Investigation done by any NGO in Parva areas with regard to implementation of food and livelihood related schemes. The fact finding report of MCDF was submitted to the Supreme Court Commissioners on 22 June 2011.

See another report (impact) at Page 21.

Media coverage of MCDF's action:

MCDF's campaign for food security in Parva areas received unprecedented media coverage. The order of the Supreme Court Commissioners directing the Mizoram government to feed the starving Chakmas was the main front page story in **Vanglaini**, the top Mizo language daily of Mizoram, and **Newslink** and **Mizoram Post**, two most widely read English dailies of Mizoram. The news was also aired by news channels and local cable networks. The mainstream respected daily, **The Telegraph, Kolkata**, carried the story: "Chakma villagers starve- SC commissioners asks Mizoram govt to supply food" on 10th January 2011. (http://www.telegraphindia.com/1110110/jsp/northeast/story_13415813.jsp)

In a historic order, based on MCDF's complaint, the NCPDR on 29 December 2010 directed the govt of Mizoram to investigate "denial of access to elementary education to the Chakma tribal children due to lack of schools" and "ensure that schools in all Chakma inhabited villages are established in accordance with the RTE Act 2009."

Other papers which carried the story are: **The Shillong Times**, **The Sentinel**, **Echo of Arunachal**, etc.

The suspension of the Store Keeper of Damdep Godown was reported prominently by **Vanglaini** and **The Zoram Times**.

6. Campaign for setting up of schools in every Chakma village

In 2009, MCDF conducted a survey in the Chakma inhabited villages in Mizoram to document the schools. As per the survey, over 72 per cent of Chakma inhabited villages in Mizoram still did not have Middle School, and over 96 per cent did not have High School. Based on these findings, MCDF filed a complaint before the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPDR) on 22 October 2010. The MCDF contended that the failure of the state government to set up Middle and High Schools tantamounts to denial of education to the Chakma children and the absence of schools has led to high dropout rate amongst the Chakma children, the petition added.



MCDF Fact Finding Team held a meeting at Parva I village on 1 March 2011. Here, MCDF President Hemanta Larma addressing the gathering.

Acting on MCDF's complaint, the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) on 29 December 2010 passed the following order to the Chief Secretary, Government of Mizoram:

- “3. After perusing the complaint, the Commission has taken cognizance of the matter and directed that the matter be referred to you for investigation/ inquiry and report to the Commission.
4. You are accordingly directed to get the matter investigated and take further necessary action. A factual report, along with authenticated copies of the relevant documents, be sent to the Commission within 30 days of issue of this letter. The report should indicate inter-alia the information on following points
 - i. The denial of access to elementary education to the Chakma tribal children in Mizoram due to lack of schools is in clear violation of section 6 of Right to Education Act which requires the local authority to establish the school in areas or neighborhood limits where there is no such school as prescribed in the act.
 - ii. Kindly ensure that schools in all Chakma inhabited villages are established in accordance with the RTE Act 2009.”

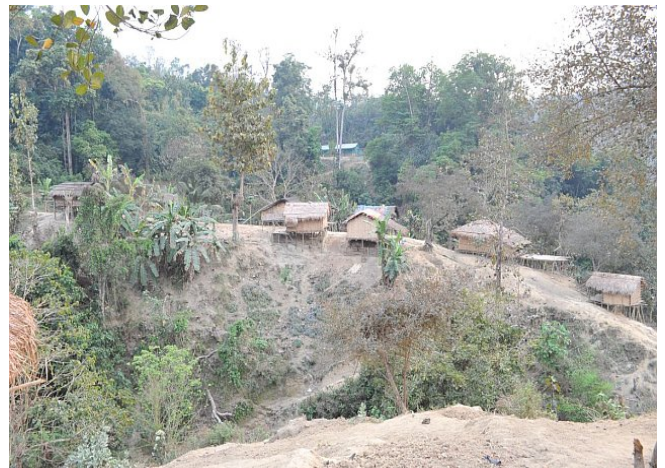
This is a historic order from the NCPCR which has the potential to change the future of the Chakma community. The Mizoram government refused to provide the requisite information to the Commission. On 10 February 2011, the NCPCR sent a reminder asking the Chief Secretary, Government of Mizoram to submit “the requisite report within 20 days of the date of issue of this letter.”

Kindly read the follow up report at page 9.

7. Intervention with the authorities to send medical team to fight mysterious disease in Thanzamasora village

Since 4 March 2011, six Chakmas died due to mysterious diseases (later identified as “Indian Tick Typhus” by New Delhi based National Institute of Communicable Diseases) at Thanzamasora village (a tiny, extremely remote village with 66 Chakma families) in Lunglei district in south Mizoram. They were identified as Mrs Doyal Lota Chakma (40), w/o of Denga Chakma; Malay Chand Chakma (20), s/o Oguro Send Chakma; Punyo Lota Chakma (45), w/o Amar Chakma; Prapha Ranjan Chakma (27), S/o Shanti Lal Chakma; Sumiron Chakma (27), s/o Shanti Lal Chakma, and Mrs Chittiso Chakma (22), w/o Pulin Chakma.

All of them reportedly suffered vomiting, high fever and headache before their deaths and their bodies turned blue-black after the death which caused panic among superstitious villagers.



A view of Thanzamasora village where six Chakmas died due to lack of medical facilities in March 2011.

The villagers believed that the deaths occurred after they were cursed with black magic by a witch from another village. There is total absence of health care facilities. Officials said at least 13 families have fled the village due to fear of death. Some others hid in the nearby forests due to fear of black magic.

MCDF's Role

On 25 March 2011, MCDF discussed the issue of medical emergency at Thanzamasora village with Additional Deputy Commissioner of Lunglei, T. Lalduhawma; Chief Medical Officer (CMO) in neighbouring Lawngtlai district, Dr R B Dey (Thanzamasora comes under Lawngtlai CMO); among others, over the phone. On the same day, MCDF submitted a petition by fax to Ms M. Zohmingthangi, Deputy Commissioner, Lunglei; Vanhela Pachuau, Chief Secretary, Mizoram; Director, Health & Family Welfare, Mizoram; and Dr RB, Chief Medical Officer, Lawngtlai seeking immediate intervention to prevent epidemic-like health

crisis currently prevailing at Thanzamasora village.

MCDF pointed out that Thanzamasora village is under Lunglei district but medical facilities come under neighbouring Lawngtlai Chief Medical Officer. Hence, there is a need for better coordination amongst officials to control the health crisis. Any unnecessary delay might result in more deaths and displacement. MCDF further warned that “More and more families are likely to flee if the situation is not brought under control immediately.”

MCDF made the following demands: Send a team of medical experts with all the necessary equipments and medical facilities; Establish a makeshift health camp at the Thanzamasora village as temporary basis and patients can be treated at the village; Make the necessary arrangements to shift the critical patients to hospitals in Lunglei or Aizawl for treatment; Immediately carry out awareness campaign in the area with the help of local NGOs like Young Chakma Association; Take measures to bring back all the families which have fled the village; Undertake a visit by senior officials from the District Administration; and Establish a Health Sub Centre with adequate number of staff and medical facilities at Thanzamasora village as long term solution.

Action taken by authorities

MCDF’s intervention prevented more deaths at Thanzamasora village. Mr T. Lalduhawma, Additional Deputy Commissioner, Lunglei informed MCDF that on 25 March 2011 itself a medical team from Lunglei would be dispatch to Thanzamasora village to take stock of the situation.

On 26 March 2011, leaders like Minister NK Chakma, CADC Chief Executive Member KK Tongchangya and Parliamentary Secretary of Mizoram, S Laldingliana visited the village with a team of doctors.

Media coverage of MCDF’s action:

India’s leading newspaper, The Hindustan Times on 26 March 2011 carried a story on MCDF’s intervention titled “Mysterious disease kills 5 in Mizoram”. (Available at <http://www.hindustantimes.com/Mysterious-disease-kills-5-in-Mizoram/Article1-677637.aspx>)



Doctors inspecting patients at Thanzamasora village

8. Celebration of Bizu festival in New Delhi

The Chakma community of Delhi celebrated Bizu 2011 at Ashok Buddha Vihar, Rajghat, New Delhi on 13 April 2011. Over 250 men, women, girls, boys and children participated in this colourful event. The event was organized jointly by Mizoram Chakma Development Forum (MCDF), Arunachal Pradesh Chakma Students Union (APCSU) and Chakma Welfare Society, Noida (CWS).

A number of cultural activities were showcased. New additions in the sports category were Musical Chair for girls, Arms Wrestling for boys, and Cock Fight for boys. Mr and Miss Bizu were selected for the first time. For its rich favour and gaiety, this Bizu would be remembered for a long time to come by the Chakma community of Delhi.



9. MCDF's intervention saves lives at Parva village, CADC

There is no basic healthcare facility for a population of 1,359 at Parva I village, CADC, Mizoram. From 1 May to 6 May 2011, three children including two baby girls died at Parva I village in Chakma Autonomous District Council, Lawngtlai district, Mizoram. They were baby Renuka Chakma, aged 1 year, daughter of Kinasur Chakma (died due to suspected malaria on 1 May 2011), baby Mono Agosh Chakma, aged 3 years, son of Guno Sindhu Chakma (died due to malaria disease) on 3 May 2011, and baby Hojpana Chakma, aged 1 month old, daughter of Guno Ban Chakma (died on 6 May 2011 due to unknown disease).

At around 11-30 am on 6 May, MCDF received a telephone call from our volunteers at Parva about the deaths and health crisis. MCDF was informed that over 50 persons, including women and children were ill at Parva I and nearby villages like Kamtuli and Siminesora. Some of them were critical and could die as there was no basic medical facilities.

Losing no time, MCDF swung into action and submitted a petition by fax to Dr RB Dey, Chief Medical Officer, Lawngtlai district; Vanhela Pachuau, Chief Secretary, Mizoram; Director, Health & Family Welfare, Mizoram and KK Tongchangya, Hon'ble CEM, CADC (by email) demanding timely intervention. MCDF's demands included sending of a team of doctors with all the necessary equipments and medicines to Parva I village immediately; establish a makeshift health camp at Parva I village where patients can be treated; shift the critical patients to hospitals in Kamala Nagar or Lunglei; and establish a Health Sub Centre with adequate number of staff and medical facilities at Parva I village as long term solution.

After submission of the petition, MCDF also spoke to CMO, Dr RB Dey and other health officials, over the phone. On the night of 8 May 2011, a team of 3 doctors from Kamala Nagar reached Parva I village with medicines and started treating the serious patients first. Unfortunately, before the Medical Team arrived, another infant, Chanan Chakma (9 months old), son of Jorittey Chakma of Parva I died due to malaria on 8 May. On 10 May, another 3-member medical team from Lawngtlai led by District Malaria Officer Dr. Maawmii reached Parva I village to bring the health situation under control.



This empty Health Sub Centre, set up in 1997, is witness to deaths every year at Parva I village. In March 2011, four children died due to absolute lack of basic healthcare facility. MCDF's intervention saved many more lives.

Given the remoteness of the Parva areas (about 160 km from headquarter Kamala Nagar) and lack of proper roads, MCDF appreciates the Medical Teams which acted swiftly. This is the first time ever that any team of doctors visited Parva I village for providing medical treatment during an epidemic like situation and this happened because of MCDF's initiatives.

MCDF's actions saved several precious lives, particularly of children and women. Villagers informed that had the medical teams not reached on time, they would have counted many other dead bodies.

Read MCDF's petition to Govt. of Mizoram and Press Release here: <http://mcdf.wordpress.com/2011/05/07/3-chakma-tribal-children-die-in-the-absence-of-medical-facility-in-mizoram-village/>

Following this intervention by the MCDF, a health worker was posted with basic medicines at Parva village, which, though not sufficient, benefited the local people.

Media coverage of MCDF's action

MCDF's intervention for medical facilities at Parva I village received top priority coverage in Mizoram press. Two of Mizoram's most widely read Mizo vernacular dailies carried the story in the front page.

"The Zozam Times" on 8 May 2011 carried a news story on the front page titled "Ni 6 chhungin Parva I ah naupang 3 an thi" along with the photograph of unused Parva I health sub centre, provided to it by MCDF.

Mizoram's most respected and largest circulated Mizo daily, **VANGLAINI** on 9 May 2011 carried a front page story: "Damdawi lam mumal loh vangin Parva-I khuaah mipui an mangang"

10. Campaign for justice for Lobindra Chakma, Mizoram

On 27 September 2011, MCDF in a petition submitted to the Mizoram Chief Minister Mr Lalthanhawla demanded stringent action against the Lungsens Block Development Officer (BDO), Mr John Tanpuia who tortured a villager Lobindra Chakma for demanding wages under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. Lobindra Chakma mysteriously disappeared from the BDO's custody on 23 September 2011.

The BDO, Mr John Tanpuia had asked Lobindra Chakma (44 years), s/o Chitra Kumar Chakma of Siphirtlang village in Lunglei district to saw teak logs, which he later refused on the grounds that he had no partners (it needs at least two persons to saw logs) and had no money to hire labourers. Angered by this, the BDO withheld Chakma's wages under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. Lobindra Chakma filed a complaint with the Lunglei Deputy Commissioner against the BDO for blocking his NREGS wages.

Enraged by the complaint, the BDO Mr John Tanpuia went to Siphirtlang village on 23 September 2011 and brutally beat up Lobindra Chakma, and his wife, Ms Milebo Chakma in full public view. Later, Lobindra Chakma was huddled into the BDO's vehicle and taken to his quarter at Lungsens. Lobindra Chakma went missing for more than a week, before he was traced by locals. *(for update see Page 57)*

11. Representation before the National Minority Commission in New Delhi

After learning through the media about the upcoming visit of Dr HT Sangliana, Hon'ble Vice Chairperson of National Commission for Minorities (NCM) to Mizoram, MCDF submitted a memorandum on 24 May 2011 seeking the NCM's intervention for improvement of the conditions of the Chakma Buddhist minorities in Mizoram. Dr Sangliana was kind enough to invite MCDF to his office for broader discussion on problems faced by Chakma minorities before leaving for Mizoram on 30 May 2011. Dr Sangliana visited Mizoram from 30 May to 6 June 2011.

On 25 May 2011, MCDF delegation met Dr Sangliana at his office at Lok Nayak Bhavan, New Delhi. During the meeting we held a frank discussion on various issues, including: 1. Lack of educational facilities for Chakmas, 2. Discrimination against Chakmas by Recruitment Rules of Mizoram Govt, 3. Lack of proper implementation of Border Area Development Programme and Multi-sectoral Development Plan for Minorities, 4. the alleged racist remarks against Chakmas by Mizoram Chief Minister Lalthanhawla and 5. Harmonious existence of all communities.

Results of MCDF's engagement:

MCDF is of the opinion that the meeting of May 25 helped enrich the NCM Vice Chairperson's understanding about the situation of the Chakmas in Mizoram, including their history, culture and aspirations to live in peace and progress as well as the problems they face in Mizoram. At the end of visit, Dr Sangliana held a press conference at Aizawl, Mizoram's capital, on 6 June 2011. He reportedly told the journalists that he found "no serious oppression against minorities" but added that "However, I feel that adequate attention

has not been given to them in terms of development.” He said the state government and the people of Mizoram should ensure that the minorities get their rightful opportunities in education and other development programmes. Dr Sangliana requested the Mizoram government to set up State Minority Commission at the earliest possible time to ensure faster development of the minorities.

On the issue of allegation about Chakma infiltration from Bangladesh, Dr Sangliana categorically stated that he found that the complaints were not genuine. “We have received a lot of complaints about Chakma infiltration. But there were no supportive evidences”, he said.

Following his return to New Delhi, MCDF delegation again met Dr Sangliana at his office in New Delhi on 8 June 2011. In the meeting various issues were discussed including the Hostel for Chakma students (boys & girls in Lunglei as demanded by MCSU-Lunglei); Language (Training of Chakmas for Mizo Language Teachers); Border Fencing (Improper erection, compensation & rehabilitation), redressal of grievances at State Level in Mizoram; and Integration of communities.

Dr Sangliana acted on MCDF’s representation of May 25. On 28 June 2011, the National Commission for Minorities forwarded the MCDF’s memorandum to the Ministry of Minority Affairs and requested that “a report in the matter may kindly be sent early regarding the educational problems raised in the letter so that the matter could be placed before the Commission for consideration.”

Thereafter, Dr Sangliana wrote a letter to the Union Home Minister P Chidambaram on 21 July 2011, and also raised the Border Fencing problem in the meeting of the National Commission for Minorities held on 26 July 2011. The minutes of the meeting of NCM notes, “Vice Chairperson explained the gravity of the situation arising out of the fencing being undertaken on the Bangladesh-Mizoram-Myanmar Border. It was decided to wait for a couple of weeks for a response from Home Minister to whom V.C. has written a letter on 21.7.11.”

