It’s time we thought about the future of our children; It’s time we started marching towards a brighter future.
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Cover Photo: Children at a school at Devasora village, Chakma Autonomous District Council, Mizoram. Photo by MCDF

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We feel extremely happy to present before our esteemed readers this Second Issue of The Chakma Voice—Global Edition, 2011.

First, a few words of apology. We were supposed to bring out this publication in print in the first week of January 2012. We had to postpone the publication date as we were looking for funds to print. As of today, we could not garner the amount of money needed to print the publication. But, lack of funds should not dither our commitments nor our aspirations to inspire the Chakma society towards the brighter side of things. Therefore, this issue of The Chakma Voice is being published online only. We know hundreds of people living in the rural area will miss this issue as they do not have access to the internet. In their interest, we hope to continue to look for funds to be able to print this issue as early as possible.

The good news is that “The Chakma Voice” is now two years old. This is a very short period in the sands of time, but we have been able to establish ourselves as a credible source of information and become the VOICE of the voiceless community, the Chakmas. Truly, the Chakmas are synonymous with “Voicelessness” in Mizoram and is universally applicable to Chakmas wherever they are. True to its name, this newsletter has become THE CHAKMAS’ VOICE.

The first issue of The Chakma Voice-Global Edition published in 2010 evoked tremendous response and rave reviews from readers across the world. This has inspired us to come out with the second issue.

While this newsletter has paid attention to the developments related to Chakma people across the world, its main focus has been Mizoram state where Chakmas’ situation is really pathetic. The Chakma Voice has been the one and only source of accurate information regarding the situation of the Chakmas in Mizoram. Given the credibility it has established in a very short period of time, The Chakma Voice has already become a reference material for researchers, academicians and all others who wish to get accurate and first hand information/data on Chakmas and their problems in Mizoram and elsewhere. The most appropriate example to cite here is the article “Educational Policies and Social Exclusion – A Case Study of Chakma Tribes in Mizoram” (available at http://mcdf.files.wordpress.com/2011/09/education-policies-and-social-exclusion-chakma.pdf) written by Anup Shekhar Chakraborty, Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, St Joseph’s College, Darjeeling, in reputed journal, Social Action of Indian Social Institute, Vol 61. No. 3, July-September 2011, which highlights discriminatory educational policies of the Mizoram government vis-à-vis the Chakma minorities. Mr Chakraborty has relied on the information provided in various issues of The Chakma Voice and has given due credit in the article.

This very issue of The Chakma Voice assumes greater importance as we carry the story of an extraordinary man who has fought for India’s independence and Chakmas’ own political rights and is still surviving amongst us. He is Dangu Baneswar Chakma, a frail man living at Nalbanya village on the outskirts of Kamala Nagar, the buzzing headquarters of the Chakma Autonomous District Council in Lawngtlai district in southern Mizoram. Yet, he is unknown, unsung and uncared by the people for whom he had fought and worked to give them a better future. Such is the tragedy that has come to reflect the Chakmas’ attitude on everything which is precious.

In order to give to our readers a myriad range of crucial information on Chakmas, this special issue of The Chakma Voice has been divided into different sections namely, MCDF’s Activities during 2011, Chakma history and culture, articles from intellectuals, and Students Page. Students Page is a new addition in which we have tried to give Chakma students/ students organizations opportunity to share with the world their own achievements and talents.

Do let us know how you have liked this issue and suggest for improvements wherever there is any room for further improvements.

Editors
THERE IS a very simple old man living in an ordinary village Nalbanya, on the outskirts of Kamala Nagar, the headquarters of the Chakma Autonomous District Council in Lawngtlai district in southern Mizoram. He is now over 81 years; his body is frail with a weak and shaky voice that is quite inaudible. He is unknown to the world, even to the Chakmas in the neighbourhood. But he is no ordinary man.

He is Dangu Baneswar Chakma who has fought for India’s freedom, to make CHT a part of India during 1947, and for an Autonomous District Council for Chakmas in Mizoram.

Even the Mizoram Chakma Development Forum (MCDF) was shocked to know that he is alive. Immediately, MCDF sent a team of volunteers to his residence to know more about him and his story of courage and dedication for his country. MCDF’s volunteers found out his house and tried to interview him. His voice is too shaky and frail to be properly understood. He has also lost much of the memories. However, luckily, the MCDF volunteers discovered some notes in a dairy written by Dangu Baneswar Chakma himself. The dairy contained some of the notes of events of his life.
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. In those days, majority Chakmas used to be illiterate and people who studied 3rd standards were considered to be qualified enough to grab lucrative government jobs.

But Baneswar Chakma chose a path to serve the country and his community in particular. 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.

In 1959, Baneswar Chakma taught as a teacher at the Primary School at Ugudasury (near Haulong Sora), Mizoram.

Baneswar Chakma had a long and luminous leadership. The first political delegation to Shillong, then capital of Assam, demanding Chakma Regional Council in Mizoram was made by the Chakmas in 1952. The first delegation to Shillong was led by Kristo Mohan Chakra, and the other member was Gura Nitai Chakma. They met Assam Chief Minister Bishnu Ram Medhi in Shillong, which was then under Assam in 1952. That was when Miz District Council (1952) and the Pawi-Lakher Regional Council (1953) were being created. Subsequently, three other delegations to Shillong were made by Kristo Mohan Chakma who was accompanied by Hari Kristo Chakma, Satya Priya Dewan and Baneswar Chakma in the second, third and fourth delegation respectively. They demanded Chakma Regional Council with headquarters at Demagiri. Baneswar Chakma was appointed as Presiding Officer in Tablabagh Village Council Election in 1963; served as the General Secretary, Block Congress Committee, Demagiri in 1967-1972 at the time of Lushai Hill District Council; as President, Chakma District Congress Committee in 1983; and as Senior Adviser, BJP, CADC in 1999.

He served as Senior Judicial Officer in CADC during 1974-1977. He was Secretary to the Honorary Organiser, Chakma Affairs, Demagiri in 1970-1997.

As a community leader, Baneswar Chakma tirelessly fought for the rights of the Chakmas and against injustice. He was part of the delegation that met Rajiv Gandhi, then Prime Minister of India demanding adequate compensation for the Chakma families evicted from the Dampa Wildlife Sanctuary in Mamit district of Mizoram in 1989-90.
It is undeniable that Baneswar Chakma has done so much for us, but what have we done for him in return? Today, he remains unknown, unsung and uncared for. He lives not very far away from the political capital of CADC, but no leader has ever visited to take stock of his situation.

Indeed, it is high time we recognized his contributions for the society. Perhaps, he is the only Chakma who has fought for the freedom of India to be alive today. Yet, it is apparent that we Chakmas have deserted him and are not willing to give due recognition to this great leader. Today, it is tragic that he lives a forlorn life.

The Mizoram Chakma Development Forum (MCDF) takes this opportunity to salute this great leader who has devoted his life to translate the tears of the Chakmas into happiness.

Here MCDF presents, for the first time, some unseen pictures of the life of Dangu Baneswar Chakma.

Baneswar Chakma (extreme Right, sitting) with Prime Minister of India, Smt Indira Gandhi and Mizoram Chief Minister, Mr Lalthanhawla in this undated photo.
Above: Baneswar Chakma (extreme Right, sitting) with Rajiv Gandhi and Mizoram Chief Minister, Mr Lalthanhawla (undated photo).

Left: (L-R) Surat Kumar Chakma, Baneswar Chakma, Kristo Mohan Chakma and Hari Kisto Chakma (undated photo)
MCDF’s role, activities & achievements during 2011
MCDF’s Activities Report
( Nov 2010 to Dec 2011)

ON 11 October 2011, the Mizoram Chakma Development Forum (MCDF) turned two years. In a very short span of time, MCDF has become a household name not only in Mizoram but also in other parts of India. This was possible because of the good works which include strategic interventions of MCDF in several social sectors which brought relief to the people. The achievements of MCDF brought a hope in the hearts and minds of the common people that “our problems have solutions”. MCDF’s slogan is “There is always a ray of hope”. In the last over one year (November 2010-December 2011), MCDF has undertaken a lot of activities. However, here we are able to provide only the most notable of our actions which made remarkable changes in the society, and were highly beneficial for the masses. It is notable to also mention that MCDF achieved all these successes despite lack of funds.

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

Parva I village in CADC which borders Myanmar and Bangladesh
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 DSCO 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.

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 esteemed 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)

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 Zozam Times.

2. 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 (NCPCR) 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.
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.”

MCDF is following up the case with the NCPCR.

3. 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 Sen 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.

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. Laldhuawma; 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 so that 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. Laldhuawma, 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:**


**4. Celebration of Bizu festival in New Delhi**

The Chakma community of Delhi celebrated Bizu 2011 at Ashok Buddha Vihar, Raghat, 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.
5. 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 Pachau, Chief Secretary, Mizoram; Director, Health & Family Welfare, Mizoram; and KK Tongchangya, Hon’ble CEM, CADC 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 Joritie 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.

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.


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 mumalloh vangin Parva-I khuaah mipui an mangang”

6. 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 Lungsen 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 the 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 Lungsen. Lobindra Chakma went missing for more than a week, before he was traced by locals.

7. 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’ 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.”

8. 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.

9. 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
10. 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 Chakra 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

11. 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 Purushathaman, 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.
“The Chakma Voice” - Its significance and role in the contemporary world

“The Chakma Voice” bi-monthly newsletter of the Mizoram Chakma Development Forum (MCDF) is presently the only English language periodical in India which focuses exclusively on Chakma community – its problems and community related developments around the world. In November 2011 The Chakma Voice completed two years of existence. It was first published in the month of November 2009. Initially it was monthly, and converted into bi-monthly from January 2010 onwards.

Significance

Chakmas are a 2.5 lakh strong population in India (Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura and Assam). Yet, they do not have a single newspaper or magazine to inform about their own situation. The only exception to this is, of course, MAADI monthly newspaper (Chakma language, printed in Bengali and Chakma scripts) published from Tripura. Hitherto several magazines have been published from different corners of Mizoram, Tripura and Assam but each of them perished after a few months.

To put this in perspective, let us know that even the Nepalis/Gorkhas with a mere population of 5,000 (five thousands) in Mizoram have their own newspaper called “Nigalo” (Nepali language monthly) which is published by Mizoram Gorkha Youth Association. The Gorkhas may be numerically minuscule but they have put their intellect where it ought to be put. In contrast, Chakmas are over 70,000-strong community (Census 2001) in Mizoram, and they enjoy political and financial autonomy under the Constitution of India (Chakma Autonomous District Council). Yet, the Chakmas could not emulate even the Nepalis/Gorkhas, not to speak of the Mizos who have dozens of news media to their credit. Mizoram, with a population of nearly 11 lakh, has 91 daily newspapers but Chakmas – the second largest community - have none.

In this scenario, MCDF’s The Chakma Voice came into being. When the first issue was printed in November 2009, many people looked at it in admiration while the some others expressed their trademark skepticism that it won’t be able to survive for long. It will meet its untimely death, they prophesied. But the MCDF proved every critic wrong. One of the

The Gorkhas in Mizoram with a population of 5,000 run a newspaper but Chakmas who are the second largest ethnic community having their own Autonomous District Council do not have any newspaper. What a shame!

The MCDF has filled this vacuum through “The Chakma Voice” which has given a voice to Chakmas.
The strongest rebuttals is through this second global edition of *The Chakma Voice*.

The significance of *The Chakma Voice* is also that it has come to represent the Chakma community and has given a voice to this voiceless micro-minority community.

Finally, *The Chakma Voice* is an indication that the Chakmas have come of age.

**Role and achievements**

Beating all odds, MCDF successfully published seven issues, including one special “Global Edition” in December 2010 where several Chakma and non-Chakma intellectuals contributed articles. But due to want of funds, three issues could not be printed in 2011.

As the MCDF in the *Global Edition 2010* editorial remarked, it was perhaps the first time where Chakmas from various parts of the world were expressing their opinions at one single forum after the Chakma World Conference held at Kolkata in 1993. One of the primary objectives of *The Chakma Voice* is to build a bridge of love and mutual respect between the Chakmas of India and the Chakmas residing in the rest of the world, and sharing of credible information about our situations.

*The Chakma Voice* has always highlighted 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 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.

This newsletter remains the only of its kind which reports exclusively about Chakma related issues and developments, 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.

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

*The Chakma Voice* has primarily focused on Mizoram state where Chakmas face institutionalized discrimination and problems in their everyday lives. Given the credibility enjoyed by MCDF and *The Chakma Voice* built over the last two years, *The Chakma Voice* has become a reference material for researchers, academicians and all others who wish to get accurate and first hand information/data on Chakmas and their problems.

The most crucial example we would like to cite here is the article “Educational Policies and Social Exclusion – A Case Study of Chakma Tribes in Mizoram” (available at http://mcdf.files.wordpress.com/2011/09/education-policies-and-social-exclusion-chakma.pdf) by Anup Shekhar Chakraborty, Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, St Joseph’s College, Darjeeling, in reputed journal, *Social Action of Indian Social Institute*, Vol 61. No. 3, July-September 2011, which sheds light on the discriminatory educational policies being pursued by the state government of Mizoram against the Chakmas. Mr Chakraborty has relied on the information provided in various issues of *The Chakma Voice* and has given the due credit in the article.
THE YOUTHS are a key segment of the society. They are vibrant and dynamic and are a source of creativity, enthusiasm and energy. It is very important to optimally tap their constructive and creative energies and to guide them to achieve their educational and career goals to involve them in nation building activities.

On 1 October 2011, MCDF organised a seminar on education and career at Ashoka Buddha Vihar, New Delhi. A small number of Chakma youths enthusiastically participated in the seminar. Dr. Sumedha Chakma, which has a Ph.D from the IIT-Delhi and Assistant Professor at Motilal Nehru National Institute of Technology, Allahabad, was the guest speaker. He being the first Doctorate in the Chakma community is a source of inspiration for the Chakma students pursuing higher education in India. He shared his experience of competition and hardship during his student life and especially during his stay at the premier institute of IIT-Delhi. He emphasised on the importance of discipline and hard work for a student to achieve academic excellence.

Mr. Hemanta Larma, President of MCDF who is also a professional in Hiring and Recruitment, imparted several tips on success. He informed about various career opportunities and the educational qualifications and skills required to grab those opportunities. Mr. Larma focused on goal oriented approach to education. He also encouraged the youths to perform a small exercise to illustrate that results and rewards are the most important motivation for hard work. He highlighted the importance of identifying one’s dream and the need to channelise the best efforts and hard work towards realisation of that dream. Mr. Larma greatly inspired and motivated the youths by citing various examples and quotes of great men and women that changed the world by thinking big and by their passion to realise it.

Due to the shortage of time the ‘open and interactive session’ was started during the snacks-break where each student introduced himself or herself to the entire group. While munching Uncle Chips and with glasses of soft drinks in their hands, the students interacted openly with each other and shared their knowledge and experiences with the entire group.

Dr. Sumedha Chakma has been a member of the Interview Board in various Central Government Recruitment Examinations. He provided a detailed information about the parameters based on which a candidate is evaluated in an interview for recruitment in Government jobs. Many students in the group were preparing for Government jobs and therefore they asked for tips and guidance that would give them an edge over the rest in the highly competitive Government Service Examinations.

This was followed by a ‘question and answer session’ where education and career related queries of the students were directly answered by Dr. Sumedha Chakma. The seminar already exceed the scheduled time but questions from the students were still popping up one after another. Dr. Chakma listened to each and every question with great interest and answered them like an expert education and career counsellor. It was getting late into the night but the whole atmosphere at the Rajghat Buddha Vihar was still alive and bustling with energy. In the interest of time the seminar was wrapped up by thanking the students for their participation and making it a success and the volunteers for their support and a special thanks to Dr. Sumedha Chakma who took out the time from his busy schedule for the students in New Delhi.

We look forward to more such seminars and for active participation from all.
Chakma history, culture and heritage
History of Chakma Rajas’ Administration in CHT

(Editors Note: This article and the one at Page 22 relating to Chakma Raj (rule) have been reproduced from http://chakmaraj.com/ in order to educate the general public including Chakmas about the Chakma Rajas’ rule in CHT. These two articles contain invaluable information about the Chakma Raja legacy which remain unknown to people till date)

Pre-British and Pre-Mughal Period

FROM ABOUT the beginning of the first quarter of the second millennium AD, most parts of Bangladesh other than the Chittagong Hill Tracts were included within empires and kingdoms or other highly formalized political or administrative systems in the nature of states. The Hill Tracts, in contrast, had comparatively non-formalized or less formalized self-governing systems, which were considered to be independent. These consisted of mainly of small kingdoms, chiefdoms and smaller chieftaincies.

British Tributary (1787-1860)

Prior to annexation into Bengal as a district in 1860, neither the Mughals nor the British are known to have had any direct influence or rule over the CHT. Although the British East India Company took over the administration of Bengal in 1760, its sphere of influence did not come to be directly felt in the CHT until the nineteenth century. By the 1780s, most of the major chiefdoms and chieftaincies of the CHT were partly formalized and converted into British tributaries (like that of the Chakma Raja), while the smaller headships (e.g., of the Mro) became de-recognized, except as headmen of smaller standing and authority. The status of the CHT peoples as tributaries was retained, at least as late as 1829, but thence onward, the process of transition from tributary to colony started in earnest, but the process nevertheless spanned nearly a century from 1787 (the year of the Treaty between Chakma Raja Jan Bux Khan and British Governor General Lord Cornwallis) to 1860 (in which year the CHT was declared a “district” within Bengal). The process of annexation of the CHT is thus described in government records:

“[In] 1829 Mr. Halhead, the Commissioner [of Chittagong] stated that the hill tribes were not British subjects, but merely tributaries, and that he recognised no right on our part to interfere with their internal arrangements. The near neighbourhood of a powerful and stable Government naturally brought the Chiefs by degrees under our influence, and by the end of the eighteenth century every leading chief paid to the Chittagong Collector a certain tribute or yearly gift, to purchase the privilege of free trade between the inhabitants of the hills and the men of the plains. These sums were at first fluctuated in amount, but gradually were brought to specified and fixed limits, eventually taking the shape, not of tribute, but of revenue paid to the State.”

Chiefdom under British Supervision (1860-1937)

Until 1860, most of the CHT was administered by the Chakma and Bohmong Rajas and their subordinate officials variously styled as Dewan, Roaja, Ahun, Kheja (Khisa), Phaingsi, Debaing and Rupsa. In 1882, a third Chief, the Mong Raja, was recognized. No official of the British government (or earlier that of the Mughal governor of Bengal) was posted in the CHT, and hardly anything was known about the CHT, until the period after 1860. However, from 1787 to 1860, the revenue and judicial authorities in Chittagong purported to authorise a precarious authority over a miniscule section of the CHT population whenever they voluntarily subjected themselves to such authority, which happened only if they had trade, landholdings or other interests in the plains that required facilitation. Thus, the trade tributes of the Chiefs – which facilitated trade between the hills and the plains – were paid to the Collector of Chittagong, as were royalties on forest produce. However, the Collector of Chittagong did not otherwise have anything to do with the CHT administration of the Rajas, chiefs and sub-chiefs.

Chakma Chiefdom in Recent History (1937 to Today)

From 1860 to 1937, most of the day-to-day CHT
administration continued to be vested upon the rajas and their officials, although the role of the central government – exercised through the Superintendent, and later, Deputy Commissioner and subordinate officials – in policy matters and administration of law and order and criminal justice, among other things, grew at the expense of the role of the traditional system of rajas, headmen and karbaries.

In 1937, the many crucial matters CHT administration were transferred to new officials called sub-divisional officers (“SDOs). However, the advisory prerogatives of the Chakma Raja and the other two rajas was institutionalised, obliging the Deputy Commissioner to “consult the Chiefs on important matters affecting the administration of the CHT”. In the 1950s, elections to the legislative bodies were introduced for the first time. Elections to local government bodies, including District Councils were held for the first time in the 1960s. In 1989, district-level councils were introduced, now called the Hill District Councils (“HDCs”). After the signing of the CHT Accord of 1997 – which ended more than twenty years of armed conflict for self-rule – a regional council for the entire CHT, and a separate Ministry of CHT Affairs were established.

The three rajas’ role in administration has changed over the centuries, as described below. Whilst the entire administrative apparatus of the CHT was at one time led by the rajas and their officials, now administrative functions are shared with the elected councils and functionaries from the Bangladesh Civil Service. However, the role of the rajas in Land & Revenue Administration, Administration of Justice and their constitutional prerogative of providing advice – such as to the Deputy Commissioner, the Hill District Councils, the CHT development Board (a statutory development authority) and to the Advisory Committee of the CHT Affairs Ministry – are still retained. Thus, the rajas still play a vital role in administration and development, apart from their direct role in land, revenue and justice administration, including through their headmen, who are the heads of units known as mauzas, and perform functions of a land and revenue officer and local judge, trying “tribal” matters and minor criminal and civil justice matters.