12. Demand for hostels for Chakma students in Mizoram

On 16 November 2010, MCDF brought to the notice of the Ministry of Minority Affairs about the blatant violations of the guidelines of the Multi-Sectoral Development Plan for Minority Concentrated Districts by the Mizoram government and demanded construction of boys and girls hostels in Chakma inhabited areas.

MCDF objected to the in-principle approval given at the 18th meeting of the Empowered Committee held on 31 August 2009 for construction of girls hostel at Lawngtlai town which is a non-minority place. The Empowered Committee had granted the in-principle approval on the ground that the girls hostel should be “located in a village which has the highest population of minorities, other than the minority community in majority in the State (i.e. other than Christians)”. MCDF demanded that the proposed girls hostel be shifted to Borapansury village under CADC and that the in-principle approval given to the hostel at Kamala Nagar be granted final approval. MCDF also demanded hostels for minority students at Marpara village and Rajiv Nagar village under Mamit district.

13. Joint Statement against Mizoram CM, Mr Lalthanhawla

On 14 May 2011, for the first time, 11 Chakma civil society organizations issued a “joint statement” against Mizoram Chief Minister Lalthanhawla who termed the Chakmas of Mizoram as “nuisance” without any basis. The Chakma NGOs took strong exception of the CM’s statement appearing in The Aizawl Post, a Mizo vernacular daily dated 28th April 2011 which quoted Mr Lalthanhawla as telling that Chakmas in Mizoram are not original inhabitants of the state but settled down in vacant lands where Mizos did not want to live and that they have become “NUISANCE” in Mizoram. The Joint Statement termed Mr Lalthanhawla’s remark as “Racial Profiling” against the Chakmas and called upon the Chief Minister to respect the



Mizoram CM Lalthanhawla

rights of the ethnic minority communities in the state.

14. Protest letter to CHT Affairs Minister of Bangladesh

MCDF took the lead to protest against the alleged support extended by CHT Affairs Minister of Bangladesh, Mr Dipankar Talukdar to the identification of the Chakmas and other Jumma indigenous peoples as “Bengalees” in Bangladesh. When Dipankar Talukdar visited Kamala Nagar, headquarters of Chakma Autonomous District Council (CADC) in South Mizoram on 10 December 2001, 15 (fifteen) Chakma civil society organizations submitted a joint “protest letter” to him. The Chakmas from Mizoram, Assam, Tripura, Meghalaya, and Arunachal Pradesh through their civil society organizations expressed the angst of the Indian Chakmas against the destruction of identity of the Chakmas in Bangladesh as a consequent to the 15th Amendment to the Constitution of Bangladesh passed on 30th June 2011 which has identified the Chakmas and other indigenous peoples as “Bengalees”. The Chakma NGOs demanded “a written assurance from you that upon your return to Bangladesh you will take all the necessary measures to impress upon the Shiekh Hasina government to recognize the Chakmas and other ethnic communities as “indigenous peoples” in the Constitution of Bangladesh.” The Indian Chakmas also demanded Mr Talukdar’s personal intervention in his capacity as Member of Parliament and Minister of CHT Affairs for speedy and full implementation of the CHT Peace Accord of 1997 signed between the Government of Bangladesh and the indigenous peoples of CHT which would help restore peace and bring development to the region (Chittagong Hill Tracts) which is today the most neglected.

The 15 signatory organizations to the memorandum are Mizoram Chakma Development Forum, Tripura Chakma Students Association, Arunachal Pradesh Chakma Students Union, MAADI, Meghalaya Chakma Students Union, Guwahati Chakma Students Union, Barak Valley Chakma Students Association, The Chakma Voice, Mumbai Chakma Association, Dibrugarh Chakma Students Union, Mizoram Chakma Students Union, the Central Young Chakma Association, Mizoram Chakma Social Forum, Mizoram Buddhist Association and Chakma Mahila Samiti.

Media Coverage

- “Chakmas peeved at ‘Bengalee’ tag”, *The Seven Sisters Post*, North East India
- *The Chakma Voice* was quoted by Bangladesh’s reputed national daily “New Age” in an article titled “Indian minority leaders’ protest note to Dipankar” (12 Dec 2011). Read online at <http://newagebd.com/newspaper1/national/43315.html?mid=5529>

15. MCDF’s intervention for early payment of old age pension

On 9 December 2011, MCDF wrote to Mizoram Chief Minister Lalthanhawla demanding early payment of old age pension to about 23,500 beneficiaries who have not been paid old age pension for the last nine months, since March 2011. In the petition the MCDF stated that as per the Hon’ble Supreme Court order dated 28th November 2001, payment of the pension under the Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension (IGNOAPS) Scheme shall be made before seventh day of every month and that Central grants meant for the IGNOAPS cannot be diverted for any other purposes as per the direction of the Supreme Court of 27 April 2004. MCDF further pointed out that non payment of old age pension for the last nine months constituted direct and blatant violation of the directions of the Hon’ble Supreme Court. The petition was also submitted to the Mizoram Governor His Excellency Shri V B Purushathamam, and the Office of the Supreme Court Commissioners, New Delhi.

On 9 December itself, the Office of Supreme Court Commissioners informed the MCDF that they have forwarded MCDF’s petition to the Director, Social Welfare Department, Mizoram govt seeking an explanation as to why old age pension has not been paid for the last nine months. This put pressure upon the Mizoram government. On 20 December 2011, the office of the Social Welfare Department at Aizawl confirmed to MCDF over the phone that the department has started paying the old age pension to all the beneficiaries.

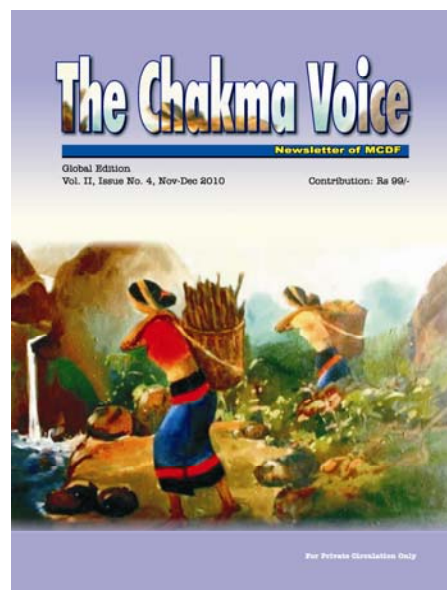
16. Memorandum submitted to Mizoram Education Reforms Commission

MCDF was the only NGO to have submitted a petition highlighting Chakmas' educational problems to the Education Reforms Commission constituted by the state government of Mizoram in May 2009 to suggest measures to improve the quality of education from primary to university level. This Commission was headed by Prof. AK Sharma, former chairperson of National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT). On 31 October 2009, a three-member delegation of MCDF met the Chairperson of Mizoram Education Reforms Commission at his residence at Noida, Uttar Pradesh and submitted a memorandum. In its memorandum, MCDF pointed out the denial/lack of access to education for the majority Chakma children and sought suitable recommendations for improvement of educational condition in the Chakma inhabited areas.

An important outcome of this engagement is that Mizoram Education Reforms Commission recommended, inter alia, that primary education be imparted in "mother tongue" which was one of the primary demands of the MCDF. The Commission in its report submitted to the Mizoram government on 30 July 2010 recommended that *"In schools where there is concentration of minority community children, mother tongue of the child should be used as medium of instruction in Class I and II."* (For details, turn to Page 69)

17. Start of "The Chakma Voice"

"The Chakma Voice" is a pet project of MCDF. Each issue has highlighted contemporary problems/issues affecting the Chakmas (in particular in Mizoram state) and provided critical analysis with a view to generate public awareness. This newsletter remains the only of its kind which reports exclusively about Chakma related issues, and is available both in print and online versions. It reaches to most of the Chakma inhabited villages in Mizoram, and in Aizawl, Shillong, Guwahati, Kolkata etc. It is also sent electronically to several readers across the world. ■



MCDF IMPACT

Mizoram gov't explains food shortage among Chakma tribals, 8 January 2011 (Source: <http://samaw.com/mizoram-govt-explains-food-shortage-among-chakma-tribals/5878>)

AIZAWL, Jan 8 (Zonet.in) – Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs Secretary, Mr. K. Riachho said, the reported shortage of supply rice in Parva I, Parva II, Parva III and Kamtuli has already been verified on the spot and necessary action has also been taken.

In reply to our correspondent, the Secretary said, a report on short supply of rice was received in December last year and the department immediately send the concerned DCSO to verify the position.

The Store keeper at Damdep Supply Godown has been placed under suspension for his alleged negligence of duty.

In addition to this, it was also proved that one of the retailers of Parva failed to lift the ration on several occasion.

The defaulter retailer was replaced and things are expected to go right now.

Chakma history, culture and heritage

Sneha Kumar Chakma's contribution to Indian freedom struggle: an unknown chapter

(Editors' Note: We are extremely pleased to publish this article under the title "Sneha Kumar Chakma's contribution to Indian freedom struggle: an unknown chapter". We could have well stated that it is a lost chapter as well. In the history of India's struggle for freedom, historians seldom refer to CHT and not at all to Chakmas who have contributed to the freedom movement. This whole article is excerpts from the forthcoming book "*The Partition and the Chakmas and Other Writings of Sneha Kumar Chakma*" by Dipak Kumar Chakma. We sincerely wish to thank the author for being kind enough to permit us to publish these excerpts from his forthcoming book. We hope that this book will help in proper understanding of the role of Sneha Kumar Chakma and other Chakma freedom fighters in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, and renew the inquisitiveness of historians and researchers to rewrite the Indian freedom movement, and study the adverse permanent impacts the Partition of 1947 had on the Chakma people.)

BRIEF ACCOUNT OF MY PART IN THE INDIAN FREEDOM STRUGGLE (by Sneha Kumar Chakma)

In early Twenties I was reading in the Lower Primary School at Khabong Pajya, my native village, 41 miles north of Rangamati, the Head Quarters of Chittagong Hill Tracts, a District in Bengal Presidency. "Gandhiji Joy bala sakale, Bharatbasi swaraj petecche" was a song sung by dancing boys of an itinerant Jatra party. This caught my imagination and the two word, 'Gandhiji' and 'Swaraj' planted in my heart an indeterminate inspiration that guided my subsequent career without my clear knowledge.

I did my Upper Primary at Chotamahapuram, 12 miles north of Rangamati and in January, 1927, I was a student of Rangamati Govt. High School, the only one of the kind in the whole District, reading in Class-V and boarding and lodging in the Govt. Boarding House attached to the School. It had been usual for Upper Primary student to be admitted in Class-IV of the High School. But in 1927,

there was no seat in Class-IV and I was asked by the Headmaster to get admitted in class-III. I revolted and insisted on my being admitted in Class-V where most of my Lower Primary mates, who had come to the High School directly after Lower Primary, had been promoted to Class-V. The Headmaster subjected me to a hard admission test, but I did so well in the test that he was compelled to admit me in Class-V but threatened me with expulsion in case I did not do well in any of the three examinations of the year. I was kept in special watch both in school as well as in Hostel. So I had to be a 'good boy' and in course of the three examinations of the year my Roll No. in Class-VI became 1. I continued to be the first boy to Class-VII and Class-VIII.

But how some prohibited swadeshi literature crept into my hands I hardly remember. The name of Motilal Nehru, Lala Lajpat Rai, Sarat Chandra Bose etc. and then Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Chandra Bose, Jatindra Mohan Sengupta etc. converted me into a freedom fighter without my distinct knowledge.

When I was in Class VII, I inspired my mother to participate in the Lahore Congress All India Exhibition (1929) in self-spun, self-woven Khadi, which she did with indigenous short staple cotton. My sense of pride knew little bounds when 'Mankumari Chalama' (Chakma) was declared winner of second prize in this All India Competition, particularly because the certificate annexed the signatures of the illustrious Motilal Nehru and his illustrious son Jawahar Lal Nehru.

Chittagong Hill Tracts was a Non-Regulated district and an excluded area, out of bounds to all political workers and revolutionaries. I may be allowed, moreover, to complain that the National Leaders and parties too, paid little attention to our area and the people.

To crown our difficulties, one notorious Mr. S.K. Ghosh I.C.S., a native Christian, was the Deputy Commissioner of Chittagong Hill Tracts and was also the Chairman of the Managing Committee of the Rangamati Govt. High School. He was subsequently reinforced by another native hunting dog of the British Government, Mr. Sankar Sen, who having had arrested one or more of the national heroes connected

with the Burge Murder case, Midnapore, was hunted by the swadeshis. He was sent to this forbidden area for shelter as S.D.O. Sadar, Rangamati. Both of them were tooth and nail in suppressing any smell of swadeshi movement in Chittagong Hill Tracts.

But freedom's inspiration was such that in 1930, when I was reading in Class VIII, I found myself a little leader and decided a school 'strike': One fine morning we took French leave of the Hostel and were out into the interiors of the District. I did not know what my seniors did when they were at large. But I had a gang of about a hundred and proceeding towards north through the main road of the District leading to Khagrachari and to Dighinala. A strike of a Government High School was in itself a very great swadeshi bid. But I did not like to stop there and started 'Bilati Barjan' movement.

As we walked 14 miles, we came to a village market, Burighat, where business came towards its close. We gave all a call to surrender foreign goods. A partial surrender was made. We set fire to them before all.

My giant class-mate was Khagendra Lal Dewan. He was not satisfied with the poor show at Burighat. Naniarchar was a big market place. We determined to do a befitting job there. As I began to speak, the crowd complained of not having a view of me. Khagendra swung me up on his shoulders and held me tight. As I spoke for half an hour the shopkeepers one by one stole to their shops and threw out whichever was foreign. Soon the entire market place was full of flames amidst thunders of *Bande Mataram*.

Our tidings ran ahead of us and as we proceeded, we found the market places on our way ready for our bidding. And within about a week, we reach Khagrachari, the biggest market place of Chittagong Hill Tracts, 40 miles north of Rangamati at the confluence of Chengi and Khagrachari rivulets. It was a market day and people came in thousands more for meeting our party than for marketing. We were, by now, less than 50 in number, but were conspicuous, thousands followed us in procession as we entered the Bazar with 'Bande Mataram'. As I began to deliver a swadeshi speech, the first of its kind in this part of India again there was a shout that I could not be seen and Khagendra had a ready plan. He immediately lifted me up on big branch of the large

banian tree and himself jumped upon it to offer me a free and secure stand, guarding against a fall. Khagrachari was my native place, Khabong Puria lying a mile west of it. Amidst successive plaudits and awe I spoke more than an hour and at last called for all *Bilati* (foreign) goods to fire. Within minutes all the open spaces of the market place heaped up into mountains and dozens of tin loads of socony kerosene were sprayed over them for easy combustion. Along with 'Bharat Mataki Jai', 'Bande Mataram' etc. people enjoyed a Bon-Fire in the day light. In days when a finest piece of Manchester Dhoti cost a Rupee and a packet of 10 of Ogden's polo cigarettes cost only two or three annas in the deepest interior, a couple of lakhs of Rupees worth of foreign goods turned into ashes at Khagrachari.

Next morning I went home with a party of 25. My father paid no direct look at me and vigorously busied himself with the habul-babul. My mother seemed to be red with pride when she saw me in the Dhoti she had woven for me from indigenous cotton. She greeted my friends rather than me and later on made a mild remark – 'Why don't you go back to your studies, now, for our better equipment!'

It was clear that Deputy Commissioner Sri S.K. Ghosh had already been in action among the guardian world and that my father had already been charged by neighbouring guardians with his child having been a little tyrant for the ruination of their innocent wards.

I looked at Khagendra who consented to return. We returned. Rather, a gang of guardians escorted us back. They wanted to prove that they had 'captured the swadeshis'. But on arrival at school I found that Sri S.K. Ghosh had already acted as President of the school Managing Committee. I was the solitary junior, of class VIII, to receive the major punishment, as one of the 6 'Ring-leaders' of 'Six months' Expulsion'. I was expelled for six months in the later half of 1930, but was allowed to sit for the Annual Examination in December.

Thus I entered the Rogues' Gallery of Sri S.K Ghosh, I.C.S., Deputy Commissioner of Chittagong Hill Tracts, in 1930 when I was a student of class VIII in the Rangamati Govt. High school.

My political Guru was Sri Ghanasyam Dewan. He was a college student of Chittagong town. Through him came Mahendra Barua to meet us secretly in Rangamati. Gymnastics, Lathi Khela, Cchuri Khela became our hobby and imperceptibly we were growing into revolutionaries. I was introduced to Charu Bikash Dutta, the lame Anushilan leader of Chittagong. Arabinda Ghosh, Barin Ghosh having attracted our attention, I contacted even the Prabantak Sangha of Motilal Roy in Chittagong Town. But its

industrial programme and spiritual inclination rather made me impatient. I therefore, choose to appreciate Ghanasyam Dewan, Mahendra Barua and Charu Bikash Dutta without clearly being able to distinguish Gandhism from Terrorism. I was very glad to meet Subhas Chandra Bose at the Jatra Mohan Sen Hall of Chittagong town when he visited Chittagong in the early thirties. I must confess that I developed a preference for armed action rather to non-violent method of struggle for achieving freedom of India.