References:
- In Memo No. 596 dated 31 August 1872, from H. Hankey, Officiating Commissioner of the Chittagong to the Officiating Secretary to the Government of Bengal (see above for full reference), Hankey wrote thus (at paragraph 3): “The Hill Tracts of Chittagong were formed into a separate district under a Superintendent in 1860, but its capabilities and resources were not known .....”. He writes further (at paragraph 9): “For some cause or other, the Hill Tracts seems to have been regarded as a sort of terra incognita, the detailed particulars of which it would be impossible to acquire.”
**Introduction**

THE FUNCTIONS of the Chakma Raja today encompass administrative, social, cultural and spiritual roles. A major part of the Chakma Raja’s role is that of the traditional head of Chakma society (including Chakmas living outside of the Chakma Circle in the Chittagong Hill Tracts). The other major role is that as head of the Hill Tracts territory known as the Chakma Circle, which is inhabited by Chakmas and other peoples. The traditional chiefs’ circles in the CHT are units of land, revenue and justice administration, and development.

**Title**

The Chakma king is variously known as Chakma Raja, Chakma Chief and Chakma Circle Chief. The traditional title is Chakma Raja, meaning king of the Chakmas. This has the same meaning as Chakma Chief. The correspondences of the British period use the words raja and chief interchangeably. However, after the promulgation of the CHT Regulation, 1900, the word chief was preferred over raja by the British. In laws and policies of the Bangladesh period (1971+) both words are used; “Raja” is used in the CHT Development Board Ordinance, 1976 and in the CHT Accord of 1997, while “Chakma Circle Chief” is used both in the 1997 Accord and in the post-1997 laws. Chakma Circle Chief denotes the head of the territory of the Chakma Circle (Chakma Chiefdom) within the Rangamati and Khagachari districts of the CHT.

**Administration of Justice**

The Chakma Raja is the fountain of justice among the Chakmas. An appeal in his court is the last bastion of justice concerning the customary laws of the Chakmas, whether it concerns personal law matters – such as on marriage, divorce, maintenance, child custody etc – or resource rights on land use, forest use, hunting and trapping rights, and so forth. Besides being the highest court of the Chakmas, as the Chief of the Chakma Circle, the raja also tries cases as an appellate court, hearing matters brought from the courts of the Mauza Headmen, who are the heads or chiefs of territorial units called mauzas (about ten miles square, having eight to ten villages or hamlets). The mauza headmen in turn will generally try cases that are not resolvable by the village heads known as karbari. Both the headmen and raja are empowered to detain people, if necessary, until the advice of the government’s district officer is obtained. They thus perform functions that are similar to those of magistrates or Justices of the Peace.

**Land Administration**

The Rajas’ role in land administration is generally indirect, through the headmen, except for the mauzas of which the raja himself is the headmen (the Chakma Raja is currently headman of four mauzas, including in the district and regional headquarters of Rangamati). The rajas supervise the functions of the mauza headmen, who are the revenue and land officers of the Government at the mauza level, besides carrying out judicial and magisterial functions. The Headmen manage and protect the common resources of the mauzas, including agricultural land, forests, grazing lands and water bodies. Headmen provide settlement grants for homesteads, and provide reports to the District officials prior to permanent settlements and leases are granted. Forest and mineral resources are also not generally exploited without the knowledge and consent of the headmen.

**Revenue Administration**

The taxes on land in the Chittagong Hill Tracts are
until today collected by the mauza headmen and deposited to the national treasury through the Rajas. For swidden (jum) land and other hillside land, the headman is entitled to 37%, the Raja, 42% and the remaining 21% is deposited to the government Treasury. For lowlands used for intensive agriculture, the headmen collect the tax and deposit it to the Treasury. The headmen are entitled to a commission on the collection while the Raja gets an annuity as a compensatory measure. In the case of swidden land, karbaries, minstrels, shamans, widows and widowers are exempt from swidden tax by custom.

**Adviser to Government**

The Chakma Raja and other two rajas (Boh Mong Raja and Mong Raja) are ex-officio advisers to the Government from the district level to the level of the Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs (established after the signing of the CHT Accord of 1997). The three rajas form as Advisory Council to the district officer known as Deputy Commissioner, and are members of the Consultative Committee of the CHT Development Board (a statutory development agency functioning since 1976) and the Advisory Committee of the Ministry of CHT Affairs by virtue of their hereditary position. The Chiefs are members of the quasi-judicial CHT Land Disputes Resolution Commission and may participate in the deliberations of the concerned Hill District Council upon invitation or of their own volition. ■
ACCORDING TO customs prevalent in the Chakma Society marriage can be held only between KHELLYA KUDUM (even relation) i.e. between the same generation or alternate generation and it should not be of the same GOZA (sept). And if of the same sept there should be a gap of seven generation from the family. However, marriage between a related grand father and grand daughter, a related grand mother and grand son and vice versa is practicable. Now a days, after late Bhuban Mohan Roy the Chakma Chief who reportedly married his related grand daughter has permitted marriage from a gap of five generation of the same sept. The following are the marriage-able relation prevalent in the society:

(a) between cousin like fathers sister daughter;
(b) with fathers cousin sisters daughter and vice versa;
(c) with fathers cousin brothers daughters and vice versa if not of the same sept and if there is a gap of five generation if from the same sept;
(d) with mothers sisters daughters and vice versa;
(e) with mothers cousin sisters daughters;
(f) with mothers cousin brothers daughter;
(g) any one from other sept if of the same generation;
(h) the younger sister in laws of elder/older brothers;
(i) younger cousin sister in laws of elder/older brothers;
(j) Elder/older sisters younger sister in laws;
(k) Elder/older sisters brother in laws;
(l) own younger sister in laws/cousin sister in laws, brother in-laws/cousin brother in laws.

A marriage in the Chakma society may be performed in two way i.e. MELA, the conventional method in which a bride is brought to grooms house and the other JAMEIA or JAMEI TULHEE DENA (literally to lead or to put the groom in brides house) where instead of taking the bride to grooms house, the groom goes to the brides house. In this process the relatives of the groom lead the groom to brides house and the marriage ceremony is performed there and the groom remains there for a certain period of time say one year, two years etc. This system is applied when (a) the groom is poor and cannot afford the marriage expenditure and when the brides father is ready to bear it, (b) When the groom has got no well-to-do relatives, (c) When the parent of the bride have got no other earning male members, (e) the parent of the bride do not want to part with their daughter due to affection, and (f) a death has occurred in the year in the house of the bride etc. In a JAMEIA all the marriage rites like Jaqdan, Chumulang, Byah Burh etc are performed in the brides house. However, the Byah Sudh Bhanga, Bizu Beran etc are done at the house of the groom or his relatives. According to customs, the mother of the bride must receive at least two rupees as DUDHOLEE TENGA (price for breast feeding) and DABHA (bride price) from the grooms. Otherwise it becomes KANYA DAAN (gifting of daughter). In such a case the parent of the bride losses the right even the shade of their daughter not to talk about visit, drinking and eating. Since as per Chakma custom, once you have gifted anything to anybody, you lose all the rights and interest on such thing. A Chakma boy get married at about eighteen to twenty one years of age and a girl is married off at the age of about fifteen to twenty. However marriageable bachelors of the age of about thirty and boys of the age of sixteen years were also seen to have got married. It may be due to economic condition of the groom or for not getting a suitable bride or for the demand of old relatives that they want to see grand children and great grand children before death.
In a marriage, the parent of the groom and his relatives gather information for a bride. In choosing a bride they had to look into the reputation of the brides clan. Whether they are lazy? Or whether any one is suffering from incurable and transferable disease like leprosy, tuberculosis? Whether the girl is clean and expert in household works and weaving?

**ARRANGED MARRIAGE:**

In an arranged marriage the parents of a prospective groom will collect information for a suitable bride through friends or relatives. They had to consider the relation first with their son and the prospective bride. According to custom, the relation should not be as under:

(a) She should not be an aunt or niece to the groom,
(b) She should not be of the same GUTTHI (clan), and
(c) If of the same Gutthi, there should be at least five to seven generation gap.

**QUALITIES OF A BRIDE:** A bride should know the art of weaving. She should be beautiful with long hair and even teeth. She should talk cheerfully and sweetly. She should know to respect elders and be obedient to them. She should also know to love and pamper young ones. She should know cleanliness and do all household chores like cooking, drawing water, collecting fire woods, cleaning the hours, collect vegetables and do cleaning and sieving of rice. She also should be active in jhum work and paddy husking.

On finding such a suitable girl the boy’s father will send a messenger to the girl’s father for permission to visit. If the reply is affirmative, the boy’s father will visit the girl’s house with one bottle of wine accompanied by at least one elder who is expert in marriage negotiations. The groom’s party tests the would-be bride’s skills of sweeping the house.

On finding such a suitable girl the boy’s father will send a messenger to the girl’s father for permission to visit. If the reply is affirmative, the boy’s father will visit the girl’s house with one bottle of wine accompanied by at least one elder who is expert in marriage negotiations. The groom’s party tests the would-be bride’s skills of sweeping the house.
The second time visit of the boys father is called DWI PUR (second date). During the visit second time the boys father has to carry presents in pairs i.e. two bottles of wine, two bottles rice beers, sweetmeats, coconut etc. Some people has the custom to carry double distilled wine and all presents in pair. If everything goes alright during Dwipur, the girls father may asks the boys father to make the third visit on a appointed day.

The third visit is called TIN PUR (third date). In this third visit the groom parents are accompanied with more relatives and experts on marriage matters. They need to carry with them chicken, wine, Kanjee, Jagarha, Pidha (rice cakes) and Mema Mishri (sweets and sweetmeats), coconut, sugar-cane, along with Paan-subori (betel nuts and leaves). If the wine etc. (called MAT PILLANG) is accepted, every things are settled like bride price (which was usually Rupees one hundred to one hundred and fifty but now a days five thousand to fifteen thousand in Mizoram, if the girl has eloped with a boy), demand of other provisions from the girls side like ornaments, dresses, rice, wine, animal for feast like buffalo, pig, chicken etc for the marriage feast. If the demand is more, bargaining goes on. Sometimes it so happens the relatives of the girl like uncle, elder brother, grand father etc. used to give concession and reduce the demand as a gesture of good relation. Sometimes a promising marriage is also called off on the inability to pay from the boy side. After the demands have been fixed and came to an agreement, a certain date is fixed for the wedding. For the inability to give in marriage on the appointed day, without a legitimate cause, both sides may be punished with fine and compensations.

Before the appointed day of wedding, the groom party has to arrange and fulfill all the demands of the bride party. Other wise, the marriage may be cancelled and the grooms father may be fined or asked to pay compensation. On the other hand if the brides father deny to marry off his daughter, he may also be fined and asked to pay compensation.

On the appointed day of wedding, the groom party consisting of a younger sister or cousin sister of the groom (PHUR BUGIYA), one experienced woman (BO DHURIYA or Hadeya), one best man (SAWALA) and other elders, young girls and boys, usually friends and relatives of the groom will reach the brides house. The groom Party should always be in pair. Nobody is allowed to accompany a marriage procession from the midway. Every members of a marriage procession must start from the house of the groom. The party will also take with them all the demanded materials like dress and ornaments for the bride, the bride price etc. On reaching the brides house they are not instantly allowed to enter the house. They are first asked to sit at the court yard where mats are spread for them. They are provided with Panhee Kutty, Daba Dhundo and Paan Subori. After a while when the host is ready to welcome the groom party they will be invited to enter the house. It is customary that feet of the groom should be washed by the younger brother or younger cousin brother of the bride. They will be provided mats or clothes will be spread for their sitting arrangement. After a rest, the Sawala will seek permission from the parent of the bride for dressing up the bride. If permitted, he will take out all the dress and ornaments and arrange it on a shieve. It will then be passed to all the assembled elders and relatives for their blessing. They will bless it blowing air from the mouth with the prayer for the couples peace and happiness, health and permanent bonding. That they should never be separated and their pair should remain intact during their whole life time. Afterward the Sawala will start dressing up the bride with the help of Sawali (bride maid), who is a friend of the bride. Sometimes it so happens that the girl opposes to dress up. In such a case she is forcefully dressed up. The bride and grooms are kept in one room in the night with other friends of bride and groom. There may be whole night enjoyment to celebrate the occasion with dancing, singing and drinking.

On the next day the JADAN ceremony is performed. At a Jadan, the sawala or an ojha (exorcist) will mix up some cooked rice with boiled eggs and also keep ready two betel rolls. He will ask the couple to sit side by side (male at the right and female at left) and bind a white scarf or cloth around them and seek permission from the assembled members of the society for binding JADAN of the couple. The assembled people will say in unison “aghe! aghe! (yes, yes). Then he will ask the couple to exchange egged rice and the betel rolls. After the exchange is over, he will again seek permission from the society to untie the bind. On getting affirmative reply he will untie it and the Jadan rite is over. As an age old rule, a Jadan should be between two persons and it is the meeting of two souls. So Jadan with a pregnant woman is not permitted. It sometimes so happens that while seeking permission to bind a Jadan, somebody may object if he has got affair with the girl. In such a case, the objector has to prove his relation. If he fails to prove the relation he is fined for causing shame. If he proves,
the parent of the girl is fined for causing shame to the grooms. He is also to compensate the expenditure of the groom party. However Jadan ceremony may be performed in the grooms house also.

In the afternoon the bride is sent off. Before leaving the house the bride will salute all her elders and with her friends and younger. She will also be advised by the parent not to neglect her duty that she should respect her in laws. The bride father may say to his son in law “Take her, I have given her to you; but she is young and not acquainted with household duties. Therefore it at any time you come back from work and found the rice burnt, curries salty or salt less or anything else wrong, teach her: but do not beat her. But at the end of three years, if she is still found neglecting her duties, you may beat her but do not take her life or make her blind or break any bone.” The bride is also advised not to take anything before looking into others share. That she should not get irritated on minor matters. She is also handed over to the groom and in laws with the request that their daughter being naive and young may commit mistakes and she should be handled carefully. Afterward she comes out from the house tearing seven strings of thread. Which symbolizes separation from her clan and entry into her husbands clan. At present, the rite of SAT NAL SUDHO KABANA is very rarely observed. The bride may also be accompanied by her relatives and friends, to see off her. Some of the friends may stay with the bride for days till the first visit called BYAHSUTH BHANGA.

On arriving the grooms house, the bride is given a warm welcome. Somebody from the procession will seek permission to admit the bride into the house and the father of the groom will permit. The mother of the groom will hug the bride and lead her to the seat kept for the bride. Before entry, feet of the bride is washed by a younger sister of the groom. Here the relatives and friends of the bride is royally treated. That’s why the people of bride side is called ARHI DHINNYA RAJA (two and half days king). Every comfort of them are looked into. They are provided with good food, good bed and good drinks etc during their stay. Whole the night drinking, eating and singing goes on. Dancing troupe perform their dance and singing whole the day. A wealthy family may solemnize a wedding with fire works.

CHUMULANG: On the next day, the main rite of a marriage, CHUMULANG is performed. It is the worship of family deities called KALEIA, PARAMES-WARI and OCHSYA. These Deities are identified with Hindu gods, SIVA, PARVATI and Ganesha. Some people also worship Michchingy, the mythological human husband of Laxmi, the goddess of wealth. (As per Chakma mythology, LAXMI PALA when the Gozen created human being, He first asked them to talk and the answer was rice (OH MANEI MAT, - OH GOZEN BHAT (meaning “Oh human talk! – Oh God rice!”). It is performed for the welfare of conjugal life and the family. It is performed for two purposes one for marriage and the other for the family called GRISTI CHUMULAG, which is performed every year at the beginning of new year. The GRISTI CHUMULANG may be performed any time for damage of crops, loss of property, and frequent illness in the family or after the death of a family member. The method of performance is same and few words are different at the time of chanting prayers. The Chumulang is believed to be the first worship of the mankind after the creation of the universe. Chumulang is solemnized by an OJHA (EXORCIST/Priest).

METHOD: For performing a Chumulang Puja, the intended votery or any of the family member will first arrange one bottle of special wine and one bottle of special KANJEE (beer of common rice) or JAGARHA (beer of Binny/sticky rice) which should never be tasted by any one. If a Chumulang is not performed for unavoidable reason, such a wine should be flown in the river. Three chickens are also required for sacrifice. Of which one should be cock, one hen and the other may be cock or hen. Some even sacrifice pig. Before the day of Chumulang, the intended votery or any member of his family will approach the OJHA with a cup of Mat (wine) and state vowing – “I am inviting you to be the OJHA of my /our JORA/GRISTI Chumulang, tomorrow. You are requested to perform the rite and disclose all the good and bad of us.” The Ojha will drink the wine and agree to perform it. At bed time he will light lamps and make prayer to God to appear before him in dream so that he can foretell the future of the couple and the family. He will also sleep putting the wine cup under his pillow. The next day he will go to the family and make preparation. At first the place where Chumulang is to be performed (usually the middle room of the house called MATHHYA GUDHI is sanctified by sprinkling KOJOI PANHEE. He will then ask to bring AAG PANHEE (the first water i.e. the water to be carried by the bride and groom from the river for the purpose and none should use even a single drop for other purpose. The bride will carry the water with a KUTTY, an earthen jug and the groom with an earthen pitcher). It should be remembered that no drop of
An altar is to be made. For the altar first a bamboo mat called TOLOI is spread. Above that, plantain leaves are spread. One small basket of paddy (measuring five pots ie. about two and half kilo) and one basket of rice (of the same measure) are to be placed at the right and left. He will then place the pitcher on the right side and the Kutty on the left. Above the baskets he will place bamboo mats made of bamboo tapes (seven pair by seven pair on the rice basket and five pair by five pair on the paddy basket). He will then coil seven string of cotton around the rice basket and the Kutty and five strings around the paddy basket and the Kutty. He will also coil five string of thread around the neck and pipe of the Kutty. He will again make one more mat for the other deity Michchingya with a roof and place at the left. Three bamboo chips with downward bristles called MALEI KEIM are posted perforating one pair each of tips of jack fruit leaves or similar thick leaves (paired one face up and another face down) on the rice busked which tips are bound together and in between the chips an egg is placed with a lump of earth. In each mat of baskets. A roof called PANG is made on the paddy basket with plantain leaves. Two more plantain leaves are spread (one face up and one face down) at the left of paddy basket and one more MAREI KEIM is posted for MICCHIN-GYA. One pair each of MALEI/MAREI KEIM are also posted in front of the rice and paddy basket. Flowers are also offered in pairs on the altar and the plat form is now ready for worship. First the Ojha will light the CHERAKS (lamps) and offer wine in front of the paddy basket, Kanjee in front of rice basket and sprinkle both on the platform meant for Michchingya. The Ojha will then bow with the prayer that – “A hem ! God Kalia ! I am performing this pairing Chumulang Puja for such and such (the couple), you kindly accept it and all their misfortune, ill luck, ill fate, diseases, unhappiness, sorrows and all other bad things to come should be destroyed. All sharp and pointed weapons against them should get blunt. On their reaching to a thorny bush it should turn into a perfumed flower garden. The barren land should turn into a fertile golden mine at their touch. The earth should yield gold at their touch. Let the fire of their house never extinguish. They should lead a happy and prosperous married life, with all the riches. Their house should be filled with food grain, clothes, precious gems and metals. Their fame should reach country to country. They should have many children and their house should be struck between cradles of children and their first child should have fair skin at the testicles. Their house should be visited by relatives and guests and the handle of their house step should get polished with the ups and down of relatives and guests Let there be no day without a guest and their fame should reach beyond the country. They should be worshipped even by the enemies. Let the stone break away or get breakage mark but their pair should never break. Or take the mark of breakage.” . I am offering this cock for the couple, you please accept it. I am offering it raising it on my head, you please accept it on your hand. I am offering this for the couple keeping the sun, the moon, the planets, stars and the four saints of the four corners as witnesses If you have any grudge or anger on them and decided to take their lives, you please spare them and in their place take this cock ! You will get blood for blood, meat for meat, head for head, hands for wings, leg for leg, liver for liver, lungs for lungs, intestine for intestine, gizzard for stomach, eye for eye, and you can satisfy all the taste of their body parts. But please you spare their lives.