It was in 1931, as I was reading in class IX of Rangamati High school, that the Science Laboratory of Dr. Prafulla Ghosh in the Mainamati Abhoy Ashram of Comilla attracted me, and I, with Sarat Talukder, Bijoy Chandra Chakma and Kanak Baran Dewan, all students of Rangamati High school, stole there in company of Ghanasyam Dewan. Dr. Nripen Bose and Dr. Prafulla Ghosh were glad to admit us. But at the instance of S.K. Ghosh, the District Magistrate of Comilla arrested us within 8 days of our stay in the Abhoy Ashram and had us escorted back to Rangamati. Ghanasyam Dewan was accused of kidnapping us and Kanak Baran Dewan's father was purchased to contrive to prove Kanak Baran a minor and Ghanasyam Dewan was sentenced to 3 years rigorous imprisonment and 30 canings and Bijoy 6 months and 30 canings. Headmaster Satish Sengupta fought hard for us and minimised our punishment to 20 canings each publicly.

The year 1932 came with a worse prospect for me. It was my Class-X, the final year in the school. The Asstt. Headmaster Dwijendra Lal Chakravorty colluded with S.K. Ghosh and Sankar Sen. He reported against Satish Sengupta, Headmaster, as having winked at our political activities. Sengupta was transferred to Bholu and Dwijen Chakravorty secured his position as Acting Headmaster. He spied against us, and flattered the British Government so that his position was made permanent.

One of the main flatteries of Dwijen Chakravorty was to have us play the English game, Football, which we virtually had boycotted. I was now the Chief of the students. My protest came in the form of an Examination strike, and decided on ridiculing the second Terminal Examination. Pages were to be written for 1 or 2 marks while questions worth 10 to 20 marks were to be answered in one or two words. The whole school mocked the second Terminal Examination. In collusion with S.K. Ghosh and Sankar Sen, Dwijen Chakravorty con-

cocted serious complaints against student leaders. S.K. Ghosh and Sankar Sen, acting through the school managing committee, ordered Two years' Rustication against myself and Mrinal Kanti Majumder, on December 10th 1932. On my appeal, however, to the Education Directorate, Moulvi Mirza Abu Zaffar, Divisional Inspector of school, Chittagong Division, personally enquired into the matter and on his report. Dr. Jenkins, Director of Public Instructions, Bengal, squashed the order of Rustication. S.K. Ghosh put up a stubborn opposition to it, even to the then Governor of Bengal, John Anderson, but was not successful.

Consequently as soon as I finished my Matriculation Examination of 1933, I was summoned by the Deputy Commissioner as a witness in his Court (April, 1933 ?) in connection with a criminal case put up by Dwijen Chakravorty against the Pali Teacher of the High School. I was declared 'Hostile', cross-examined and was arrested in Court by S.K. Ghosh who put up a case against me u/s 193 I.P.C (False Evidence) in the Court of the S.D.O Sadar (Sankar Sen) who sent me to jail custody in the Rangamati jail. So my under trial prison began somewhere in April 1933. When the results of my Matriculation Examination was published that I passed in the 1st Division with letters, I was still an under trial prisoner. After about four or five months, on the evidence of the solitary witness, Mr. S.K.Ghosh, ICS, Deputy Commissioner, Sankar Sen, S.D.O. convicted me and sentenced me to three months R.I. Within a fortnight or so I sent a jail-Appeal to the Divisional Commissioner of Chittagong, Mr. A. J. Dash, who within a fortnight of the receipt of my petition sent an order to the D.C. to release me on Bail Rs.50/- and I was ordered to personally appear before him, if I remember aright, on September 20th 1933. In course of time, I was declared the District Scholar of Chittagong Hill Tracts, in the Matriculation Examination of 1933. It is probably in the first week November 1933, that Mr. Dash, Commissioner, released my Bailsman.

Under special permission of the Syndicate of the University of Calcutta I had a late admission in the Chittagong College and normally graduated from there in 1937.

After graduation it was my endeavour to turn the Chittagong Hill Tracts Peoples Association into a pure counterpart of the Indian National Congress which was forbidden in this non-regulated Excluded Area, and to train up the minds of the general public for active participation in India's freedom struggle in whichever form it might come to them. I scarcely remember when and how I was boosted up to the

highest executive position of the Peoples Association as General Secretary. I held that position until the Chittagong Hill Tracts People Association became defunct after the ill-fated Partition that threw Chittagong Hill Tracts into the occupation of unwanted Pakistan.

When the second World War came up in 1939, the grip of the British Government in Chittagong Hill Tracts grew enormously tighter. On the other hand, All India (national) leaders showed very little interest in the people and the area. Only Subhas Chandra Bose had a comparatively clearer conception and inclination for us, and we, too, placed greater faith on Subhas Babu's method of Independence than on other alternatives. Even Mahatma Gandhi grew smaller to me when he said, "Sitaramiya's defeat is my defeat". Quit India movement of 1942 had very little to do with Chittagong Hill Tracts. Subhas Babu's escape abroad was looked upon by us with hope as well as disappointment. The leadership of Chittagong Hill Tracts therefore lay entirely on our local hands.

From 1940 I was mostly outside Chittagong Hill Tracts. And in 1944 I proceeded to Calcutta and was seldom in my native district. But it was impossible to correctly know the facts of Netaji's progress with his Azad Hind Fouz. It seemed that most people of India joined with the British propaganda machinery in blacking out news of Netaji. What a vexation it was to me, when, probably in 1948 or 1949, my President of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Peoples Association, Kamini Mohan Dewan, disclosed to me in Calcutta, that on his arrival in Manipur, Netaji Subhas Chandra sent a personal letter in my name and it was delivered to him (President, Kamini Babu who was a Gandhian old man), safely, and that he preserved the letter for full three years and destroyed it only in 1947. Here was a colossal betrayal of an arm-chair politician! What an unconsolable despair for me! And what a detestation for Kamini Babu!

Soon in 1945, atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki turned the fate of the world and of India's mode of freedom, seriously telling upon the future of Chittagong Hill Tracts. Partition of India was decided on. And I was busy, terribly busy, to save my District from the sword of the butcher. I hastened to Chittagong Hill Tracts, called meetings, ascertained the general consensus and started for Simla to meet, on the occasion of the

Wavell conference, the All India leaders in order to keep Chittagong Hill Tracts in India. I called on Pandit Nehru and Maulana Azad, among others, and they assured that my District shall not be thrown to Pakistan.

I demanded representation in the Constituent Assembly of India and myself was co-opted in the All India Excluded Areas sub-committee of the constituent Assembly headed by A.V. Thakkar, in 1946.

I put up a strong Memorandum before the Bengal Boundary Commission and mobilised the iron-man Sardar Ballav Bhai Patel to take up the case of Chittagong Hill Tracts with Lord Mountbatten and Sir Cyril Radcliffe, which he did.

At zero hours between August 14th and 15th 1947 I went to Col. G.L.Hyde, Deputy Commissioner, Chittagong Hill Tracts, Rangamati, in procession and asked him to flourish Indian National Flag, instead of the Union Jack, which he agreed to. Next morning I hoisted Indian National Flag publicly and Col. Hyde came to salute it. He invited us to his office and Banglow where he hoisted Indian National Flag ceremoniously and officially. This was done according to the Indian Independence Act, 1947, passed in the British Parliament on 18th July, 1947.

On August 17th 1947, the Radio announcement interpreted Radcliffe Award having assigned Chittagong Hill Tracts into Pakistan. On August 19th 1947, I called a conference at the Deputy Commissioner's Bangalow where all leaders including the Chakma Raja, attended. In presence of Col. Hyde, Deputy Commissioner, the conference decided not to abide by the Radcliffe Award.

I left Rangamati same day (August 19th 1947) for Tripura with 8 armed Volunteers and crossed to Sabroom on August 21st 1947.

Excerpts of interview of Sneha Kumar Chakma in the *Indian Post* (Post Script) dated 23.08.1987

"Years of Genocide have desensitized us"

Driven out of Bangladesh, the Chakma Buddhists are a persecuted and homeless people today. The influx of these tribal refugees from the Chittagong Hill Tracts to Tripura continues unabated, with most of them refusing to return home because they fear for their lives. Sneha Kumar Chakma, the leader of the Chakmas' battle for survival, spoke about the initial days of his struggle and the exodus of Chakmas to Tripura, in an interview to VINAY SAHASRABUDDHE just before his death last month.

A brief largely unnoticed Agartala datelined news item in *The Times of India* on 20th July said “the Chakma leader Mr. Sneha Kumar Chakma, who led an armed insurrection for the merger of the Chittagong Hill Tracts with India in the late forties died here yesterday”.

The doyen of the Chakma Buddhists struggle for ethnic survival, Sneha Kumar Chakma, died unsung and unwept. With his death, the lone surviving pillar of the Chakma freedom movement has collapsed, putting a question mark over the future of this movement – a feeble battle by an ethnic group on the verge of extinction. The saga of this battle for survival by a 600,000 strong tribal community of Chakmas is a story of agonizing apathy and neglect. The division of the country at the time of Partition left the Chakmas in the hands of rulers for whom they were an unwanted lot. Sneha Kumar Chakma led the lonely struggle with an undying spirit.

Excerpts from the interview:

In all how many Chakmas are there? What is their condition today?

Today, there are about 7,50,000 Chakmas all over the world. A majority of them around 600,000 – live in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. There are about 1,50,000 Chakmas in India, mostly in the North-East: a majority of them are in Mizoram.

Our state of affairs is deplorable. We are a homeless lot. The Bangladesh Government has turned us homeless. Even elsewhere, our presence is undesired. In Arunachal Pradesh and other parts, people want us to quit. Even in Mizoram, a part of which is our own home land, the State Government is bent upon harassing us.

How come Chittagong Hill Tracks allocated to East Pakistan despite the fact that non-Muslims were in a majority in that area?

That is a very, very long story, a Himalayan blunder. It was a series of mistakes on the part of all concerned. Chittagong Hill Tracts – CHT – was a full-fledged district during the British regime. There was ambiguity about the fate of CHT till independence. Even the Independence Act of India, passed in the British Parliament on 18 July 1947 was silent about CHT.

But Sir Cyril Radcliffe, who presided over the Radcliffe Commission (which earmarked areas for India and Pakistan), did all the mischief. In fact I remember, for six days from 15 to 20 August 1947, the Indian tricolour was flying at Rangamati, our district headquarters. It was Colonel G.L.Hyde, then our district commissioner, who hoisted the tricolour first. All of a sudden, on 21 August, we saw a Pakistani flag. We saw that the jawans of the Baluch Army of Pakistan had taken over everywhere. It was shocking development. The Chittagong Hill Tracts People’s Association decided to fight this onslaught.

Although CHT was categorized under Group ‘C’ meaning East Pakistan (now Bangladesh: Group A is present Pakistan and Group B is present India). Pakistan were under the impression that India would take hold of the administration since non-Muslims were a majority in our district. By when, even after six days, there was no sign of Indian governance. Pakistan acted smartly, sealing our fate for ever.

Did not your people resist? Was not your case heard by the rulers in Delhi?

Of course. We did resist. Several resistance squads were organized. Nolinaksha Roy, a former Chakma raja, KM Dewan, president of the CHT People’s Association and several others came together to form an action committee. We resolved not to abide by the Radcliffe award.

I then went to Delhi. Those were turbulent days of hectic activity and Deputy Prime Minister Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel could not spare much time for us. He told me to explain our grievances within three minutes. I told him whatever I could and went back to Agartala (sic) (it was actually Kolkota) in a dejected mood.

But Sardar had assured us all possible help and accordingly wrote to Lord Mountbatten that forcing Chakmas to be part of a theocratic Muslim State such as Pakistan would prove ‘monstrous’. Sadly, this did not help. But I am grateful to Sardar Patel. He at least sympathized with our cause.

What about Pandit Nehru? Did you ever meet him?

Yes. I met him once, and that too, on the advice of Sardar Patel. Along with my colleagues, I was waiting in Delhi to seek at least a brief interview with the Prime Minister, some time in September 1947. Do you know how long I waited? I was kept waiting for

45 days. At last, when we met, Nehru's response was wholly disappointing. When we requested monetary and military help to free the CHT from the clutches of East Pakistan, he at once got furious. Agitated, he asked us, "Do you want India to come again under foreign yoke?" We were at a loss to understand his reaction.

Nehru was opposed to the idea of the CHT joining the Indian dominion, since he thought that re-opening this issue would spark off an international controversy and would amount to antagonizing other countries. Ironically, at the cost of the independence of Chakmas, he was going to preserve the prestige of India. This was not only unwise but also help us underlined our endless agony, sufferings and sorrow.

What were your next steps?

What Radcliffe did to us was the grossest injustice and provided a momentum to our determination to fight back. Although I never returned to CHT thereafter, our people continued their Constitutional fight.

Why did not you go back?

It was useless to go there. It was not our willingness, but the willingness of the Indian government that mattered the most. But I doubt whether the rulers had the political will to do something for our cause. They could do it in Jammu and Kashmir, Junagadh, Hyderabad and even in Goa, but they did nothing for us in CHT. So, when the government was not solidly behind the Chakmas in CHT, what was the use of my going there?

How long did the resistance movement continue?

Unfortunately, it died within a couple of years. Again, in 1960, the CHT people were up in arms due to their eviction from prime agricultural land in the CHT following the submerging of the area by the Kaptai dam and hydro-electrical project.

What happened at the time of the creation of Bangladesh? Did Indira Gandhi help you?

Yes. She was all sympathy for us. I wanted to save my people from the exigencies of warfare. I sent a wire to Mrs. Gandhi asking her to arrange

to protect my people from the Mukti Bahini onslaught. She sent three contingents of the Bhutanese regiment to Rangamati. A Buddhist General Owai Singh, was its commander and he dealt with the situation rightly.

Why was there a confrontation with the Mukti Fauj? Was former Bangladesh President Sheikh Mujibur Rehman against the Chakmas?

Thousands of Chakma youths had offered to join the Mukti Fauj, but none of them was called out. In Bangladesh, you have to be either a Bengali or a Muslim. Otherwise, there is no guarantee of your life and property. Nobody recognizes you. And about Mujib, the less said the better. He wanted to evict us all. Our leader, Charu Bikash Chakma, demanded autonomy, but what did he get? Mujib (in retaliation) threatened to send 500,000 Bengali speaking Muslims to the CHT to turn us homeless. It was a regime which let loose a reign of terror, leading to horrendous atrocities.

We formed the Shanti Bahini in 1973 to forestall the encroachment. But our resistance was ruthlessly crushed. Mujib also tried to Islamise the Chakmas. More than a thousand girls were compelled to marry Muslims.

Since when have the Chakmas been taking shelter in India? What is the nature and magnitude of the present influx?

It was in 1964 that the Chakmas started pouring into India. Earlier, the reason was the evictions resulting from the hydel project. Next is the atrocities of the government. Systematic efforts for heavy Islamisation of the CHT have been going on for decades. In 1951, there were only 18,000 Bengali Muslims. In 1961, the figures swelled to 45,000. And today, they have almost outnumbered us. Bengali Muslims constitute 45 percent of the present population of the CHT. Buddhist monasteries have been demolished to make room for mosques.

The present exodus would not have started if 10,000 Bangladeshi troops had not launched a major offensive against the tribals on 29 April 1986. Today, they are bent upon our eviction. A piece of land has not satiated their greed. They are committing gang-rapes on our sisters. Their strategy is to encircle a Chakma village, segregate the men and then rape the women. They have killed more than 10,000 Chakmas. These are barbaric atrocities. If I tell you all that my people have faced, blood, and not tears, will flow out of my eyes. Years of genocide have desensitised us.

The Bangladesh Army has recently stepped up organized settlement of Muslims in CHT and this is posing a

serious threat of annihilation. Go to Gigharia, Me-rung, Baghichari, Khagrachari and you will see how a virtual genocide of the Chakmas is being organized.

What about repatriation? Would not your people go back to CHT?

Why not? We will go back if the security of our life and property is guaranteed. The Bangladesh Government has stated that it very much wants the Chakmas to return. But this is just an eyewash. Muslim infiltrators and the Bangladesh Army are kept ready in CHT to subject us to torture, oppression and harassment. In such a situation, the talk of repatriation is meaningless.

What do you expect from India?

Active support in our struggle. The Indian government is offering us a healing touch. But that is not sufficient. India should use its good offices to ensure our protection and, more importantly, our human rights. We have appealed to Rajiv Gandhi to try for a lasting solution to the ethnic problem. But, unfortunately, the Indian response is not very satisfactory. And meanwhile, the Bangladesh government is acting smartly. Recently, it has started saying that despite the Chakmas' willingness to return to the CHT, India is stalling their repatriation.

The Bangladesh government recently organized a visit of the ambassadors of frontline nations to the border areas to show how willing they are to take us back. India, on the other hand, has argued our case in a weak-kneed manner.

Have you ever approached Buddhist leaders in India? And what about the response from human rights activists all over the world?

Yes. We have approached them. The Indian Buddhist Council, particularly its general secretary, Bhikshu Rashtrapal, is keen to help us, but of late, the organization itself is suffering from internal squabbles. Of the human rights activists, Amnesty International, Survival International, the Anti Slavery Society and several others have taken up our cause. We hope a day will dawn when, with the help of all our supporters, we will be free from the clutches of the present rulers. ■

Our unknown Chakma heroes

Read about Dangu Baneswar Chakma who has dedicated his entire life for the Chakmas, yet, is spending his last days in his small hut at the outskirts of Kamala Nagar, CADC, Mizoram, unknown and unsung. In *"The Chakma Voice—Global Edition 2011"* the MCDF had written an exclusive article on his life and contributions, titled, ***"Baneswar Chakma: An unknown hero living at our backward"***, published along with rare pictures of his life. Interested readers are requested to read the article online here: <http://mcdf.files.wordpress.com/2012/04/the-chakma-voice-global-edition20112.pdf> (pages 2—5)

Excerpts from the article:

"Baneswar Chakma, son of Phaireia Chakma was born on 12th June 1929 at a village called Kakparyya under police station Longudu in CHT in then undivided India (now in Bangladesh). He passed the 9th standard but could not complete his 10th class. He took active part, at local levels, in the freedom movement of India. He worked with freedom fighters like Smt Kalpana Dutta (who is famous for her active role in armed resistance movement led by Surya Sen which carried out the Chittagong armoury raid in 1930) and Loke Nath. Baneswar Chakma was one of the jewels who fought to bring the Chittagong Hill Tracts under the territory of India.

In 1947, he represented along with Sneha Kumar Chakma (in Tripura) and Ganeshyam Dewan (in Bangladesh) demanding inclusion of CHT into India. Unfortunately, the Boundary Commission headed by Cyril Redcliff gave away CHT, the Chakma kingdom, to Pakistan. Chakma leaders continued to fight for CHT's inclusion into India. In 1957, Baneswar Chakma was the Secretary of the Tribal Union (Regional Party) which demanded CHT's inclusion in India. In 1967, he was one of the representatives which met Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in Delhi on the CHT issue."

50th Chakma king, Raja Tridiv Roy: Obituary

(Editors' note: His Excellency Raja Tridiv Roy, the 50th Chakma king, passed away in Islamabad, Pakistan on 17 September 2012. For our readers who may be interested to know more about Raja Tridiv Roy, we are pleased to present a short biography and a news report with due credit to the sources.)

Short Biography of the 50th Chakma Raja

Source: <http://www.chakmaraj.com>
Sunday, 30 September 2012 18:05

The Late Raja Tridip Roy
Birth: Rangamati, 14 May, 1933
Marriage & Installation: Rangamati, 2 March, 1953
Passing Away: Islamabad, 17 September, 2013

FAMILY

Raja Tridiv Roy was born as the second child and first son of Raja Nalinaksha Roy & Rani Benita Roy. His siblings are: Rajkumari Amiti, Rajkumar Samit (who passed away in 2008), Rajkumari Moitri, Rajkumari Rajasree (Rakhi) and Rajkumar Nandit. Raja Nalinaksha was the 49th Chakma Raja and the son of Raja Bhuvan Mohan Roy and Rani Dayamoyi Roy. Rani Benita was the eldest daughter of barrister Saral Sen (son of Brahmananda Keshub Chandra Sen) of Kolkata. Raja Tridiv's first wife is Rani Arati Roy. The children are Rajkumari Chandra, Raja Devasish, Rajkumar Sivasish, Rajkumar Indrasish and Rajkumari Triveni. His second rani (later divorced) was Rani Anjali (widowed from her second marriage). Their children are Chand and Rajkumari Piya. The third rani (later divorced) was Rani Martine (Quentric; since remarried). Rajkumar Padma Sambhava Gwenhale was their only issue.

CHAKMA RAJA

He functioned as the Chakma Raja or Chakma Chief from 1951 to 1971. Although the formal investiture or installation was held about two years later (on 3 March, 1953), he took over as the Chief immediately after his father, Raja Nalinaksha's, death, on 7 October, 1951. Raja Tridiv left Rangamati on 9 November, 1971, for a tour of Southeast Asia as a special envoy of the Government of Pakistan, never to return to his homeland. In 1974, his eldest son, Yuvaraj Devasish Roy, was declared as



His Excellency Raja Tridiv Roy

Chakma Raja and as Raja Tridiv's successor. From 1974 to 1977, Kumar Samit Roy, younger brother of Raja Tridiv, acted as Regent, until the Yuvaraj took over functions of the office of the Chakma Raj.

GOVERNMENT & OTHER PUBLIC POSITIONS

He was granted honorary commission in the Pakistan Land Forces and appointed Honorary Aide-de-Camp to the Governor General of Pakistan. He was elected Vice-Chairman of the District Council, Chittagong Hill Tracts (unopposed). Later he was twice elected to the East Pakistan Provincial Assembly (once unopposed) and once to the National Assembly of Pakistan. He served the Government of Pakistan in several positions, including as Federal Minister, Presidential Adviser, Ambassador-at-Large and as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary.

He represented the country at several international conference including the following: Sixth World Buddhist Council, Yangon (1956), 2500th Buddha Jayanti Celebrations, New Delhi (1956), World Food Congress, Washington DC (1963), General Assembly, United Nations (1963, 1972 and several more times).

SPECIAL HONOURS BY GOVERNMENTS & CIVIL SOCIETY

On 14 November, 2005 he was conferred the award of Sri Lanka Ranjana by the President of Sri Lanka in 2005 for his meritorious services to the Pakistani and international Buddhist communities (he was the Founding President of the All Pakistan Buddhist Society). On 2 March, 2007 he was conferred the award of Saddhamma Jotikadhaka in Yangon by the Government of the Union of Myanmar in recognition of his contributions to the purification, perpetuation and propagation of teachings of the Gautama Buddha. On 1 November, 2009 he was conferred the award of Saddhamma Dipa at Sarnath, India by the Shishu Koruna Sangha Trust, Kolkata. He gave several talks on Buddhism and wrote articles on Buddhist philosophy for several newspapers and journals in Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. He also gave several talks on Buddhism in Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, Myanmar (former Burma) and Thailand.

PUBLICATIONS

His major publications include the following: *They Simply Belong*, *The Windswept Wahini*, *The Departed Melody: Memoirs*, PPA Publications, Islamabad, 2010, ISBN. 969-8587-10-1 and *South American Diaries: A Pakistani Ambassador's Journal (1981-1995)*, National Book Foundation, Islamabad, 2009. He has also published short stories and articles in several newspapers and journals in Bangladesh, Pakistan and other countries.

MAJOR EVENTS DURING HIS INCUMBENCY AS CHAKMA CHIEF

The people of the Chakma territory (Chakma Circle) and the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) had to face several major challenges during the period of his incumbency as the Chakma Raja (1951-1971). In the 1950s, in partnership with other leaders of the hill region, including then members of the provincial legislative assembly, Kamini Mohan Dewan and Birendra Kishore Roaza, he prevented the erosion of the special constitutional, political and administrative status of the CHT and planned population transfer of non-indigenous people into the area.

In 1960, when the Kaptai Hydroelectric Dam was constructed, leading to the displacement of nearly 100,000 people and the permanent flooding of their homes and lands, including the palace

of the Chakma Rajas and prime agricultural land of the region, he helped rehabilitate his people on new and inhospitable lands, facilitating major occupational changes and causing acute economic, social and cultural disruptions. More than ten thousand displacees, and their more numerous descendants, still irk out an existence as stateless refugees in Arunachal Pradesh, India.

In 1971, in partnership with one of the elected leaders of the region, the late Manobendra Narayan Larma (who later led the armed struggle for autonomy for the CHT and died in an intra-party struggle), he resisted the eviction of indigenous people from the Reingkhong Reserved Forest by members of the Forest Department and East Pakistan Rifles. He helped spread education in his region by facilitating the establishment of schools and colleges and by securing their admission to institutions in the capital city and elsewhere.

In 1971, he gave shelter to numerous people, including indigenous people and Bengali (Muslim, Hindu, Christian and Buddhist) who were at risk of massacre or other atrocities by the Pakistan Army. ■

Condolence message on death of Raja Tridiv Roy from Pakistan's Foreign Office

ISLAMABAD, Sep 17 (APP): Foreign Minister Hina Rabbani Khar, Minister of State Nawabzada Malik Amad Khan, Foreign Secretary Jalil Abbas Jilani and all officials of the Foreign Office have expressed their deep condolences over the sad demise of Ambassador Raja Tridiv Roy. "In his passing away, Pakistan has lost a distinguished diplomat who served the country with exemplary commitment and distinction," said a statement issued by the Foreign Office in this regard. (Source: Associate Press of Pakistan)

CADC's condolence over Raja Tridiv Roy's demise

Kamalanagar, Sept. 18: Chakma Autonomous District Council today paid tributes to His Highness Raja Tridiv Roy and Hon'ble Parliamentary Secretary, Govt. of Mizoram, Pu Chawngtin Thanga over their demise in a condolence assembly held at the premise of CADC Secretariate. As a mark of respect CADC declared today as a holiday. The Raja's demise marks the closure of an important Chapter in the history of the Chakmas.

The Raja who gave away his kingdom

Published in *The Express Tribune*, September 18th, 2012.

KARACHI:

Raja Tridiv Roy, minister-for-life, former government adviser, envoy and chief of the Chakma Tribals, died in Islamabad on Monday. He was 79. The late Raja Roy will be remembered as the man who gave away his kingdom so that he could be with Pakistan during one of the country's most turbulent periods.

Born in Rajbari, Rangamati, Chittagong Hill Tracts in 1933, he was installed as the hereditary Chakma Raja in 1953. This is a position that he later abdicated, giving control to his son.

A Buddhist by faith, Raja Tridiv Roy, left East Pakistan and came and joined the government of then president of Pakistan Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in the seventies. This despite the fact that he won the elections in 1971 as an independent candidate from his constituency.

Roy's other distinction was that at one point he was also offered the position of president of Pakistan by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who himself had assumed the prime ministership of the country. The reasons were clear: under the newly proclaimed constitution, the president would have to be a Muslim and Roy was not willing to change his faith. Also, Roy described the position as a "gilded cage."

When Bhutto was deposed in 1977, Raja Tridiv Roy was carted off in 1981 on an ambassadorship to far away Argentina. He returned to Islamabad in 1996. Since then, he was head of the Pakistan Buddhist Society.

Looking back, it would be unfair to say that Raja Roy migrated because he saw the Pakistan government as a better option. He was the head of a protected community, which was in an unenviable position when hostilities started between the Pakistan government and the Mukhti Bahini. Things have to be viewed in a historical context to understand Roy's decision, say observers.

In 1947, the CHT should have gone to India as it was largely non-Muslim in its make-up. But this did not happen and the new government did not forgive the Chakmas for their pro-Indian stance immediately prior to independence. The special status of the CHT was changed and misused to allow non-indigenous people to migrate into these lands. In the early sixties, a hydro-electric dam was built which submerged about 40 per cent of the cultivatable land of the area.

As troubles started between the Mukti Bahini and the Pakistan Army, the Chakmas, learning their lesson from history, decided to remain aloof.

During this period, Raja Tridiv Roy stood for elections as an independent candidate, after refusing an Awami League ticket offered by Sheikh Mujib. This put the Awami League against Roy and the Chakmas. After the creation of Bangladesh, Roy left for Pakistan, because he felt that the demands for keeping the CHT autonomous and independent would not be met by the Bangladesh government.

Roy felt that his options in the newly emerging Bangladesh were limited: despite being an elected member of his peo-

Raja Tridiv Roy's other distinction was that at one point he was also offered the position of president of Pakistan by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who himself had assumed the prime ministership of the country. But under the newly proclaimed constitution of Pakistan, the president would have to be a Muslim and Roy was not willing to change his faith.

ple, he feared being put behind bars or exterminated, or worse, "sacrificing my principles and objectives for personal gains." He tried to push for the continuation of special status for CHT but saw that the new government in Bangladesh was not interested.

In one interview, Raja Sahab said that he had "no regrets", for abdicating his position and moving to Pakistan but was unhappy with the shabby treatment he has received after being relieved of his position as the Pakistan Ambassador to Argentina.

The Chakmas, meanwhile, have not fared too well either. There are reports of forcible conversions and settlements in the CHT protected areas to change the demographic mix-up of this community. The fallout has resulted in the fleeing of many tribals to neighbouring India.

In the final analysis, it can be said that the person who detested gilded cages ended up living in one. The Chakma House in Islamabad, where Raja Sahab spent the final years of his life forgotten by the Pakistan government and the community he served. ■

The Process of weaving 'bein' of Chakmas



An authority on the Chakma customs and culture, Dangu L B Chakma in this exclusive article explains the process of Chakma traditional weaving

BEIN AND ITS PROCESS:

The Chakmas grow cotton called *SUDHO* in abundance in their Jhum. The hilly soil is suitable for growing cotton. But the length of the cotton yarn grown by the Chakmas is shorter than the yarn grown in other parts of the world. Though the length is short, it is famous for its quality of fibre. The cotton grown by the Chakmas were exported to foreign countries even during British rule. The Chakma inhabited area was best known as "KAPAS MAHAL" OR COTTON BELT during the British period. It is still exported to foreign countries from Bangladesh and India for mixing with certain fabrics in Europe and Japan.

PROCESS OF GROWING:

The cotton seeds are first mixed with mud and dried. It is done for polishing of the yarn remnants of the seeds. It is then mixed with paddy and sown along with paddy in the jhum by making a small hole on the ground with the tip of a *CHUCHYANG TAGOL* (sharp tipped dao). The cotton plants grow along with paddy plants and the cotton balls generally matures in October-November.

After the cotton is harvested, it is dried on a bamboo plaited mat called *TOLOI*. The seeds and the fibres are then separated with the help of a wooden ginning machine called *CHORNGHI* which is made of two wooden rollers fixed horizontally one upon another in a wooden frame on a wooden housing called *CHORNGHI GHAR*. The frame in which it is fixed is called *CHORNGHI DA-BANA* (meaning thigh) and the plate on which it is mounted is called *CHORNGHI PAT*. The rollers – *CHORNGHI SOLA*, the teeth of the rollers –

CHORNGHI KARENGA or *CHORNGHI MELANI*, the handle with which it is operated is called *CHORNGHI HADA*.

The ginned (seed extracted) cotton is then again dried in the sun and bowed with a *DHANU* (bow) which is made of a small bamboo usually of three to four feet in length and a string of *LUDI BACH* (creeper bamboo) is bounded tightly between two ends. The cotton is then bowed in a place where there is no flow of wind and usually inside the house on a *TOLOI*. In bowing cotton to bloom, the bow string is repeatedly pulled and released with the thumb keeping one end on the cotton. A ring of bamboo tube or of deer wind pipe is worn on the thumb to protect from blistering. When the cotton is sufficiently bowed and blown, it is rolled into *PECH* on a hard surface usually on the back of a plate or a wooden plank or low stool, with the help of a roller called *PECH KADHEE*. When the *PECH* are ready, it is spindled into thread with the help of a *CHORNGHA* (spinning wheel).



A Chakma woman weaving traditional clothes in Mizoram
(Photo: MCDF)

The *Chorgha* is also made of wood, cane tapes and iron spindle and it is fitted on a wooden plate called *CHORGH PAT*. The other parts of a *Chorgha* are *Mala duri* (the wheel belt usually of thread), *Sugurhi Sir* (wooden, spindle housing plate), *Sughurhi Kan* (pumpkin slice shaped spindle housing), *Dabana* (fans), *Chorgha Kan* (thread guider), *Chorgha hada* (handle), *Chorgha Lagori* (handle stick), *Chorgha Sira*, *Chorgha Malei* (wheel tapes), *Chorgha Mhadala* (wheel rod), *Chorgha Pat* (plate), *Takkwa* (spindle), *Chorhoi baach* (oil guord) etc.