You being a divine deity ,you live in the Heaven and we live on the earth. I cannot have direct conversation with you The communication between Heavenly body and human being is done with a medium and I will use rice and tips of leaves called AAG PADA as a medium for communication.. So I will throw tips of leaves to communicate with you. If both the leaves fall face upward, I will presume that you are happy and laughing. We are also laughing today to our heart content as we are happy with joy. If both fall face downward, I will take it as you are angry. In that case I will seek your forgiveness for the couple through the leaves tips. If after seeking forgiveness the leaves again fall face down I will change the leaves as it is said that the leaves also have relation and they cannot form pair, with brotherly sisterly relation. And if the leaves fall one face up and one face down, I will presume that you have accepted the offering and you will spare their lives.” He will then throw the tips of leaves and if it fall one face up and one face down, he will slit the throat of the cock and sprinkle the blood on the paddy basket. Likewise, he will put the same prayer before the rice basket and the platform of Michchingya with the other chicken and sprinkle the blood. At the last the pig (if a pig is to be sacrificed). He will then ask the couple to bow. This sacrifice is called KAJA PAGE GOJANHA (raw offering). Afterward he will ask the chicken to be dressed and cooked without making into pieces. When the chicken are cooked, he will change the leaves with new one and again offer them before the deities, the cock in front of paddy basket, the hen and the egg before the rice basket and
the other chicken in front of Michchingya. He will also offer the wine and Kanjee. He will also offer rice and other curries for seven times. He will also exchange the courses between Kalia and Parameswari. The exchange of offering is believed to be to clear up the ill feeling of the deities so that they cannot say that the things offered to me were less tasty than the other. If they feel so the offering will not be perfect and it has to be performed again. He will also offer the dresses head of the pig in front of the three platforms. This offering is called SICHYA PAGE GOJANHA (COOKED OFFERING). He will again put prayer for the couple as earlier and ask the couple to bow again. He will now put prayer before the deities to show the future of the couple in the form of sign in the parts of the chicken, the egg and rice called AAG PACH and the rite of is called CHAMBA CHAIHNA. After some times he will take out the offerings and examine the chicken, egg and rice for omen

CHAMBA CHAHNA: The fore tell signs which are looked into and examine on the offerings are as under:
(1) If the fingers of the chicken are found uneven or if there is any hollow between the fingers it is understood as simpleton and he or she will not be able to accumulate any wealth. Also it means that no secrecy will remain a secret with him or her.
(2) If there is no hollow it means a miser and accumulation of wealth.
(3) On taking out the tongue of the chicken a trident appears. If the middle portion is longer than the other it means a funeral pole which means early death. If it is coiled it means wealth for the male and good luck for the female.
(4) On shelling the egg if a cross appears, the male must become a novice in the temple for at least seven days.
(5) If the flat portion of the egg is displaced, it means displacement and change of residence or a broken family.
(6) If a crack at the middle, a misfortune.
(7) Bad smell denotes bad relation.

The Ojha also performs the rite called ‘SADHUR MARI DEHNA’ (killing or destroying the enemies). In this rite he will assemble all the left outs of CHAMBA ie the tongues, beaks, egg shells, bones etc. on plantain leaves. There he will put burning charcoal and put some wine and mustard seeds in his mouth and utter ‘Ahem… taking Preta and AJURHO (deity of wine) as witness, to day I am extinguishing all ill fate and ill luck of the couple as at the curse of the Kushybas maternal uncle a gem headed serpent died getting into pieces at every curse. He cursed seven times invoking truth and the serpent become seven pieces. So also I am throwing Ajurho king (wine) on all ills and ill future of the couple. With the dropping of Ajurho, all ills and ill futures of such and such should get into pieces. If I drop one drop it should become two pieces, if five drops, five pieces, if seven drops, seven pieces. As if water dropped on fire extinguishes it, so also all ills, all ill future of such and such should extinguish. I am destroying the enemies of such and such, keeping the moon, the sun, the earth, fire, water planets and stars also AJURHO (wine) as witnesses. That all the ill fate, ill luck, loss, illness, diseases, misfortune and accident etc of such and should destroy like the water extinguishing a burning fire. Their ill luck, ill future, misfortune, should reach beyond seven seas and seven Lankas or islands at the throwing of this wine and water. They should have a long, healthy and prosperous life. That their house should fill with gold, silver and other precious metal and stones. They should never face a poverty and dearness of dress and ornaments. They should have lots of children so that there is collision between cradles. They should always have guest in their house and their door handle should get polished with the entry and exit of guests. They should have and rear sheds full of four footed animals and birds. Their fame should reach country to country and they should live to able to see great great great grand children. They should be worshipped even by the enemies. With this he will throw wine and water till the charcoal are extinguished and throw it below. He will also thank the chicken and the animal for their use in the Chumulang rite and will make prayer for their better life in the next birth that the chicken should be born as golden eared myna and the pig as a monkey so that he can take the first fruits of trees. Then the couple will take his blessings.

In the mean time feast will be ready and the couple will offer the lunch plates (usually prepared on a ME-JANG, a bamboo plaited platform used for taking food sitting. Above the platform plantain leaves are spread and on which rice, curry etc are put to prepare the dish.) to some of the elders like grand parents of both side, parents, elders of parents with salute and they will bless them for healthy, prosperous, long merrily life. Mat (wine), Kanjee, Jagarha and other drinks will also be offered to all if available before the start of feast. After the feast is over and all the guests are entertained with DABA (bamboo hubble-bubble) and betel rolls. The Sawala will lead the newly wed couple to every elders of the couple. Who will bow them
touching the feet and the elders will bless them blowing air on rice and cotton and putting them on their forehead (which the Sawala carries with him) and paying some money, wishing the couple a long, healthy and prosperous life. The rice, cotton, money symbolizes prosperity of food, clothes and power. This blessing is called SEP DEHNA.

KHANA SIRANA: After Taking the feast, the people will rest for some times. Some may even take siesta. At around three to four the village elders and members of the society will assemble and the couple will again offer a big dish with every possible courses of curry, meat, sweetmeats, wine, beer, cakes, fruits etc. He will declare that he want to throw a KHANA (feast) to enable him to become a member of the society. He or on his behalf the Sawala will first seek permission from the assembled DUS MURUBBI to throw the Khana. “That the couple has arranged a Khana and the DUS MURUBBI should accept it and accept the couple as a member of the society. The should taste all the courses like rice, birnee rice, meat, fish, sweet, bitter, sour and other courses and accept the couple. That no one should blame the couple for not providing a Khana to the Society. On this, the assembled people will permit him and they will remove the cover of the Dish and they will try to appease all by providing every items like sweet, sour, bitter etc. at their demand. If they cannot fulfill the demanded items, they had to seek for pardon for the inability. It is believed that there should be a quarrel and fighting even a mocked one at the time of Khana to complete it. Some body who bears grudge with the groom used to demand impossible things and the considerate people would plead in favour of the groom and quarrel starts. However, if the majority people are found satisfied, the Sawala will seek permission to close the Khana Dish .And if permitted, the KHANA SIRANA rite is complete. From that day, the newly wed couple will be treated as a member of the society.

A Khana Sirana rite may be performed even after years of marriage if the economic condition is not good. There was a rule that if a married man dies without offering a Khana, his body should be disrespected and carried below the knee. However, his children and relatives may seek forgiveness from the society by offering a bottle of wine and if accepted, his body may be carried on shoulders.

In the evening, the newly wed couple will first go to the riverghat and take bath. They will also worship the Gongi Maa (river goddess) with lamps and flow. Afterwards they will go to the temple and offer flowers and light candles and seek blessing for better future life.

As per custom, a newly wed couple is treated impure. So they need to perform the rite BUR PARA at the riverghat by appeasing the river goddess GANGA. It may be with lamps and flowers or with animal sacrifice like a pair of chicken or a goat. It vary from Ojha to Ojha and as per the method they have learnt from their guru. (It is said that there were nine lakh of sages who learnt the mantras and pujas in different ways). Unless this Bur Para rite is performed, the newly wed should not enter others houses. Otherwise, they may be fined for causing impurity. For that they will have to bear all the expenditure for performing a Bur Para like chicken etc as that family have perform it to gain back purity.

In a Bur Para the ojha leads the couple to the riverghat. There he makes a platform on four bamboo posts. He puts some bamboo chips as a floor of the platform. On which he puts a lump of earth. Above that he put one bamboo chip with downward bristle (called malei keim) perforating two leaves as in other sacrificial platform. He then pours one bamboo tube of water and chants mantras, blowing air on the water. He puts it on the platform. After lighting lamps, he will lift the chicken and chants prayer that he is offering the chicken in lieu of the couple and that the couple should be spared if they have offended her. He is offering blood for blood, meat for meat, liver for liver etc etc. He will also test whether the offering is accepted with the help of AAG PADA as in other puja and later sacrifice the chicken. At last he will wet the side hair of the couple with mantra chanted water and ask them to go home without looking back and the Bur Para is over.
However all marriages do not go in happy way. It often happens that a boy and girl makes up their mind to couple, but the parents would not hear of it. In such a case the lovers elope together. It the parents of the girl is very much against the match, they have the right to take back their daughter and marry off with other boy. If notwithstanding the opposition of the parent, the lover still elope for the third time, no one has the right to interfere with them and they can marry.

**BYAH SUTH BHANGA:** The first visit to the parents and in laws by the newly wed couple is called Byah suth bhanga. There they need to stay for few days. At the time of going for the Byah Suth Bhanga visit the couple must be accompanied by the Sawala, some old lady and friends. The will also take with them presents like wine, beer, coconut, cakes, fruits and drinks, dresses etc. for the members of the father in laws family and for other relatives like grand father in law, grand mother in law, uncle in laws and aunty in laws. It is also a customary for the in laws to send back some presents at the time of return of the couple.

**BIZU BERAN:** Bizu Beran is the second compulsory visit by a newly wed couple to the relatives of the bride during the period of first Bizu after the marriage. During this visit also presents for all the relatives needed to be arranged along with wine, beer, sweets etc.

**MODERN MARRIAGE:** Now a days, the conventional way of performing marriage rite is almost over in the town area and among the educated elites. Since performance of conventional Chumulang with sacrifice of animal is not Buddhistic. So, instead of performing the Chumulang, a marriage is performed with a Buddhist monk or a devotee called LUKTHAK (who is usually an ex-monk) and who is wel versed with the marriage process. In a marriage with a monk or Lukthak a PUJO is arranged where all provisions for listening religious discourses call MANGAL SUTRA or PHAREKH like five measures of rice, one coconut, one Magal Ghat (a water pot) mango leaves, basil leaves, betel leaves, sugar cane, flowers, a big paper flower called JHONGA PHOOL nine strings of thread roll, candles or oil lamps, incense sticks, and other provisions like sweets, fruit drinks are arranged on a bog KULO (sieve). First the pujo is place in front of Buddha Idol (if arranged in the temple) or in a corner of the house. It is sanctified with Kojoi Panhee or sandal wood dipped water. After lighting candles, the couple is asked to bow and pray. Afterward the five precepts of Buddhism ie. Pancha Sheela ( ie. Not to kill, not to steal , not to tell lies, not to commit adultery and not to take intoxicants to the extend of losing sense) is administered to all the assembled, and religious discourses like KARANANIYA METTA SUTTA, MANGAL SUTTA etc are recited befitting the occasion. Afterward, the Pujo provisions are dedicated .The couple is also taught about their duties to parents, elders, youngers and to each other. Both parent also advise their wards and at lat the bride is handed over to the groom. A feast is also arranged for the occasion. Food offered to the temple .Blessing from the elders is also sought with bow and it is given by blowing air on rice and cotton and putting on their head.