In spinning thread, one end of the cotton *pech* is applied to the conical point of the *Takkwa* (Spindle) and a thread is wound by turning the wheel in a motion which causes wounding of the spindle and thread is spun. The spun thread is then rolled in the spindle until it is full and removed. A full roll of spun tread is called *EK TAKKWA SUDHO*. The tread is also varies in size for purpose to purpose. For a *Jummwa Silum* (working shirt) the tread will be larger in size and for a *Ganjha* (napkin) it will be smaller in size. *ABEDHI SUDHO* is the thread which is spun by a child who has got no menstruation and a monopause woman which is regarded sacred for the purpose of puja and other rites and also for binding a talishman.

From a *Sudho Takkwa* it is transferred into *KHANG* (coil) with a *LANGHA* which is made of wood or cane and wooden stick or bamboo chip. The *Khang* is sometimes divided into *SULHEE* and *LADDEE*.

A *Sudho Khang* is dyed into different color of choice. The following were the process of dying and making of color :

BLUE: To get blue color, *KARMA* or *KALMA* (indigo) leaves are soaked in a earthen pot and left for rotting for two-three days. Afterward, the leaves are squeezed out and the settled remnant of the bottom is strained out lime powder added. (Lime is prepared by burning the empty shells of snails in burning bamboo). It is then stirred with a stick called *BHARA KADHEE* till it becomes frothy and when the froth does not stick to anything dropped. It is then allowed to settle down for few hours. When it is settled, the water is carefully drained out and the color sediments remains at the bottom. The color sediment now strained with a clothe and dried in the sun making small cakes. For making blue solu-

tion, alkali water of bamboo ash or plantain ash, or of sesame tree as are made and the color cakes are dropped to melt. The solution is heated and the thread coils are dipped and boiled. It is then taken out and dried. The process may be repeated if the desired shade is not obtained.

BLACK: To get the black color, the blue thread is boiled with the barks of *KALA GAB* and dried. Some even bury the blue thread in under water black mud to get the black color.

RED : To get the red color, the bark or roots of *RANG GACH* (colored tree) is cut into pieces and pounded and boiled with water adding ash. The water is strained and the thread is dipped and boiled adding some oil to get fast color.

YELLOW : To get yellow color, raw turmeric and the bark of mango tree is pounded and boiled in water. It is then strained and the thread is boiled in the colored water adding ash and oil to get permanent shade.

GREEN : To get green color, the blue thread is dipped in the yellow solution and boiled adding ash and oil.

BROWN : To get brown color, the bark of *JARUL TREE* is pounded and boiled in the same process and the blue thread is dipped in it and boiled adding ash and mustard oil.

When the thread is colored and dried it is mixed with rice arraroot called *MAR DENA*. It is then brushed with a brush of jungle fruit called *RIJHI*. The process is called *TIGANHA*. It is then dried and spread with the help of a wheel called *NADEI* on a sieve or a basket. The process is called *KARANHA*. When *Karanha* is complete some rice grain or husk is placed on it to make the thread string come out without interruption while rolling into *TUM*. The thread is then ready for weaving process.

For weaving a clothe, the apparatus required are collectively called *SACH-PADAR* which are made of fine pieces of bamboo and hard palm tree called *CHA GACH*. This *Cha gach* bears fruit which are like betel nuts and the Chakmas take it as betel substitute. A *Sach Padar* consist of (1) Radang, (2) Tagalak, (3) Tarham, (4) Byong, (5) Ba Kadhi for upper shaft, (6) Suchyak, (7) Shiang, (8) Tammwa, (9) Bogolla, (10) Ba kadhee for flower patterns, (11)Thur Chumo, (12) Tapsi Cham, (13) Tapsi Dori, (14) Chibong or Kuduk Kada (porcupine quill) (15) Mum (wax), (16) Beino Kani or Narekulo Bagol or a brush), (17) Pano rega, (18) Sudhonnuli, (19) Ba etc. The *RADAN* is a piece of bamboo which is required for the proper measurement of the loom.

It is made by cutting holes where the required apparatus are fitted where the thread are wounded. It is usually fitted at the *CHANHA* (veranda) and the thread wounding apparatus like *Tagolhak*, *Ba Kadhee*, *Suchyak*, *Shiang*, *Tammwa*, *Bogolla*, and if for *PINON*, two more *Ba Kadhee* for *CHABUGHI GUYHEE* are fitted. The thread is then wounded around the *Sach Padar* (usually two strings at a time), till the required measure is wounded. Afterwards it become a *BEIN* (loom) as a whole.

The *Bein* is then taken out from the *RADANG* and fastened to two rope rings called *JADANI* which are bound to a wall or two posts. The weaver seats at the other end of the *Bein* and binds it around the waist with a rope called *Tapsi Dori* and a piece of dry leather of a buffalo or shambar, as a back cushion. The dry skin is called *TAPSI CHAM*. The *Bein* is now stretched to its limit by fitting the feet to a jam called *BEINO GAR*, under the *Bein* and the weaver starts weaving. First the weaver will pull the *SUCHYAK* up to the *BA KADHEE* and the thread will separate into two rafter. The *Byong* will be then passed through the space between the two rafters, below the *BA KADHEE* and it will be pulled down towards the weaver by holding two ends of the *Byong*. It is then again Pushed back up to the *Ba Kadhee* and kept up, to make space to pass the shuttle roll called *SUDHONNULI*. The *Sudhonnuli* is passed with a bamboo tube case called *THURCHUMO*, through the space made by the *Byong*, and below the *Byong*. Now the *BA KADHEE* (thread stick which thread is fastened with the thread of lower rafter) is pulled up to fall the other rafter down and make space and the *Byong* is pulled out and passed through the space created by the *Ba Kadhee* under it. Now the *Byong* is pulled down forcefully and one stinge is weaved. Afterwards the *Sudhonnuli* (shuttle) will be passed by making space with the *Byong*, by the *Byong* at the bottom. Now the *Suchyak* will be pulled down again up to the *BA KADHEE* for lowering the upper rafter and making intersection and space to pass the *Byong*. The *Byong* will be passed through the space, below the *Ba Kadhee* to pull home the already passed thread towards the weaver, forcefully and another string will be woven. This process is repeated over and over again till the required length is obtained.

DESIGN AND FLOWER PATTERN. The Chakmas weave flowers and other designs in their *Bein* from the flower pattern *ALAM*. It contains flower designs which have names like (1) Bigun biji (brinjal seed), (2) Samuga leich (snail tail), (3) Majara (wringed bamboo stool),(4) Sakkora Chaga (lemon slice), (5)Junhee chokh (glow fly eye), (6) Saba Kangel (snakes backbone), (7) Bedagi Boillhya (cane leaves), (8) Tuttubi Hat-pa (lizards feet), (9) Sangha-Chakra (conch and wheel), (10) Ulu (a sour fruit), (11) Chari tola (bottom of a earthen container), (12) Sannhya Pidha (diamond shaped cake), (13) Padi Chibang (a tree), (14) Ghandi Phool (gong flower),(15) Daba boidhak (bottom of hubble bubble), (16) Sidha phool (Flower of Sita), (17) Bagha chokh (Tigers eye), (18) Bilei khuch (Cats paw), (19) Karenga leich (tail of Karenga), (20) Kudhu Kereng (Gourd seed décor), (21) Kurho chokh (chicken eye), (22) Betgulo (a snake), (23) Pajha Khara chokh (dice décor), (24) Dur (tortoise), (25) Chera hat-theng (centipede legs), (26) Tedhoi Biji (tamarind seed) etc. ■

(Lokkhi Bhusan Chakma is an authority on Chakma customary law. Till recently, he was the Court President and Recorder of District Council Court, Chakma Autonomous District Council (CADC), Mizoram. He has been in public service for a long time. He had joined CADC services on 21.4.87 as Historical Research Officer, which designation was later renamed as Art & Culture Officer (ACO) which he held till 2003. During his tenure as ACO, he was instrumental in the introduction of Changmha (Chakma) script in the CADC schools. He was editor of AALAAM magazine (not in publication now). He has written several articles, poems and about fifty songs.)

Kalindi: The Chakma Queen (A true story)

By Raja Devasish Roy

(Courtesy: <http://www.chakmaraj.com>)

Kudukchari village is one of the larger Chakma settlements to the west of the Rangamati-Khagrachari highway within Rangamati district. It nestles against some low hills that seem to gradually ascend as they head westward towards the legendary Furamone Hill, the home of fairies and spirits, according to local belief. Nearby flows a stream bearing the same name as the village, which joins the Karnafuli near Manikchari. Today, the village is full of activities as there are schools, rice-husking machines, and occasionally, foreign and city visitors who come to see how the Chakma people live. Soon it will probably have electricity and satellite television. But life was so different even a few decades ago. But let me take you back even further, to the beginning of the nineteenth century, when it was a sleepy village of swidden or “jum” farmers.

This village was the home of a sturdy and jovial farmer, who, in his old age, used to be called “Guzang Bujya”; the bent old man, because of his stooping frame. Guzang used to love his first-born, Kalabi (meaning the “dark one”), as she was the only child until many years later, when her brother, Jai Muni came into this world.

Kalabi’s favourite toy was the dragon-fly. Guzang would catch one and tie a length of reed onto its tail while Kalabi would hold the other end in her chubby fingers and run around their little front yard, with the dragon-fly wildly fluttering its wings to keep up with Kalabi. However, Kalabi was a kindly soul at heart, and she would make it a point to release these poor creatures after play, dazed and tired no doubt, but quite alive and healthy.

Kalabi used to love going for a stroll into the nearby forest with her father. This was even more exciting than flying dragonflies. Sometimes the duo would compete with each other to see who

could collect more bamboo shoot and wild mushroom, or catch crab and shrimp in the stream that ran through the forest. Guzang always lost, and he never did that intentionally. Kalabi was more deft and far quicker with her hands. At other times, Kalabi would challenge her father to spot a certain tree or plant or flower that she had discovered by herself. She was never afraid of any wild creatures, and she could name scores of birds, insects and other animals, and plants, in her mother tongue, Chakma.

On one of the occasions that the two took their customary stroll, Kalabi pointed out some strangely shaped flowers to her father. Guzang was very excited when he saw them and exclaimed that they were ‘Ghila’ flowers. He frenziedly plucked a few and started to hurry towards the village, quite forgetting his daughter. A panting Kalabi followed, perplexed.

On reaching the outskirts of the village, Guzang realised suddenly that he had not even a single flower or a petal in his half-closed fist. He must have dropped them in his hurry and excitement, he thought. He retraced his steps and tried to find them on the ground, but the flowers were very small, and probably got lost among the fallen leaves that Kalabi had raked over in her half-walk-half-run while in the wake of her fast-walking father. Try as he might, Guzang couldn’t also locate the plant, even with Kalabi’s help, because they had lost their way. Dejectedly, Guzang returned home, followed by Kalabi, scarcely hearing the latter’s stream of questions.

The next few days there was heavy rain. After the rains Guzang went again towards the spot that he thought he had seen the Ghila flowers, but he had no luck. When they heard about it, most of the villagers didn’t believe it, because no one was known to have ever seen the flower of the Ghila plant, whose pods are used to play games with. The few who did tend to believe him - because he was a truthful and straightforward man – disagreed among themselves over small details, but were unanimous in their opinion that Guzang’s family would come into a windfall of some sort. This is because there is an old Chakma saying that whosoever sees the Ghila flower would have very good fortune. The village shaman or vaidya, who was a much respected and feared man, prophesied that Kalabi would one day become a queen. The ordi-

narily practical-minded Guzang didn't know what to believe. The ten-year old Kalabi found all this mildly amusing, although she didn't quite understand what all the fuss was about.

As the years went by Kalabi grew into a graceful young woman and the Ghila episode was all but forgotten. Little happened in Kudukchari to disturb their simple and almost unchanging way of life. In those days there were no schools in the villages, so Kalabi helped her parents and brother in their daily chores. She weeded their vegetable patch, kept birds away from their swidden field by making different types of scarecrows, and picked fruits and vegetables. She also fetched water from the stream nearby, at least twice a day, morning and afternoon. At other times, she wove skirts, shawls, blankets or other cloth, with numerous designs. Her favourite motifs were the wild aubergine and the elephant.

The Chakma capital of Rajanagar was situated to the southwest of Kudukchari. For a healthy adult it took more than half a day to walk from Kudukchari to Rajanagar. Only a very few among the residents of the village had ever made that journey. But those who did were full of stories about the beautiful palace of the king, the temples, the numerous lotus ponds and the raja's elephants and horses.

At that time, Dharam Bux Khan was the raja, the last independent Chakma ruler. There are many stories surrounding Dharam. One of the best known is about one of his mother's journeys during the time that Dharam was in the womb. It is said that on the way, the rani was tired and had to rest, although there was little shade there. Then suddenly, it is said, out of nowhere appeared a large cobra, which shielded her - and the yet-to-born raja - from the sun by spreading out its hood.

Another story held that when he took a bath at home, Dharam did so by lifting a large pitcher full of water with just one hand, although normally, such a pitcher required to be held with both hands, even if by a reasonably strong man. Dharam was a tall and athletically built man. Because of his size it was commonly said that Dharam remained in his mother's womb for not just the usual nine months and a few days, but for twelve whole months. No wonder, he is the only Chakma ruler known in history as a

“maharaja”.

Peace had been established with the English during the time of Dharam's grandfather, Jan Bux Khan's time. Although the British were constantly annexing new territories to their empire, there were no indications that they were interested in the Chakma territory beyond receiving the annual tributes. Dharam, who was still a bachelor, was getting bored. He could think of no other outlet for his adventurous and sporting nature, then to go hunting, his favourite pastime. One autumn morning the young raja mounted his favourite elephant and proceeded towards a forested area not far from Kudukchari, because he had been told of rich game in the area: sambhur, mountain goat, barking deer, wild boar, bear, leopard, and sometimes even tiger, bison and elephant.

It was late afternoon when the hunting party reached Sugarchari, about an hour's walk from Kudukchari, where they halted for the night. Not long after sundown, a big crowd had gathered in the grounds of the village chief's house. They were there, not only to see their raja, but to listen to the minstrel sing the ballad of Radhamon, the warrior, and his beloved, the lovely Dhanpudi, in honour of the king. The minstrel and the younger people continued with the singing and the refrains late into the night. Dharam did usually enjoy listening to different episodes of this romantic epic, but on this occasion he did not stay up late as he wanted to make an early start the next day.

The next morning the party started towards Kudukchari, and in a little more than an hour they reached the outskirts of the village. They proceeded towards the mountainside and left the elephant at a certain point because it would surely scare away all animals in sight, even the tigers and leopards if it accompanied them any further. The hunters stalked off in different directions while Dharam stayed at a spot that was believed to be a vantage point. But the day didn't seem lucky for the raja as he didn't have occasion to fire even a single shot from his muzzle-loader. They had lunch from banana leaf packages which were the parting gifts of the Sugarcharians. After lunch, Dharam gave up the idea of the hunt for the day and ordered his retinue to make for camp. On the way they stopped to rest for a while. Dharam couldn't resist sprawling on a grassy patch under a shady tree and began to savour the surroundings. The nearby stream, full after the recent rains, gushed forth exuberantly. Before he knew it, Dharam was dozing. Dharam's retinue retreated to a respectful distance to let him take his siesta.

Dharam soon started to dream about the hunt and saw all the animals that he had hoped to come across. But before his dream was to end, his reverie was rudely shattered by the sound of excited chatter and laughter coming from

below. With some curiosity, Dharam stalked towards the spring, and looked down from atop a cliff.

He could see a group of girls that had come to fetch water. Dharam was amused by the girls splashing water at each other, all except one of them. He walked towards them and when he reached the stream, the girls were a bit taken back by this handsome giant of a man. They stopped their horseplay and were quite at a loss. Kalabi was the one who didn't join in the play. She didn't even look once towards the stranger. She deftly filled her pitcher full of water and started heading towards the village. Dharam was mildly bemused by the graceful movements and carriage of this village lass. Unnoticed, he followed Kalabi from a distance.

The girls kept on chattering. They had seen the elephants and the large retinue of men with guns from a distance and thought that some nobleman or prince must have come to hunt. But they did not know that the tall man was their raja, since Dharam had come unannounced. They were all teasing each other as to which of them the tall stranger may have fancied. They were too shy to follow Dharam and were not aware that he was following Kalabi.

By the time Dharam had reached Kalabi's house, the latter had already gone indoors. Dharam stood at the foot of the carved log steps to the verandah of the house and with a mischievous smile on his face, asked aloud if anyone was home. Kalabi was alone at home. Her parents and Jai Muni had gone to their swidden field to harvest their small patch of Amey rice that they usually kept aside for special occasions. When Kalabi came out into the verandah, Dharam asked for some water. And without waiting for an invitation, he climbed on to the verandah. Kalabi greeted Dharam as she would an elder relative and promptly fetched the water pitcher. She politely but shyly answered all his queries about her family, their farm and so forth. After having emptied the entire pitcher of the water, Dharam thanked Kalabi and made for camp, knowing that his staff would be a trifle worried and looking for him.