Performing marriage with a monk or Lukthak is found to be cheaper than the traditional Chumulang rite. It also saves the principle of Buddhism. Hence many are opting for marriage with monk or Lukthak.

Now a days, court marriage is also done. The Chakma Autonomous District Council of Mizoram has also legalized it after codification of CHAKMA CUSTOMARY LAWS.

(Lokkhi Bhusan Chakma is 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.

L B Chakma is an authority on Chakma customary law.)
Neglect of a language: The case of Chakma language in Mizoram and Tripura

This article by MCDF Research Group highlights for the first time the official discrimination against the Chakma language and script. While the script is not recognized in Tripura, despite a strong demand made by Chakmas, there is a tendency in Mizoram to count the Chakmas as Bengalee speakers!

Introduction

THERE ARE around 1 million Chakmas in the world. They are a community with distinct culture, traditions, and speak a language having its own written script. They mostly inhabit the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh; the Arakan or Rakhine state of Myanmar; and Mizoram, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh & Assam in the North Eastern region of India. The Chakmas, though in less numbers, are also living in various parts of the world.

The Chakmas are one of the rarest of indigenous communities in the North East India having their own script which is centuries old. Yet, both the language and the script of the Chakmas have been utterly neglected by the respective state governments to the extent that this can be called criminal act.

In this article, Mizoram Chakma Development Forum (MCDF) attempts to highlight this criminal neglect of the Chakmas’ language and script in Mizoram and Tripura.

A. THE CASE OF MIZORAM

In Mizoram, Chakmas have Autonomous District Council, protected under the Constitution of India. The Chakma ADC protects and preserves the community’s culture, language and script, apart from enjoying political autonomy (though in limited measure). With a population of 71,283 which constitute 8% of Mizoram’s total population (Census 2001), Chakmas are the second largest community, after the Mizos. (See, http://censusindia.gov.in/Tables_Published/SCST/dh_st_mizoram.pdf)

But, Chakmas are very much neglected in Mizoram. This article seeks to document an aspect of that neglect, that is, Chakma language.

Height of apathy: Chakma speakers are counted as Bengalees!

In the Mizoram government’s response to questionnaire for 41st Report (for period from July 2002 to June 2003) of the National Commissioner for Linguistic Minorities (NCLM) there is no mention of Chakma as a language spoken in the state. The linguistic profile of Mizoram was mentioned as follows:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>No. of speakers</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Paite</td>
<td>7726</td>
<td>1.12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The highlight of Mizoram government’s response is the exclusion of Chakma language. The fact that the Bengali speakers were mentioned as 8.57% suggests that Chakmas have been counted as Bengalees! (Just look at the figures below; Bengali is spoken by just 1% of Mizoram’s population.) Counting of Chakmas as Bengalees is the height of discrimination and apathy against the Chakmas by the administration in Mizoram.
However, Chakmas figure prominently in the response to the questionnaire for NCLM’s 42nd Report (for the period from July 2003 to June 2004). The languages are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>No. of speakers</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mizo</td>
<td>773058</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chakma</td>
<td>71086</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindi</td>
<td>31989</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bengali</td>
<td>9774</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>2666</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Chakma language has been rightly restored as the second most spoken language in Mizoram after Mizo.

In the responses to the questionnaire for 45th Report (for the period from July 2006 to June 2007), the languages spoken are given as:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>No of speakers</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mizo</td>
<td>647849</td>
<td>72.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chakma</td>
<td>67057</td>
<td>7.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakher</td>
<td>34731</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pawi</td>
<td>24900</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paite</td>
<td>14356</td>
<td>1.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hmar</td>
<td>14240</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bengali</td>
<td>13325</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How the number of Chakma speakers came down from 71,086 to 67,057 is a mystery. On the other hand, Census 2001 counted the Chakmas as 71,283.

If we look at critically, we find the following three things:

First, it is evident that the state government of Mizoram in its response submitted to the National Commissioner for Linguistic Minorities for 41th Report counted the Chakmas as “Bengalees”.

The Mizoram govt’s response to the questionnaire for 41st Report the NCLM was that there was not a single Chakma speaker in Mizoram while Bengali speakers constituted 8.57%. This clearly indicated that all Chakmas have been counted as Bengalis!

Second, exclusion of the Chakmas as a distinct linguistic group (despite being the 2nd largest linguistic group) was height of discrimination and apathy against them, and assaults their identity as a distinct community in Mizoram; and

Third, the Mizoram government has been inconsistent with the number of speakers of various languages including Chakma.

Mizoram snubs NCLM: Evidence of apathy against minorities

Article 350B of the Constitution of India provides for “a Special Officer for linguistic minorities” to be appointed by the President whose duty shall be to “investigate all matters relating to the safeguards provided for linguistic minorities under this Constitution and report to the President upon those matters at such intervals as the President may direct, and the President shall cause all such reports to be laid before each House of Parliament, and sent to the Governments of the States concerned.” The National Commissioner for Linguistic Minorities was created under Article 350B.

The NCLM may be a constitutional authority but without any teeth. Its orders are repeatedly violated by the state government of Mizoram, without any accountability.

The 46th report (July, 2007 to June, 2008) of the National Commissioner for Linguistic Minorities painfully records -

Inspite of repeated reminders and letter to Chief Minister from the Commissioner for Linguistic Minorities, the State Government did not furnish a reply to the Questionnaire for the 46th Report of the CLM. Therefore, there is nothing new to report, than what has already been reported upon in the 45th Report of the CLM for the period July 2006 to June 2007.

The NCLM merely reproduced its earlier recommendations contained in the 45th Report as below:
i. The State Government should immediately issue suitable directions for maintenance of Advance Registers in schools to enable registration of linguistic preference of minority language students.

ii. It should make efforts to develop expertise in languages other than Mizo. It should also help in preparing the books in Lai, Mara Chakma, Paite and Hamar.

iii. The State Government should take steps to publish gist of important rules, regulations, etc. in minority languages in areas where their speakers constitute 15% or more of the local population.

iv. The State Government should publicize the safeguards available to linguistic minorities so as to ensure that speakers of minority languages are not denied their linguistic rights for want of information in this regard.

v. A firm machinery to look after the safeguards provided to the linguistic minorities is required to be established at state and district level. This should also include a monitoring committee to check action taken by the subordinate officers.

This is not the first time that the Mizoram government snubbed the NCLM. In his 44th Report (July 2005 to June 2006) the CLM also painfully notes that “Reply to the questionnaire for the Forty Fourth Report has not been received from Mizoram even after a lot of efforts. We are unable, on this account, to give information about the updated position about the implementation of the safeguards for the linguistic minorities.”

**Mizoram’s Tribal Research Institute: Mirror of discrimination**

The aim of the Mizoram’s Tribal Research Institution (TRI) is to “undertake a systematic study and research in all aspect of tribal life and economy which will help the Tribal Areas and the Government in formulating the Development and Welfare Schemes for the tribal people in the correct lines.”

Its objectives are: 1. collection of factual information about the history, social organisation, language, customs and manners, wedding, birth and death ceremonies, customary laws and usages, system of inheritance etc. for each particular tribe resident in the state; 2. study the old monographs and writings on the customs, social organisations, and other subjects; 3. collection of folk songs, folk tales, prayers, stories, festivals, myths and fables; 4. evaluation of the Welfare Works taken up since Independence particularly noting their impact on the mind and psychology of the people showing which of them harmonise with their modern way of life and development, and 5. to take up social economic survey of each Tribal village.

But the Mizoram’s TRI situated at Aizawl has done nothing for the Chakma tribe. This reflects the biasness against the Chakma community.

The 44th Report stated that “The TRI is not working on any language other than Mizo and is not producing any books in them. At least the folklore of these tribes can be published in their own language. TRI can also help prepare the books in Chakma, Lai and Mara.” Similarly, the 45th Report recommended that the Tribal Research Institute “should make efforts to develop expertise in languages other than Mizo. It should also help in preparing the books in Lai, Mara Chakma, Paite and Hamar.”

**No monitoring Body**

No independent body has been set up to monitor and implement the safeguards provided to the Linguistic Minorities.

The Mizoram government refused to provide answers in a lot of questions, mainly relating to machinery for implementation of the safeguards of rights of linguistic minorities. It did not reply to questions for 45th Report concerning the safeguard mechanisms.

It is surprising that the Mizoram government while responding to questionnaire for 42nd Report stated “Items 43 to 47 come under the purview of State’s Home Department”. “Items 43 to 47” related to Machinery for Implementation of Safeguards and Pamphlets in minority languages.

**Minorities’ silence: No complaint**

The state government has stated that no petition/complaint has been filed by any linguistic minority group. When asked to indicate major problems faced by the government and administration in actual implementation of safeguards provided to linguistic minorities, the Mizoram government replied “N.A” (Not Applicable) (Response to questionnaire for 40th Report).
B. THE CASE OF TRIPURA

The National Commissioner for Linguistic Minorities in its 46th Report stated with respect to Tripura that “the performance of the state government in the implementation of safeguards for linguistic minorities can hardly be termed to be satisfactory. The state government ought to sensitize itself towards the genuine grievances of linguistic minorities and initiate remedial steps for their redress.”

The crowd in the streets of Agartala on 18 August 2011 inspired some confidence in those Chakmas who are struggling for the right to use their own script called Ôjhaapaat’. Hundreds of Chakmas marched in the streets of Agartala, capital of Tripura, holding placards and colourful banners written in Chakma, Bengali and Roman scripts demanding official recognition of Chakma script and its introduction in schools. A banner read, “Chakma script is our heart”.

The protestors were trying to convey a stern message to the government of Tripura. That is: there is also a script called “Ojhaapaat” which is Chakmas’ own script which is in use for centuries, and the government must respect their right to read and write in their own script rather than imposing a script used by the dominant community in the state.