Kalabi told her family about Dharam as soon as they got home. When he heard about a tall young man with English pantaloons who drank as much water in one go as the entire family did during a meal, Guzang was sure that the man was none other than the Chakma Raja himself.

In accordance with an old tradition, Chakma kings never visited the houses of commoners, although they met their subjects on tour and at court. This is

perhaps the case because of the belief that some ill would befall the commoner whose house was visited by a raja, unless the head of the household was conferred with a title. The other, and less preferable alternative, was to undergo some purification rites through the medium of a shaman or ozha. Even today, many Chakma villagers hold this belief. Guzang was naturally perturbed. He did not dream of becoming a village chief or some sort of nobleman, but he could hardly afford the costs of the rites either. Fortunately, Guzang's dilemma was soon put to an end. Within the week, he received a royal summons to present himself in Rajanagar. Guzang was conferred the title of "Dewan" and given a ceremonial sword by the raja.

In those days, being a Dewan meant certain privileges like exemption from taxes and receiving first fruits and haunches of game on behalf of the king, but it didn't necessarily translate into direct financial gains of a substantial nature, unless it was followed by a grant of agricultural land in the lowland areas. Guzang still tended to his jum. The shy and modest man was not so sure that his elevation to the Chakma nobility was a very good thing. He was certainly embarrassed when his fellow villagers no longer greeted him in the old familiar way. Well, he consoled himself, at least he had seen the palace and had visited the temple with the huge image of the Buddha, where he had made offerings of flower.

Kalabi's predicament was no better. Her friends teased her incessantly about her royal encounter. They asked her if the king had invited her to his palace and so forth. Some even started calling her "the queen". Kalabi merely smiled. Inwardly, she was sometimes on the verge of tears, out of embarrassment. Though she had found Dharam very charming indeed, she told herself that it was simply not her place to start having any personal feelings about the raja. She, of course, didn't think that the raja was interested in her in any special way, since he did not betray any such feelings during his conversation with her. Yet, whenever she thought about him, which was quite often, she would miss Dharam as if she had known him all her life. If anyone were to observe her then, they would surely have seen her flush and try to swallow the huge lump in her throat. When more than a month had passed by since the raja's hunting trip, the gossip-mongers started to tire and life gradually returned to normal in Guzang Dewan's village.

Meanwhile, in the Chakma capital, those who knew the raja well noticed that he was not quite himself.

Dharam had lost his heart. He knew that his family was keen for him to marry one of the eligible daughters of the leading Dewans who thronged his court. But Dharam could not put Kalabi out of his mind. One day, he had a dream when an oracle told him that he should make Kalabi his queen. Dharam made up his mind. He decided to brave the palace intrigues and announced his intentions. Needless to mention, the raja's word was law.

The wedding formalities proceeded in typical Chakma fashion. An elder relative of the raja went to meet Guzang to formally ask for his daughter's hand and to settle a wedding date. As custom demanded, the groom's representatives had to visit the bride's house three times. They brought a mountain of presents each time. At first they brought rice cakes, fruit and rice wine. Later they brought other presents like fine imported cloth from the port town of Chittagong, fancy looking beads and glass ornaments and dainty little mirrors. A great deal of excited conferring was going on among the village girls because all the unmarried friends of Kalabi were vying to be the special bridesmaid who would accompany Kalabi to the palace. For who knew, perhaps there were still a few bachelor princes around?

On the appointed day, a senior uncle of the raja led the groom's party to Guzang's village. The women and the elderly went on elephant back, while others followed on foot. A feast was given by Guzang's clan the like of which the villagers had never seen. The next morning, at an auspicious hour, the groom's party was joined by the bridal party to make their journey to Rajanagar. The bridal group included almost all the villagers except for the very old and the sick. Dharam waited impatiently, as custom forbade the groom to go to fetch the bride. He would not be alone with his bride until they visited his father-in-law's house, after the wedding ceremony, as Chakma custom demanded.

The wedding festivities at Rajanagar included a fair and a feast that started at noon and ended late at night. An ojha presided over the wedding ceremonies and the "Chumulong" Puja was performed. The customary boar's head was shown its due respect. The ojha made the couple feed each other rice and eggs and pronounced Dharam and Kalabi, now formally called Kalindi, husband and wife, with the consent and blessings of all present, as custom demanded. Among the distinguished guests at the wedding was none other than the village vaidya from Kudukchari who made it a point to let everyone within earshot know how he had foretold the rani's good fortune.

A few days later, the newly-weds travelled to Kudukchari accompanied by a large retinue and mountains of foodstuff and clothing that was carried on elephant back. At the village, Dharam was keen to visit the spot where he had first seen his future queen. And there in the cool stream water the couple bathed together for the first time.

Dharam and Kalindi were to be parted only with Dharam's death. After he died, Kalindi had to face the English, who wanted to include the Chakma kingdom as an integral part of the British empire, instead of letting it remain as a tributary kingdom. She could not prevent the gradual annexation of the region. The British sent a "Superintendent of Hill Tribes" – a young English army officer – into the hill region, but she would refuse to let the Superintendent run the administration of the hill country according to his will. In this she had the support of the Dewans and other clan chiefs and all her people. Until her death, she remained the unquestioned leader of the Chakma people and other peoples who lived within her territory.

Although she would never give in to invaders and colonisers, Kalindi, the only regnant Chakma queen in history, was a just ruler and a generous leader. Until today, when her descendents visit the old palace at Rajanagar, in Rangunia, within Chittagong district (which the Chakma Raja still owns along with the ponds and surrounding paddy lands), the local Bengalis still chant slogans in her honour and in honour of the incumbent Raja and his ancestors, including Maharaja Dharam Bux Khan. The couple's shrines are located next to the temple at Rajanagar. A poetic epitaph of Dharam Bux in white marble, authored by his great grandson, Raja Bhuvan Mohan Roy, is still preserved in the Chakma Rajbari, as are the ivory clogs and ivory chair used by Kalindi. Sugata Chakma (Nanadhan), a leading Chakma poet of today, has written a poem for Kalindi, saying she will remain immortal in the annals of Chakma history. The poem has been put to music, which school children occasionally sing:

Saangma Rajpodhe Jonopodhe twa naang

Bazi thok bazi thok, jonomaan

Rani, tui bazi thak, Rani tui bazi thak. ■

**Lead articles:
Views that matter**

Keyboard Layout of Chakma Fonts: A Comparative Study

By MAADI, Tripura

The most used Chakma fonts in India are *Chakma(SuJayan)* created by Dangu Er. Jayan Chakma and Sujoy Chakma and *Punongjun* created by Dangu Er. Jayan Chakma. District School Education Board, Chakma Autonomous District Council (CADC), Mizoram is using *Chakma(SuJayan)* in their Text Books and here in Tripura we are using *Punongjun*. In Dechhul (CHTs), Indigenous Cultural Institute, Rangamatye used *Chadigang* fonts in its Text Books. Recently, Bivuti Chakma and Jyoti Chakma of Ribeng IT Solutions, Rangamatye developed *Alaam* fonts in collaborating with Indigenous Cultural Institute. They were also successfully developed the only Chakma Unicode font *RibengUni*. Earlier, there were two fonts in use in Dechhul namely *BijoyGiri DPC* (created by Deba Priya Chakma) and *NishanChakma*.

It means, by 2012, we are having at least five ASCII (American Standard Code for Information Interchange) fonts and one Unicode font to write in Chakma. But the problem is we cannot use all the fonts easily due to different keyboard layouts of each font. The font developers did not followed a fixed pattern while placing fonts in the keyboard. As example, if we learn `a s d f g / ; l k j h` formula for English typing, we can use all the fonts available in Roman scripts. Similarly, if we learn `Bijoy` in Bengali, we can use almost all fonts available for writing in Bengali except *Amar Bangla*. But in Chakma, every time we want to use a new font for designing or for some other reasons, we have to learn the new font's keyboard layout first, which is a time consuming process.

Now, what is the solution? This paper tries to search for a proper solution for it and proposes a new keyboard layout for a broader consensus. Before that, let us have a look at the keyboard layouts used by the different Chakma font creators.

Keyboard layouts of Chakma fonts can be broadly divided in to three groups : (1) *Chakma(SuJayan)* group – This group used a easy formula in their layouts just like *qwerty* in case of English keyboard layout. *Chakma(SuJayan)* and *Punongjun* falls under this group. In this system prominent fonts were placed in prominent places and vowel strokes were put (with Shift option) as per their articulation, eg. ° (Banhi dena) at I and , (Ek tan) at U etc. (2) *BijoyGiri* group – This layout solely rested upon the pronunciation of the fonts and placed them

keeping in mind the similarity with English fonts, eg. ক at k, ক at K, ঞ at a etc. This is identical with Amar Bangla layout in Bengali. *BijoyGiriDPC* and *Chadigang* falls under this group. (3) *Bijoy* group – Mostafa Jabbar, the famous developer of Bengali writing software ‘Bijoy’ included a incomplete set of Chakma fonts namely *Bijoy Changma* in his Bijoy software. He used Bijoy keyboard layout in *Bijoy Changma* also which was created

Symbol	PunongJun	Chakma(SuJayan)	RibengUni	Alaam	BijoyGiriDPC	Chadigang
a	A	ᱠ	ᱡ	ᱢ	ᱣ	ᱤ
b	B	ᱦ	ᱧ	ᱨ	ᱩ	ᱪ
c	C	ᱫ	ᱬ	ᱭ	ᱮ	ᱯ
d	D	ᱰ	ᱱ	ᱲ	ᱳ	ᱴ
e	E	ᱵ	ᱶ	ᱷ	ᱸ	ᱹ
f	F	ᱺ	ᱻ	ᱼ	ᱽ	᱾
g	G	᱿	᱀	᱁	᱂	᱃
h	H	᱄	᱅	᱆	᱇	᱈
i	I	᱉	᱊	᱋	᱌	ᱍ
j	J	ᱎ	ᱏ	᱐	᱑	᱒
k	K	᱓	᱔	᱕	᱖	᱗
l	L	᱘	᱙	ᱚ	ᱛ	ᱜ
m	M	ᱞ	ᱟ	ᱠ	ᱡ	ᱢ
n	N	ᱤ	ᱦ	ᱧ	ᱨ	ᱩ
o	O	ᱫ	ᱬ	ᱭ	ᱮ	ᱯ
p	P	ᱰ	ᱱ	ᱲ	ᱳ	ᱴ
q	Q	ᱵ	ᱶ	ᱷ	ᱸ	ᱹ
r	R	ᱺ	ᱻ	ᱼ	ᱽ	᱾
s	S	᱿	᱀	᱁	᱂	᱃
t	T	᱄	᱅	᱆	᱇	᱈
u	U	᱉	᱊	᱋	᱌	ᱍ
v	V	ᱎ	ᱏ	᱐	᱑	᱒
w	W	᱓	᱔	᱕	᱖	᱗
x	X	᱘	᱙	ᱚ	ᱛ	ᱜ
y	Y	ᱞ	ᱟ	ᱠ	ᱡ	ᱢ
z	Z	ᱤ	ᱦ	ᱧ	ᱨ	ᱩ

especially for typing in Bengali. Later on the Chakma font creators followed the layout. *NishanChakma*, *Alaam* and *RibengUni* are based on this layout. You can see a comparison between different layouts in the above chart.

The question is can't we create a unified layout for all Chakma fonts ? We asked the question to Dangu Bivuti Chakma, co-creator of *Alaam* and *RibengUni* in November 2012 when he released *RibengUni*. While Dangu Bivuti readily agreed to our proposal but he insisted for a consensus through a

conference/seminar between Indian and Bangladeshi Chakmas which involves a substantial amount of time and money. Then what to do ? We tried to search for a middle path to avoid these constrains. We prepared a layout, then mailed it to Bivuti to review the same in Ribeng IT Solutions. After their approval we named it MaadiRibeng Layout and tried to use it in *Punongjun* font. No doubt we found it excellent.

What is the basis of this new layout ? Before going to that let us have a look at the English keyboard layout. The top 5 most used English characters are e, a, t, i & n followed by o, r, s, h, l, d, m, u, c, g respectively. It is clear that these frequently used characters were place without shift and in the prominent zone of the keyboard. Similarly, we have to place our most used

S/N ACCORDING TO USE	CHARACTER	TIMES OF USE IN 15,388 WORDS
1.	ʼ	6017
2.	(4833
3.	°	4634
4.	᳚	2570
5.	᳚	2508
6.	᳚	2466
7.	᳚	2104
8.	᳚	2079
9.	᳚	2072
10.	᳚	2035
11.	᳚	1970
12.	᳚	1954
13.	᳚	1625
14.	᳚	1601
15.	᳚	1475
16.	᳚	1430
17.	᳚	1389
18.	᳚	1343
19.	᳚	1298
20.	᳚	1102
21.	᳚	1029
22.	᳚	979
23.	᳚	952
24.	᳚	895
25.	᳚	825
26.	᳚	760
27.	᳚	738
28.	᳚	692
29.	᳚	629
30.	᳚	547
31.	᳚	529
32.	᳚	528
33.	᳚	486
34.	᳚	445
35.	᳚	427
36.	᳚	423
37.	᳚	398
38.	᳚	386
39.	᳚	336
40.	᳚	336
41.	᳚	328
42.	᳚	326
43.	᳚	274
44.	᳚	206
45.	᳚	160
46.	᳚	151
47.	᳚	75
48.	᳚	67
49.	᳚	49
50.	᳚	30

characters without shift for easy typing. So, we tried to find out the most used characters of Chakma scripts.

The MAADI team conducted a detailed survey of 145 Chakma articles with

15,388 words published in MAADI and other publications to find out the most used Chakma characters. Study revealed that the top ten used Chakma characters are Ubor tulye (ʼ), E kar ((), Banhi dye (°) Ra (᳚), Ek tan (,), Na (᳚), Ba (᳚), Ra machye (᳚), O kar (᳚) and Ma (᳚) (details are in the above chart). So, we must place these characters without shift for speedy typing. It was the principle guideline in preparing MaadiRibeng Layout combined with pronunciation theory for easy memorization of the layout. Below is the proposed layout :

MaadiRibeng Layout

`	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0	-	=
	ꠘ	ꠚ	ꠛ	ꠜ	ꠝ	ꠞ	ꠟ	ꠠ	ꠡ	ꠢ	-	=
~	!	@	#	\$	%	^	&	*	()	-	+
~	!	@	ꠑ	\$	%	ꠒ	ꠓ	*	()	-	+
q	W	e	r	t	y	u	i	o	p	[]	\
ꠣ	ꠤ	(ꠥ	ꠦ			ꠧ	꠨	꠩	[]	꠪
Q	W	E	R	T	Y	U	I	O	P	{	}	
꠫	꠬	꠭	꠮	꠯			꠰	꠱	꠲	{	}	꠳
a	s	d	f	g	h	j	k	l	;	'		
꠴	꠵	꠶	꠷	꠸	꠹	꠺	꠻	꠼	;	'		
A	S	D	F	G	H	J	K	L	:	“		
꠽	꠾	꠿	꠺	꠻	꠼	꠽	꠾	꠿	:	“		
z	x	c	v	b	n	m	,	.	/			
꠺	꠻	꠼	꠽	꠾	꠿	꠺	,	.	/			
Z	X	C	V	B	N	M	<	>	?			
꠺	꠻	꠼	꠽	꠾	꠿	꠺	<	>	?			

We request the respected Chakma font creators to review the layout and suggest appropriate alternations. We must agree to a common layout as soon as possible and change the layouts of the existing fonts as per a common layout to make them user friendly. It is also felt that more and more fonts with different looks are needed to add variety in the Chakma Scripts Store. We must give rounds of applauses to the Chakma font creators which is the greatest achievement by the Chakmas by the beginning of the twenty second millennium. ■

Chakmamaadi11@gmail.com
<http://chakmamaadi.wordpress.com/>
<http://www.facebook.com/maadi.chakma>

Arunachal: Uncertain future awaits the Chakmas of Papumpare district



By **Paritosh Chakma**

I visited Chakma villages in and around Kakila Centre in Papumpare district of Arunachal Pradesh, bordering Assam's Sonitpur district, in October-November 2012. It

was my only sojourn there so far, and the experiences are exhilarating.

"Kakila Centre", as they named it, is the main business point and is connected by a considerably good road with Gohpur, a small town in Assam's Sonitpur district, which is the gateway. A cute "Tata Nano passenger car" (picture on the right) took us in style from Gohpur to the Kakila Centre which is about 18 kilometres. A good number of such vehicles ferry passengers throughout the day, the last being 5-30 PM from Gohpur if you are lucky enough. And, we were. The signboard mentioned the road was constructed under PMGSY scheme.

A small dusty road that runs through the Kakila Centre is, surprisingly, the state border between Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. People move freely, and we do not know whether one is from Assam or Arunachal Pradesh, and of course, it does not make any difference. For a semi-rural Kakila Centre is a bustling business hub with daily markets, where fresh vegetables of all kinds, meat and fish are readily available, throughout the day. Poor people from villages come on bicycles to sell their vegetables. Monday has a bigger and busy Weekly Market at the heart of the Kakila Centre. Assamese is the lingua franca, although the majority of the main Kalika are the Bodos. I loved eating the "Bodo pitaa" (rice cake) prepared by the Bodo women at the Monday market. If you order and wait for some time, you can have them hot.

I enjoyed a lot of Chakma hospitality for which I am grateful. However, in this article I would like to write about the problems this small community faces in this part of the world.

Chakmas' sojourn in these lands

The painful story goes back to the Partition of India in 1947 when the homeland of the Chakmas, the Chitragong Hill Tracts, was "gifted" by Radcliffe Award to Pakistan, despite strong resistance from the people of CHT. The interventions from Congress leaders, particularly Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Patel couldn't help CHT to be part of India and Buddhist Chakma tribe's future was sealed in Islamic Pakistan.

During 1964-69 the Government of India (the process was initiated by Jawaharlal Nehru and completed by his daughter Indira Gandhi) accepted hundreds of Chakma refugee families who had to flee homes in CHT, East Pakistan due to inhuman atrocities by the Islamic State and submergence of their lands by Kaptai dam and resettled them in Arunachal Pradesh's Changlang, Lohit and Papumpare districts. More numbers are presently in Changlang and Lohit and fewer (around 2000 souls) are settled in Papumpare district's "Chakma Settlement Area". There are about half a dozen Chakma families living in Arunachal Pradesh's side of Kakila Centre. Some kilometers from the Kakila Centre are larger Chakma villages, or what is called the "Chakma Settlement Area".

I am fortunate enough to meet some living souls who were young at the time of "Bor Porong" or the "Great Exodus" as the Chakmas call it, and they came as refugees with their parents or relatives. "We entered through Demagiri, where we remained for a few weeks in relief camps. Then, we were brought to Aizawl with full armed escorts. The people had to walk the whole journey to Aizawl, except the aged and the women who were driven in small vehicles", recalled a lady who is now in her 80s.

An aged man informed me that they had to remain in relief camps in Aizawl for two years. "During our stay, the Aizawl was bombed by planes.. There was flames all around us. We were so afraid, but our relief area was not harmed", he told me. Immediately after I came back to Delhi, I checked the month of this aerial attack by the Indian Air Force. It was in the afternoon of 4th March 1966.

The Chakmas recalled that the Mizos were too generous to them when they travelled from Demagiri to

Aizawl. All along the road, they supplied food, and water to the refugees.

From Aizawl, they were shifted to Cachar, Assam from where they were resettled to then NEFA, a Centrally-administered region of enough vacant lands, now known as state of Arunachal Pradesh.

“Then this area was quite uninhabited, wild forests, and full of wild animals like tigers, elephants, bears. We had to face a lot of atrocities mostly from the elephants .. We cleared the jungle to make it habitable and suitable for cultivation”, I was informed during a discussion with a group of Chakma elders while the others nodded in agreement. They laughed heartily. Laughter and casual discussions over glasses of home-made wine are the routine affair. But I sensed that beneath the laughters run deep-seated sorrow and concern for their future.

The Socio-Economic conditions

I must record here that I did not see a good house built by Chakmas, except two or three in Chakma Village No. 8 which were built with cement. Most of the houses are constructed with bamboos and already in dilapidated conditions. The houses explain their socio-economic conditions.



How do they earn their living? The Chakmas have been allotted their own house plots and agricultural lands at the time of settlement in “Chakma Settlement Area” in 1964-69. But poverty, medical needs, and other reasons have forced many Chakma families to sell off their agricultural lands to the local tribes. Those who still retained their agricultural lands cultivate these lands



which are the main source of their food and subsistence. Some families have betel nut and coconut gardens which they sell in the market. Some grow vegetables. Yet some others (particularly youths) saw logs for rich local tribesmen. I met some youths who, they said, went as far as China border to earn their living!

Others survive by gathering vegetables from the Jhum fields which are one-day walking distance away from the villages to sell in the daily markets to earn a square meal for the family. Of course, for some, earning is not enough for a square meal for the family which I found is usually big. But none has been included in the Public Distribution System.

Discrimination and neglect by the State government is all-pervading. But their situation is seldom taken into account and I have a feeling that Chakmas of this part are even more marginalized than their brethren in Changlang and Lohit districts of Arunachal. Due to their population being numerically small, they are less cared for. Due to lack of high schools and above, most students are forced to drop out. Chakma children do not get opportunity to study further. Job opportunity within the State of Arunachal Pradesh is NIL. By looking at the face of this boy, I asked myself "What is his future?"



Politically, except the recognition of the “Gao Buraa” or the village headman, the Chakmas have nothing. There are around 2000 Chakmas living in this area. Only a handful of them have been granted Indian Citizenship after nearly 50 years of their sojourn. The rest are “Stateless”. They are not even “Refugees”, as they get nothing from the Central or State government. They fend for themselves. But there are restrictions. The Chakmas are not allowed to acquire land or built houses outside the “Chakma Settlement Area” but almost half of the “Chakma Settlement Area” has been captured by Arunachalese locals by way of buying from the Chakma land owners!

“The Chakma Settlement Area” will be turned into an airport

Vast swathe of fertile agricultural land will be taken over for airport

Soon the “Chakma Settlement Area” will turn into an airport, to be constructed by the Airport Authority of India. The Arunachal Pradesh government is in full swing to acquire a vast swathe of very fertile agricultural land in five Chakma

Blocks No. 2, 3, 5, 6 and 10 of the “Chakma Settlement Area”, and will uproot 237 families. The process of land acquisition is being done in a very clandestine manner. So, is this a ploy to grab the Chakmas' lands in the guise of airport? We don't really know. But what we can know is that the impoverished Chakmas will have to pay the costliest price for the development of Arunachal.

As of now, all questions in the minds of the Chakmas are unanswered. As a result, fear and uncertainty were reigning in the minds of the people at the time of my visit.

Where will the Chakmas go? No idea.

Will they get compensation? May be. How much? Don't know.

Will they get resettlement and rehabilitation? No idea.

The biggest issue is how will the Chakmas survive without their agricultural lands? Since they cannot buy lands outside the “Chakma Settlement Area” where will so many families be accommodated?

Only future will be able to tell. But the future is predictably uncertain for the Chakmas of Papumpare district! ■



This fertile agricultural land of the Chakmas will be taken over for construction of an airport

Women position in our Jumma society and some food for thought



**By
Tandra Chakma,**
*Human Right Activist,
working at Manusher
Jonno Foundation,
Bangladesh*

I received an email request from *The Chakma Voice* to write an article. After few days thinking, I decided to write an article on the position of Jumma women. I find it apt to quote from Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR). Articles 1 and 2 of UDHR clearly provide equal rights to everyone. Please find here below two articles from Universal Declaration on Human Rights:

Article 1.

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Article 2.

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.

Here in Article 2 it was clearly stated that rights of everyone should not be discriminated. Let me describe first about the position of Jummas in our mainstream society. When we look at the government instrument of Bangladesh, 15th Constitutional amendment of Bangladesh stated Jummas and other indigenous people as Khudra

Nrigosti. It was written in the constitution as such -

“23(A) The culture of tribes, minor races, ethnic sects and communities.-The state shall take steps to protect and develop the unique local culture and tradition of the tribes, minor races, ethnic sects and communities.”

After one year’s movement the government enacted this during 15th amendment. But the government already signed ILO Convention 107 on 22nd June 1972. ILO reviewed convention 107 and added another convention as ILC Convention 169. This stated self determination and rights of culture clearly. Bangladesh government still did not sign ILO Convention 169. In the Women policy 2011 there is no option for strategic level improvement for Indigenous or Jumma women. There should be some special steps for leadership development for Jumma / Indigenous women. Government of Bangladesh reserved 50 seats for women under Article 65. Previously it was only 45. But there is no provision for Indigenous women for three Hill Districts (Rangamati, Khagrachari and Bandarban) and majority Indigenous areas from plain land. Very recently I was reading a document of Chandra Roy. It was a comparative study of Sammy Women and Jumma women on gender and empowerment perspective. I would like to copy here some paras from her document as given below:

“The Chittagong Hill Tracts (Bangladesh)

A Peace Accord agreed in December 1997 between the Government of Bangladesh and the Parbatya Chittagong Jana Samhati Samiti (PCJSS) to end twenty-five years of violent conflict which claimed hundreds of lives, is the basis for self-rule institutions in the CHT. These include (i) a Regional Council to coordinate and supervise all activities in the CHT; (ii) strengthens the power and authority of three Hill District Councils in the districts of the Chittagong Hill Tracts – Bandarban, Khagrachari and Rangamati. The hill district councils were first established in 1989; and (iii) a ministry for CHT affairs to coordinate CHT-related policies and programmes at the central level. The following is a brief overview of these three institutions with reference to the participation of women:

Representation of women at the CHT Accord Institutions:

Councils	Membership
Regional Council	22 members
Women reserved seats	Three
Hill District Councils	34 members each
Women (reserved seats)	Three each (3x3=9 in total)
Current status:	Five members, one women (Bandarban) Selected by Government Elections to be held
Ministry of CHT Affairs	One minister In practice selected from among the three Elected members of parliament from the CHT
Current status:	One deputy minister (Member of Parliament - Rangamati) (male)

Although there are problems regarding the implementation of the Accord, these three institutions are functioning, albeit nominally. It is apparent from the above table that the representation of women is limited with respect to the CHT institutions-with the exception of the three `three reserved' seats for women in the councils. It should be clarified that the allocation of designated `reserved' seats for women (reserved seats for women at the CHT councils as in line with the practice followed by national parliament) does not limit women from standing for any of the other seats. This possibility remains open, although given the male dominated political environment in the CHT, it remains to be seen to what extent this opportunity will be availed of by the Jumma or indigenous women. In addition, at the Council secretariats and administrative officers, indigenous women are under-represented, and of the few who are employed there, none occupy high positions."

As I quoted above different UN instrument and Bangladesh government instrument still there is opportunity to include Jumma or Indigenous women if we hammer it again. At least, something should be gained. Political representation of Jumma women is coming in front day by day. Without including 50% of Jumma women of society at decision making process, advancement and emancipation of Jumma Society could not be possible.

Moreover very recently violence against Jumma / Indigenous women and girls increased alarmingly. A research is going on by Kapaeeng Foundation. Please see below the data of violence against Jumma women at Chittagong Hill Tracts collected by Kapaeeng Foundation.

Year	Rape	Attempted Rape	Killed after Rape	Abduction/ kidnap	Molested	Physical assault	Killed/shot dead	Total
2007	5	3	0	1	0	0	0	9
2008	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
2009	2	3	2	1	3	0	0	11
2010	5	4	3	1	4	1	1	19
2011	10	7	3	4	0	2	2	26
2012	21	6	2	2	0	6	1	38
Total	45	23	10	9	7	7	4	105

To overcome this situation I have some suggestions:

1. Reserved special seats for Jumma as well as Indigenous women in parliament.
2. Include Indigenous women strategic issues at National Women policy 2011 (Bangladesh).
3. Create women brigade (community women group) in every village of CHT, especially to prevent violence against women and girl child.
4. Involve youth (both male and female) to aware on violence issues and to create voluntarism and Maleya system (a very good practice of voluntarism for the sake of society) . Which was prevailed in our society, but we are losing it on the pressure of mainstream culture. We need to revive it.

Lastly , network of women and jumma lawyer is important to overcome it.

Finally, our Jumma society is advancing with mainstream society. We have to revive our good values and togetherness, such as Maleya system in our society. Here I would like to describe in brief about Maleya. From the time immemorial it was practice in the Jumma society. When someone cultivates a jum it is quite difficult for him or her to cut the jum as early as possible. For this he or she selects a day to cut the jum with the help of all villagers. On the said day all villagers gathered in a place and helped the fellow jumia to cut the whole jum. On this day they bring Vat Moja (lunch packet) of themselves and cut the whole jum. In return to this the owner of the jum invites the helpers on a suitable day. On the same day the villagers also bring some food for the owners of the jum and helped him or her to arrange the feast. This practice we should keep and never forget. This is our niche of culture.

If we want to advance our society we must keep our women in the same position with men. At the end of the day it is our mother or our sister who make our social ties strong. It is the same woman who encourages all the good works you do. So according to the Article 1 of UN declaration we have to think for equal rights of women. If the women seat in the top position and taking decision on their issues the box I posted on comparative data on violence above should be different. We may see more positive pictures.

Information: Indigenous Women: A gender perspective by Chandra K. Roy, Human rights Report 2011 Kapaeeng Foundation, VOW data provided by Kapaeeng Foundation , National women policy 2011 and UN Declaration on Human Rights. ■

Students Column

CCSA: The star of South India



By Dangu Tanak Chakma, President, CCSA

I. Introduction of CCSA:

The Chennai Chakma Students Association (CCSA) was formed on 5th June 2011 with the primary objective of looking after the welfare of Chakma Students studying in the state of Tamil Nadu. The main goals of the CCSA are: to motivate and uplift the Chakma students in their studies and in the fields of games & sports, social activism, etc; to solve the problems faced by any Chakma student/community member in their day-to-day life; to work for the welfare and well-being of the Chakma community; and to bring unity and integrity amongst the Chakma students.

II. Social Work during the year 2012

A. Blood Donation



CCSA members in blood donation camp

The CCSA organised a voluntary blood donation camp on 24.10.2012 (Sunday) at Rajiv Gandhi Govt General Hospital, Chennai, which is a leading hospital in the state of Tamil Nadu. The above mentioned voluntary work was a first of its kind activity of the Association for social cause. A total of 16 units of blood were donated. We hope that

blood donation service was a pleasurable one and also an immense assistance to those needy for their survival.

B. Helping the family of a deceased from Bangladesh

Mr Gopala Krishna Dhar, son of Sudhansu Bimal Dhar from Chittagong district of Bangladesh, a patient with T.B, asthma and diabetes was on his way to Bangalore for better medical treatment. He was accompanied by his wife, cousin and brother-in-law. They were heading towards Bangalore via Yeswanthapur Duranto express from Howrah (Kolkata) in Train no.12245, B-1 coach, berth no.9. On the way, the patient was found unconscious in Gudur district, Andhra Pradesh (09:45 am, 27.09.2012), and they informed to the Gudur Railway Station and on arrival of the train at the Station, the RMO/GDR had attended to examine the patient and was later declared brought dead by the railway doctor. The dead body was then unloaded on Platform NO.1 in Gudur Railway Station and later was sent to Govt hospital, Gudur for post mortem examination.

Soon after that Mr. Amal Chowdhary (Nephew of the deceased) of Kamala Nagar, CADC, Mizoram, contacted the President of CCSA Mr. Tanak Chakma at around 10:15 am and elucidated how his relatives were facing difficulties in communicating with the Andhra locals, as they don't know how to speak Hindi and English. He asked for help from the CCSA to look into the matter and to transport the dead body by flight from Chennai. CCSA extended full assistance.

The CCSA held emergency meeting and asked the relatives of the deceased to bring the dead body to Chennai. The CCSA members received the dead body along with his companions at Minambakkam, Chennai and then moved straight to the airport for transportation of the body. But, unfortunately due to unavailability of some important necessary documents from Gudur Police Commissioner, the body could not be sent by flight. Then the CCSA decided to send the body by road transport to Kolkata. After great hardships, an agency agreed to transport the body to Kolkata in Ambulance on 38.09.2012. After two days the CCSA was informed of the safe arrival of the deceased by the family members in Kolkata who also expressed their deep appreciation for the assistance rendered by the CCSA. ■

MCSU-Aizawl: Mizoram's pride



Dangu Sudhi Tongchangya

**By
Sudhir Tongchangya,
GS, MCSU Aizawl**

The year 2012 has been a great year of experience for the MCSU, Aizawl Zone since it has come across with lots of activities and achievements throughout the year, which are indeed believed to be a sign of grand success and moments of pride in the history of MCSU, Aizawl Zone. Therefore, the MCSU, Aizawl Zone takes this opportunity to lay down some of its activities and achievements during the year of 2012-

1. The Executive Committee of the Mizoram Chakma Students' Union, Aizawl Zone was reconstituted on 25th February 2012 by holding its 7th General Election at the premises of MCSU Office, Chakma House, Hunthar Veng, Aizawl. The election was conducted for the three posts, namely President, Vice president, and General Secretary. The following students have been elected: Sujan Chakma (President), Joydev Chakma and Kashaw Moni Chakma (Vice-Presidents) and Sudhir Tongchangya (General Secretary). Other remaining posts of the Executive Committee were filled up under the consultation of the President and the General Secretary.