Imposition of Bengali script: Naked assault on Chakmas’ identity

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Persons belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (18th December 1992) states that “States shall protect the existence and the national or ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic identity of minorities within their respective territories and shall encourage conditions for the promotion of that identity.” (Article 1). The Indian Constitution also provides several safeguards for minority communities. Article 29 (1) of the Constitution explicitly states that “any section of citizens” has the right to conserve the “distinct language, script or culture of its own”.

However, the state government of Tripura has sought to directly assault the Chakmas’ identity by imposing on them the Bengali script.

As per the latest 46th Report (for the period July 2007 to June 2008) of the National Commissioner for Linguistic Minorities (NCLM), there are 64,690 Chakma speakers constituting 2.55% of Tripura’s population. Yet, the script of the Chakmas is utterly neglected and not recognized. Instead of introducing the Chakma script, the Tripura government has imposed the Bengali script on Chakmas against the wishes of the community in gross violation of the rights of the linguistic minorities provided by and under the Constitution of India.

Article 350 A of the Indian Constitution states that it shall be the duty of every state government to provide adequate facilities for instruction in mother-tongue at primary stage. As per the 46th report of the NCLM, 27 Chakma medium schools have been recognized by the Tripura government. But the problem is the Tripura government has separated the language from its script with dubious intentions.

Failure of Autonomous District Council

There are two official committees for the advancement of Chakma language in Tripura: one at state level headed by Arun Kumar Chakma, Member of Legislative Assembly, and the other, at Tripura Tribal Area Autonomous District Council headed by Radha Charan Debbarma, Executive Member in charge of Education of the Autonomous District Council. Both the Committees are ineffective. The Autonomous District Council level committee reportedly met only once since it was created. State level Advisory Committee is a failure. In fact, the state of Tripura claims that Bengali script was introduced for Chakmas as per the resolution passed by the Advisory Committee in 1998.

It is understandable that the Tripura state government, led and dominated by Bengalis, has refused to recognize the Chakma script but neither is the Tripura Tribal Area Autonomous District Council which is headed by fellow tribals seemed interested. The Autonomous District Council, if it wanted, could have followed the Chakma Autonomous District Council in Mizoram by introducing the Chakma script at ADC level. But it has not done anything like that. It is interesting to know that the Chakma Language Development Committee of the TTAADC is headed by a non-Chakma. (http://ttaade.nic.in/LANGUAGEWINGWEB%20VERSION.pdf). It is not about the community of the person who is heading the Chakma Language Development Committee, but about empowering that community for safeguarding of whose rights the committee was constituted.
Lead articles:
Views that matter
Has the Chakmas’ population in Mizoram really increased ‘abnormally’?
- Myths and reality

This article by MCDF Research Group examines, for the first time, the validity of the allegation that Chakma population has increased abnormally in Mizoram. This article presents a critical analysis of official statistics and data. As this article establishes, there is no abnormal growth of Chakma population in the state.

I. Introduction

The Chakmas are the second largest ethnic community in Mizoram state in North East India. At Census 2001, they constituted 8% of the total population. The Chakma Autonomous District Council (CADC) was constituted under the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India in 1972 in Lawngtlai district in southern part of Mizoram. Chakmas also live in two more districts—Lunglei and Mamit, which are outside the jurisdiction of the CADC.

The tragedy is that the Chakmas who fought against the Mughals to retain their territorial independence and to keep the CHT a part of India at the time of India’s independence in 1947, are being asked to prove their Indian-ness from time to time.

The allegation is that the population of the Chakmas have risen abnormally in Mizoram due to infiltration from Bangladesh. However, any allegation must be backed with authenticated data. Any defence also must be backed with authenticated data.

This short report is a comprehensive study to find out the truth.

2. About Chakmas in Mizoram

The total population of Chakmas in Mizoram was 71,283 at Census 2001 which is 8 per cent of Mizoram’s total population (888,573). Out of Mizoram’s eight districts they live in three districts only, viz. Lawngtlai, Lunglei and Mamit. (See Map, right)

The Chakmas are a distinct ethnic community with unique culture, traditions, folklore, traditional attire, songs and dances, festivals of their own. They speak a language called Chakma, and have their own script (called Arog) to write the language.

The Chakmas are Buddhist. Importantly, Chakmas are one of the three ethnic minority communities having their own Autonomous District Councils in southern Mizoram (the other two being Lai and Mara).

The Chakma Autonomous District Council (CADC) was created on 29th April 1972 when Mizoram was being upgraded into a Union Territory from a district in Assam. On 20 February 1987 the Mizoram state was born.
3. Chakmas’ population: Myth versus the truth

The “myth” is that the Chakma population in Mizoram has increased disproportionately or abnormally in the last a few years due to mainly—the allegation goes—illegal infiltration from Bangladesh. However, official figures/data do not at all back this claim, as succinctly pointed out below.

Before we analyse the thing, it must be mentioned that population of every species increases over the years. Here, the real attention should be given to whether there has been an “unnatural”/abnormal increase in Chakmas’ population.

A. District wise analysis of population growth

Below in Table 1 is the extract from “Census of India 2011– Provisional Population Totals—Mizoram, given at Page 30. An analysis of the data presented at Table 1 shows that there is nothing “abnormal” in the growth rate of Chakmas in three Chakma inhabited districts namely Lawngtlai, Lunglei and Mamit between 1971 to 2011. In fact, the percentage of decadal growth of population in these three districts has gradually decreased as explained below.

i. Lawngtlai district

Lawngtlai district is inhabited by Chakma, Lai, Mizo and smaller communities like Bawm and Brus. The Chakma ADC and Lai ADC are situated in this district. While the CADC is Chakma majority, LADC is Lai majority.

The percentage of decadal growth has consistently fallen from 50.77 in 1971-81 to 46.68 in 1981-91 to 34.87 in 1991-2001 to 34.08 in 2001-11. Further, the increase in population in Lawngtlai district between 1991-2001 and 2001-2011 is almost the same, and nothing abnormal. Hence, the population growth in Lawngtlai district is not unrealistic.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District Code</th>
<th>State/District</th>
<th>Percentage Decadal Variation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mizoram</td>
<td>10.64 7.90 26.42 22.81 28.42 35.61 24.93 48.55 39.70 28.82 22.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>Mamit</td>
<td>- - - - - - 72.40 23.57 -2.77 36.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02</td>
<td>Kolasib</td>
<td>- - - - - - 42.43 26.90 35.25 25.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03</td>
<td>Aizawl</td>
<td>- - - - - - 68.30 58.73 38.07 24.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04</td>
<td>Champhai</td>
<td>- - - - - - 29.69 30.28 29.84 16.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05</td>
<td>Serchhip</td>
<td>- - - - - - 9.95 22.27 17.82 19.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06</td>
<td>Lunglei</td>
<td>- - - - - - 43.22 28.79 23.16 12.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07</td>
<td>Lawngtlai</td>
<td>- - - - - - 50.77 46.68 34.87 34.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08</td>
<td>Saiha</td>
<td>- - - - - - 63.93 57.75 34.80 19.71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * Mizo District became UT of Mizoram in 1972.

ii. Lunglei district:

The Buddhist (Chakma) population in this district is 22,429. The majority are the Mizos.

The percentage of decadal growth has consistently fallen from 43.22 in 1971-81 to 28.79 in 1981-91 to 23.16 in 1991-2001 to 12.29 in 2001-11. Hence, the question of abnormal growth of Chakmas in this district does not arise.

iii. Mamit district

The Buddhist (Chakma) population in this district is 8,579 which constitute 13.66% of the total population. The majority are the Mizos.

The percentage of decadal growth has sharply fallen from 72.40 in 1971-81 to 23.57 in 1981-91 to -2.77 in 1991-2001. This is the only district in Mizoram having seen a negative decadal growth.

In 2001-2011, the percentage of population growth increased to 36.59 due to the repatriation of thousands of Brus from the relief camps in Tripura under the supervision of the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Population growth in Serchip district

While all the three Chakma inhabited districts namely Mamit, Lunglei and Lawngtlai recorded constant decease in percentage of decadal growth of population, a proper study of the percentage of decadal variation in population (Table 1) in Mizo inhabited SERCHIP district throws interesting light.

The percentage of decadal variation in population in SERCHIP district shows a sharp increase from 9.95 in 1971-81 to 22.27 in 1981-91. Even the decadal growth increased from 17.82% in 1991-2001 to 19.12% in 2001-2011 while in all other districts, the decadal growth rate increased.

B. Block wise analysis of population growth

Table 2 provides the block-wise population growth in Mizoram. It is taken from the official report “Statistical Abstract of Mizoram - 2009” released by the Department of Economics & Statistics, government of Mizoram, Aizawl.

Out of total 22 Rural Development Blocks, Chakmas villages are situated only in 5 RD blocks namely Zawlnuam, West Phaileng, Bungmum, Lungsen, and Chawngte.

Now, from Table 2 let us take these five Chakma inhabited RD Blocks (including Mizos and other non-Chakma population) and see the variation in population from 1981 to 2001.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Block</th>
<th>Population in 1981</th>
<th>Population in 2001</th>
<th>% of increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zawlnuam</td>
<td>24,444</td>
<td>27,693</td>
<td>13.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Phaileng</td>
<td>16,838</td>
<td>21,177</td>
<td>25.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bungmum</td>
<td>12,239</td>
<td>15,821</td>
<td>29.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lungsen</td>
<td>21,127</td>
<td>30,648</td>
<td>45.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chawngte</td>
<td>16,983</td>
<td>34,529</td>
<td>103.31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Except Chawngte Block, none of the rest four Blocks have witnessed more than 45% growth rate. Chawngte (or Kamala Nagar) is the headquarters of Chakma Autonomous District Council and Chakmas from other districts of Mizoram continuously migrate to Chawngte for jobs/ income. Secondly, considering the 164% population growth in Tlangnuam Block, 112% in Tuipang, 111% in Lawngtlai (see below), Chawngte’s population growth rate is comparably far lesser.