2. During the declaration of the HSLC and HSSLC results for 2012 by the MBSE, the MCSU Aizawl extended its help to several students from the Chakma community to get their results. The Union also helped several students to get admission into various institutions in the Aizawl City.

3. The MCSU Aizawl organized its 8th Voluntary Blood Donation Camp on 26th May, 2012 at Civil Hospital, Aizawl to commemorate the MCSU Day instead of 24th May. On that occasion, the MCSU Aizawl donated 38 units of blood, out of which 37 units were contributed by male and 1 unit from female. It has been a legacy for the MCSU, Aizawl Zone to donate blood once or twice in a year in order to tackle the blood crisis of the patients who come from each and every corner of Mizoram.



MCSU members performing a cultural dance

4. The MCSU Aizawl made a survey of total number of Chakma Students studying in various institutions in the Aizawl City. It was found that around 300 students are pursuing their studies in Aizawl, out of which 8 students are doing their higher education at Mizoram University (MZU) campus including Mr. Jyoti Bikash Chakma who is doing M.Phil., and 78 are pursuing their Under Graduate Courses in different Colleges and the rests are studying in primary, middle, high and higher secondary section of education.

It was also found that there are 10 Hindi teachers from Chakma Community who are posted in Durtlang, Aizawl for training. There are about 29 Chakma families residing in different parts of Aizawl City.

5. This year has been an egotistical year for the MCSU, Aizawl Zone as it has launched its maiden MCSU Annual Sports Meet for the various Chakma students studying in Aizawl. The Sports Meet was organized from 15th to 17th June 2012. Hence, it is also a pride for the MCSU, Aizawl Zone as it is perhaps for the first time ever a Sports Meet was conducted at Aizawl City by any Chakma Organisation.

During the Sports Meet, the students were divided and placed in four different groups/valleys. Such groups/valleys were named as Tuichawng Valley, Borgang Valley, Sajek Valley-I and Sajek Valley-II. During the morning session of the first day of the Meet, the Union organized the Annual Sports Launching Programme at Chakma House, Hunthar Veng, Aizawl in which Dangu Buddha Dhan Chakma, the Executive Member, i/c, Education, Cultural Department etc., Chakma Autonomous District Council, Kamalanagar graced the programme as the Chief Guest. All the outdoor games were conducted on the second day of the Sports Meet which was held at the High Field, Mac Donald Hill,



Dangu Nirupam Chakma, MLA (third from right, in black suit), seen encouraging MCSU members during the blood donation campaign at Aizawl

Zarkawt. Consequently, the third day of the Meet was conducted again at Chakma House followed by the closing ceremony. The Union would also like to thank all the students and participants who were involved during the Sports Meet and further encourages all to actively participate in future endeavours.

6. On the occasion of the Annual Sports Launch-



Girls Football team of MCSU Aizawl

ing Programme i.e. 15th June 2012 the MCSU submitted a memorandum to the Chief Executive Member of CADC through Dangu Dr. Buddha Dhan Chakma, Executive Member, CADC to demand a three-points proposal for the benefit and welfare of Chakma students studying in and outside Mizoram. The three demands were: 1. 50 percent concession on room rent for Chakma students during their stay/halt at Chakma House, Aizawl. 2. reservation of a particular room for Chakma students at Chakma House, Aizawl and 3. construction of urinal shed cum toilet for public uses at Chakma House compound.

7. This year the MCSU Aizawl formed a distinctive Cultural Club as a sub-committee under the Cultural Department of the Union. This Club aims to develop and conserve the cultural heritage and tradition of the Chakma Community. It also aims for the broader participation of Chakma artistes to perform and showcase their talents at a higher level. It is presently headed by Dangubi Laxmi Devi Chakma.

8. The Union also formed a Cricket Club in the name of Vijoygiri Riders' Cricket Club (VRCC) under the Games & Sports Department of the Union which is affiliated to Mizoram Cricket Association. ■

BVCSA: The gems of Silchar

By Monu Mohan Chakma, President, BVCSA

ABOUT BVCSA

Formed in 1986, the Barak Valley Chakma Students Association (BVCSA) is one of the oldest Chakma students associations in the country. After a lull, the association was rejuvenated in 2010. On 8 August 2010, a new Executive Body was selected to work vigorously for the welfare of the students in particular and the Chakma society in general.

RECENT ACTIVITIES

The BVCSA held its first Fresher Meet at Silchar on 18th November 2012 under the leadership of Monu Mohan Chakma, president, and Anil Ranjan Chakma, General Secretary. Nirupam Chakma, MLA, Mizoram graced as Chief Guest.

About 150 students and their family members attended the gathering.

The BVCSA placed a few demands before the



A section of the audience in the Freshers Meet, Silchar

Hon'ble MLA Dangu Nirupam Chakma, including construction of a hostel for Chakma students and a Buddhist temple at Silchar. He was kind enough to assure the students community to look into the matter. ■



Photo (left): Members of Barak Valley Chakma Students Association receiving Dangu Nirupam Chakma, MLA, and his wife at Silchar.

Poem: Changma Sawbon

By Ven. Dhammalankar Bhikkhu,
New Delhi

(1)

Aami Changma, Nodorebong harore,
nou ahreibong ridisudom, Ujei jebong somare.

Nou ahreibong Dharma-karma, Nou lugeibong
Jaat,
Goribong desh-jador kam, jobibong aamar maat.

Inshe-pishum rakh-huttri, pelei bekkani,
Joda awi ujei jebong, goribong gawm kamani.

Baji tebong juk-juk duri, pittimi bugot,
Jador nang bajeibong, nou poribong gullot.

Jagi udi bei-bonlok notebong arh gumot
Jage-jag mili, lamibong aami field-ot.

Jaat bei-bon andarot agon, ahgon ahh dugot puri,
Uddar guri tarare aami, bekkune mili.

Nodorebong guli-bomb, nodorebong harore,
Nolamibong pijedi aami, ujeibong mujunge.

Iddur legi begawttun, parok ongor ebarot,
Begaw sidu hojoli rawlaw, lagi tedong somajaw
hamot.

Legar bul awle buji loyoh thik gurinei,
puro guri parok awlung patturu-turu dinei.

(2)

Begeh mili goribong haam, Desh-jaadottei,
Monobol nou ahreibong, jebong mujunge ujei.

Buddho dharma sangha, lawbong tinen nang,
Harore duz nodee, goribong nijor haam.

Sukh-balet piri ebaw, ekjoda awi haam golleh,
Bekkune pire pebong, jaat bei-bon mari dileh.

Lega sigi sikkita awbong, dharmoi awbong dhoni,
Sheel samadhi pragyaloi, awbong aami guni-gyani.

Changma awnei baji tebong, dibong boudho
porichoi,
Goribong jador baledi haam, nou awbong porajai.

Bharot-Bangla jotaw changma ahgee, nou awbong sesh,
Juddo gori bejattoi, benebong changmar sonar desh.

Changma bei-bonun, jara jadona jadawttun durot sorei,
Pirei anibong tarare aami, changam bijawgor hoda sunei.

Biyong-duri baadol-duri, goribong aami juddo,
Banebong changmar desh, awbong dugottun mukto.

Dawraw-maraw awi begeh, songi-samasse ujulei,
Esseteh iddur legi, lolung begawttun bidei.

(3)

Hala megh nou utteh guri, gujuribo debha,
Gurung-garang bondugo raw, suno jebaw goda.

Goli-bomb purei geleh, biyong-baadol doribong,
Sahoj tuli ujei geleh, aami jidibong.

Jaga nei arh jebar dei, honaw dejot arh,
Jaat bei-bon joda awi, juddot laami ebar.

Bugor looh dali dinei, desh baneibong,
Awlor gori buji tele, hissuno nopebong.

Hammo awbar joda awbar, ikke aamar somoi,
Dugot puri hoi din tebong, pebong ahh hoi bojor?

Bugor looh dalidi, desh pebar seleh,
Sigon guro-o nohanon, hissuno naw-awle.

Hugigune juddo gosson, bharot sorkarloi,
Bugor looh dali dinei, desh pei jeyondo.

Nou doreyoh bei-bonlok, monot sahoj tulo,
Pawre sugei tebar sele, dhaandi begeh bugor looh.

Lega-pora sigi aami, dawraw-mawraw awi,
Desh-or lai juddo gori, bharot sorkarloi.

Sugei tebong shanti-e tebong, desh judi pei,
Ajhi-rownge din hadebong, bei-bon-or mu sei.

Ekkin ebaw sei din, ajhi-rowngor somoibow,
Ikkettun duri jugol awi, awbong begeh aami hammo.

Iddur legi baledhi hoda, bidei long-or ebar,
Hojoli regeim begaw sidhu, gawme dale buji lohar.

Pori-puroi buji palleh, bari gawm awbaw,
Eh dogeh haam golle, legana sattowk awbaw.

News in Brief

Mizoram

Chakma girls rescued

On 10 November 2012, abducted minor Chakma girl (15 years) was rescued at Aizawl by members of the Mizoram Chakma Students Union, Aizawl Zone and CADC Teachers Association. The minor Chakma girl hailing from Adubangasora village in CADC had been abducted by a Muslim man who was caught and handed over to the police.

Earlier, two minor Chakma girls who were abducted from CADC by a Muslim man were rescued by Varak Valley Chakma Students Association at Silchar in November 2011.

These repeated incidents of abduction of minor Chakma girls by Muslims points out the dangers faced by our young girls. Parents, society and the government of CADC as a whole must be ever vigilant of illegal or legal migrants who are working in Chakma areas.

Border Fence in Mizoram

On 6 November 2012, the Mizoram Boundary Committee headed by former minister C Chawngkunga submitted its interim report on the findings on the Indo-Bangladesh border fencing in the Mizoram to the state government. The committee said that it would urge the government to ensure that construction companies followed the guidelines for border fencing by constructing it at 150 metres

to 200 metres from the actual border. "In some places the fence was constructed at 500 metre from the border, causing immense loss of land to India", the Boundary Committee said, adding that 15 villages were fenced out while the fencing ran through 21 villages—all Chakma villages.

NHRC notices Mizoram on Borapansury PHC

Acting upon a complaint filed by MCDF regarding the defunct Primary Health Centre at Borapansury village, CADC (lying unused for the last 20 years), the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) on 27 October 2012 issued a notice to the Secretary, Dept of Health and Family Welfare, Govt of Mizoram "calling for a report in the matter within four weeks".

Update: Lobindra Chakma torture case

In November 2012, the National Human Rights Commission asked the Joint Secretary, Government of Mizoram, Department of Personnel & Administrative Reforms, Aizawl to appear in person before the NHRC in New Delhi on 18.12.2012 at 11.00 A.M. along with the requisite reports in the case of torture of Lobindra Chakma by Lungsen Block Development Officer (BDO), Mr John Tanpuia. Earlier, the official failed to submit reports despite orders from the NHRC. Lobindra Chakma was tortured for allegedly demanding wages under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme on 23 September 2011.

Violence by alleged YMA members in Kamala Nagar

At midnight of 16 October 2012, one person belonging to Mizo community reportedly barged into the house of Mizoram Chakma Students Union (MCSU) General Secretary Shanti Bikash Chakma and started creating nuisance. Alerted by the intrusion and angered by the midnight disturbance, SB Chakma allegedly punched the intruder in the dark, not knowing who he was. The victim later died at Lunglei civil hospital on 17 October. SB Chakma was arrested for murder and he is still in Lawngtlai district jail.

In relation to the death of the Mizo, on 22 October the Young Mizo Association, Chawngte branch, called a "peaceful procession" which turned violent. (Video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yhkp2pHIuNA&noredirect=1>) A press release by CADC administration stated that "the mob took to vandalism, causing damage to hundreds of houses, shops, vehicles, Buddha statue and properties worth rupees lakh by pelting stones and bricks." The violence was perpetrated despite acceptance of the Central YMA's demand to pay Rs 5 lakhs as compensation to the deceased's family by the CADC govt.

Further, on 23 October, the Mizo Zirlai Pawl, Chawngte, called a bandh. But the Police halted the MZP activists at the Chawngte-Kamalanagar bridge. The DC, Lawngtlai, SP Lawngtlai, Add. DC Lawngtlai, Add. SP and the DSP, Lawngtlai descended to Kamala Nagar to contain the situation.

Tripura

Tripura Chakmas win script demand

On 7 August 2012, Tripura Chief Minister Manik Sarkar announced at Agartala that the state government resolved to officially introduce a new script as Chakma scrip in school level. Chakma language is taught in school level from the first standard till fifth standard since years but in Bengali script. The state government had set up a state level committee for development of Chakma language in the face of growing demand for Chakma script.

In 2012, the Chakmas formed Chakma Script Demand Committee, and pushed the demand vigorously.

Now, preparation of Textbooks in Chakma script is going on.

Tripura currently provides school education in Kokborok language across 943 schools, Manipuri language is taught in 28 schools, Bishnupriya Manipuri language is taught across 36 schools and Halam Kuli language is taught in 49 schools. Chakma language is currently taught in 58 schools.

Chakma is Tripura's forest chief

The Tripura government has appointed Sanatan Talukdar, who belongs to Chakma community, as the new Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Tripura. Congratulations!

Arunachal Pradesh

Core committee formed to conduct fresh survey

On 26 October 2012, the second meeting of the joint high power committee (HPC), constituted by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) under the chairmanship of MHA NE-II joint secretary Shambhu Singh on the Chakma and Hajong refugees of Arunachal Pradesh, took place at Itanagar. It was decided to constitute a core committee to carry out a joint survey verification of Chakma and Hajong families settled in Arunachal Pradesh between 1964 and 1969. The fresh survey is yet to start.

NHRC and NCPCR order for admission of 88 Chakma students

Taking strong exception to the denial of admission to 88 Chakma students by school authorities in Changlang in 2011 academic year, both the National Human Rights Commission and the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights ordered the State govt of Arunachal Pradesh to admit the Chakma students. Due to NCPCR's persistent directives, the 88 students were finally admitted. This was possible because of the complaint filed by the Asian Centre for Human Rights. This case is still ongoing. In its proceedings dated 19 October 2012, the NHRC directed the Secretary, Department of Secondary Education, Arunachal Pradesh and the Director, Secondary Education, Arunachal Pradesh, to submit reports within six weeks after ACHR challenged the correctness of facts stated in the reports submitted to

the NHRC earlier by the state govt.

Assam

Chakma village without any facility

The Chakmas of Bankakhal, a remote village in Cachar district, are virtually living in stone age, without any facility, like road, school, water supply, or health centre. Not a single villager is literate! The village is so backward that it is not fit for human habitation, and 18 families had left. Presently only 12 families are residing there. Following a complaint by ACHR before the NHRC, the State govt of Assam assured to undertake developmental works for this Chakma village.

Bangladesh

Bangladesh rebuilds destroyed Buddhist temples

In October 2012, the Bangladesh government ordered rebuilding of the Buddhist temples destroyed by Muslim mobs in Cox's bazaar and Chittagong districts in September 2012. The work would be carried out by Army engineers at an estimated cost of 120 million taka. The Muslims attacked hundreds of Buddhist houses and vandalized temples on 29-30 September 2012 in the worst communal violence in Bangladesh's history.

About The Chakma Voice

The Chakma Voice is the bi-monthly newsletter of the Mizoram Chakma Development Forum (MCDF). Each year “the global edition” is published in January. It is the only printed English newsletter reporting exclusively on Chakma related issues.

The Chakma Voice reports the contemporary issues and problems of the Chakmas from the rights based perspective. Particular focus is given to Mizoram where the Chakma minorities suffer myriad problems ranging from denial and deprivation of development and access to basic facilities to systematic discrimination; but no media ever reports about them. *The Chakma Voice* not only reports the problems but also analyses and discusses these issues threadbare and objectively with a view to raise the level of awareness and find solutions. No other NGO or media has done this so comprehensively in the context of Mizoram.

The MCDF also uses the Social Networking Sites (SNS) to create awareness. Today the Chakmas’ problems and issues no longer remain unknown or restricted to our sleepy villages in the peripheries of India but are prominently highlighted and discussed in Facebook, orkut, twitter and blogs and newspapers.

The other objective of *The Chakma Voice* is to build a bridge of love, friendship and mutual respect between the Chakmas of Mizoram and the Chakmas residing in the rest of the world.

The Chakma Voice is available both in the print and online editions. It is also available on the Facebook. To read *The Chakma Voice* online, kindly visit: <http://mcdf.wordpress.com/newsletter/>

Readers can submit articles, letters or comments at: chakmavoiced@gmail.com

If you wish to contribute/donate to *The Chakma Voice*, kindly feel free to contact us at chakmavoiced@gmail.com



Published by:

MIZORAM CHAKMA DEVELOPMENT FORUM

C3/441-C, JANAKPURI, NEW DELHI– 58, INDIA

Website: www.mcdf.wordpress.com

Email: chakmavoiced@gmail.com