Population growth rate in some non-Chakma inhabited Blocks are given below. The abnormal rate of population growth is for anyone to see.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Block</th>
<th>Population in 1981</th>
<th>Population in 2001</th>
<th>% of increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tlangnuam</td>
<td>93,769</td>
<td>2,47,703</td>
<td>164.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khawzawl</td>
<td>35,807</td>
<td>65,779</td>
<td>83.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunglei</td>
<td>34,530</td>
<td>66,111</td>
<td>91.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawngtlai</td>
<td>18,517</td>
<td>39,091</td>
<td>111.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuipang</td>
<td>22,143</td>
<td>47,084</td>
<td>112.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 2: Block-wise population of Mizoram


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Name of Block</th>
<th>1981 (persons)</th>
<th>1991 (persons)</th>
<th>2001 Male</th>
<th>2001 Female</th>
<th>2001 Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Zawlnum</td>
<td>24,444</td>
<td>30,853</td>
<td>14,386</td>
<td>13,307</td>
<td>27,693</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>W. Phaileng</td>
<td>16,838</td>
<td>21,591</td>
<td>11,487</td>
<td>9,690</td>
<td>21,177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Reiek</td>
<td>10,973</td>
<td>12,128</td>
<td>7,241</td>
<td>6,674</td>
<td>13,915</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Thingdawl</td>
<td>35,351</td>
<td>44,833</td>
<td>31,927</td>
<td>29,119</td>
<td>61,046</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Darlawn</td>
<td>18,066</td>
<td>20,983</td>
<td>12,370</td>
<td>11,799</td>
<td>24,169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Phullen</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6,368</td>
<td>5,969</td>
<td>12,337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Aibawk</td>
<td>11,671</td>
<td>14,439</td>
<td>8,171</td>
<td>7,816</td>
<td>15,987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Tlangnuam</td>
<td>93,769</td>
<td>1,70,667</td>
<td>1,26,399</td>
<td>1,21,304</td>
<td>2,47,703</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Thingsuthlia</td>
<td>20,638</td>
<td>27,095</td>
<td>18,635</td>
<td>16,551</td>
<td>35,186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Ngopa</td>
<td>20,956</td>
<td>23,347</td>
<td>8,913</td>
<td>8,449</td>
<td>17,362</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Khawzawl</td>
<td>35,807</td>
<td>50,192</td>
<td>34,036</td>
<td>31,743</td>
<td>65,779</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Khawbung</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9,964</td>
<td>9,634</td>
<td>19,598</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Serchhip</td>
<td>23,428</td>
<td>29,993</td>
<td>17,958</td>
<td>17,562</td>
<td>35,520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>E. Lungdar</td>
<td>28,885</td>
<td>32,344</td>
<td>9,834</td>
<td>9,368</td>
<td>19,202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Burghmun</td>
<td>12,239</td>
<td>15,549</td>
<td>8,486</td>
<td>7,335</td>
<td>15,821</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Lungsen</td>
<td>21,127</td>
<td>26,496</td>
<td>15,932</td>
<td>14,716</td>
<td>30,648</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Lunglei</td>
<td>34,530</td>
<td>48,493</td>
<td>34,432</td>
<td>31,679</td>
<td>66,111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Hnahthial</td>
<td>18,615</td>
<td>20,877</td>
<td>12,552</td>
<td>12,091</td>
<td>24,643</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Chawnte</td>
<td>16,983</td>
<td>24,870</td>
<td>17,956</td>
<td>16,573</td>
<td>34,529</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Lawngtla</td>
<td>18,517</td>
<td>29,330</td>
<td>20,820</td>
<td>18,271</td>
<td>39,091</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Sangau</td>
<td>8,777</td>
<td>10,746</td>
<td>7,101</td>
<td>6,871</td>
<td>13,972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Tuipang</td>
<td>22,143</td>
<td>34,930</td>
<td>24,141</td>
<td>22,943</td>
<td>47,084</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total:** 4,93,757  6,89,756  4,59,109  4,29,464  8,88,573
Flight to Sittwe:

On 22 January 2011 at 2:30pm, I boarded a plane at Yangon Airport bound for Sittwe. Despite the flight delay I was happy that I was going to Rakhine state. My friends in Yangon gave me a list of Chakma villages in northern Rakhine. My initial plan was to visit Mrauk U. But my friends insisted I must visit Buthidaung. After 1:45 hours of scenic flight we arrived at Sittwe Airport. Sittwe is surrounded by murky water on three sides. Like many other Myanmar cities, Sittwe is dotted with bell shaped golden pagodas.

Towards Mrauk U:

On 23rd January at 2:00 pm I went to the ferry terminal to board a boat bound for Buthidaung. However, two police officers did not allow me to go. They asked me why I wanted to visit Buthidaung. So, I had to go to Mrauk U by boat on 24th January. Every port or terminal in Rakhine state has a police check post. Their job is to make sure that foreigners do not venture into restricted areas and Rohingyas do not travel from one port to another without permission. The Kaladan River at Sittwe is huge and rather looks like sea. It might be very dangerous to travel during the monsoon.

Search for Chakma Villages:

In the morning of 25th January 2011, I hired a bicycle from the hotel and went on to explore Mrauk U’s ancient temples. After visiting 4 or 5 temples, I decided to find out the Chakma villages near Mrauk U. I asked a young tourist guide about the Daignet villages. But he could not tell me, it might be due to my pronunciation. The Rakhines know the Chakmas as Daignets. Frustrated, I headed to the Mrauk U bazaar. There I showed the list of villages given to me by my friends in Yangon, to some people. One of them told me he knew some villages and one village by the name of Nankya was only 4 miles from Mrauk U. He told me the village was inhabited both by Rakhines and Daignets. Another girl at a nearby restaurant who spoke English told me that Nankya was 6 miles from Mrauk U. Immediately I decided to go there with a hired bicycle. I bought a hat to protect myself from the scorching heat. On the way, I met two Rohingya boys. I asked them in Chittagong dialect the direction of Nankya. They showed the way. I asked them whether there were Chammos. They assured me there were indeed Chammos.

Maze of Names:

Bengalis aka Rohingyas refer to Rakhines as Moghs and Chakmas as Chammos. The Rakhines refer to Rohingyas as Muslims and among themselves more derogatory term Kulas which literally mean blacks. The Rakhines refer to Chakmas of Rakhine state as Daignets which literally mean ‘armoured warriors’. They refer to Chakmas who live in hills for Jhum or shifting cultivation as Taungchongya. They also use the generic term Shaks which includes the Chakmas, Taungchongyas and Daignets. The ethnic Burmans refer to Chakmas as Thit or Thet; however it should not be mistaken with a small tribe Thet in Rakhine state who number less than 500. The Baruas in Rakhine state are known as Maramagyi. They mainly live in the urban areas of Sittwe, Buthidaung and Maungdaw. The Kuki tribes in Rakhine state are known as Chin (pronounced Shin). The Kuki/Chin tribes in both Mizoram and Chin states are Christians. The same tribes in Rakhine state are exclusively Buddhists. The Tripuras in Rakhine state are known as Mros and they should not be mistaken with Murongs or Murungs of CHT. The Tripuras of Tripura state and CHT are predominantly Hindus. The Mros of Rakhine state are predominantly Buddhists.
Bike ride to Nankya:

I found the eastern exit of Mrauk U city and the road to Nankya. The road was unpaved and pebbled. It was very difficult journey. I met a Rohingya woman and asked her in Chittagong dialect how far the Nankya village was. She told me it was another 4 miles. She cautioned me there was a police check post ahead after a bridge. She advised me not to stop at the check post, because if I did the police might prevent me from going beyond the bridge. After riding on bike for another two miles, I came across a Rohingya village named Paungdok. After the village I came across the bridge and the check post was on the left hand side of the road. Fortunately there was no sentry at the check post and there were 3 men in civilian clothes chatting on the right hand side of the road. After riding for another mile I arrived at Nankya village.

Nankya village:

I looked for Daignets aka Chakmas. I introduced myself to the Chakmas and told them the reason for my visit. They carried my bike and guided me to the front yard of a house. After riding on bike for an hour and travelling for 6 miles finally I found the village at 12:00 noon. They tried to gather as many villagers as they could. Some of them squatted on ground and some of them sat on traditional stools. We had discussion on various issues. I asked them about the number of households in the village, their livelihood, their nearest school, their nearest hospital, the location of other Chakma villages in Mrauk U region etc. Nankya was a mixed village. Rakines live in the northern half and Chakmas live in the southern half. There were 96 households in the southern half alone. The villagers of Nankya were mainly traders and farmers. Their village is located on the western bank of Lemro River. There are several Chakma villages on the eastern bank of the river. They mainly studied up to primary level in Burmese in the local primary school. They had 2 graduates, one of them was un-employed and the other was working as teacher in the local primary school. Their nearest hospitals were in Mrauk U and Myaungbwe.

I asked them why they were so far away from the core Chakma population in Buthidaung. The answer I expected was nomadic life of Jhum or shifting cultivation brought them there. The response I got was chilling. Soon after the British granted independence to Burma in 1948, there was a big riot between the Rohingyas aka Bengalis and the indigenous people in Buthidaung-Maungdaw area. The Rohingyas aka Bengalis did no want to live under Buddhist dominated Burma. They wanted a separate dominion or join Pakistan. The Rohingyas were armed and supported by their coreligionists of the British Indian Army. According to them half of the Chakma population vanished in that riot and they were forced out of their land. They had to leave behind their ancestral land in Buthidaung and settle in Lemro valley. What surprised me was the mutual ignorance, scant knowledge we had about them and they had about us. For example they don’t know the name of the current Chakma king. I told them it was Raja Devashish Roy.

Mejelegung village:

On 26 January 2011, I went back to Nankya with the bike. I had lunch in the village. The cooking style is very similar to ours. Vegetables are cooked in low heat with sprinkle of dry fish. The meal also included mashed green chilli and dry fish salad. After lunch we set off on boat for villages on the eastern bank. After about 45 minutes of boat ride we stopped at Mejelegung village. It has over 100 households. There was another Chakma village east of Mejelegung and on the foothills of Rakhine Yoma. Just like in Nankya, the villagers gathered in the front yard of a house. The villagers are mainly farmers. We held discussion on various issues like where they sell their farm produce, what their total population was in Rakhine state etc. They mainly sell their farm produce in Mrauk U.
They have only one graduate in the whole village and he is unemployed. On population they told me, a retired Chakma officer of the Burmese Army conducted an internal census 15 years ago in 1996 and the number returned 60,000. By now they are convinced the number had grown to at least 80,000. I saw large number of children in every Chakma village I had visited. Chakmas of Rakhine state have high birth rate. I am sure the number 80,000 is not only possible it's rather a conservative estimate.

**Lappangung village:**

After more than an hour at Mejelegung we set off for another village Lappangung. Just like Mejelegung, Lappangung is on the bank of Lemro and halfway between Mejelegung and Nankya. The village has 60 households. The villagers are mainly farmers. I was very amazed by the fact that we could still speak in the same language after many centuries of separation. However there are also some differences between their and our vocabularies. I was careful not to use Bengali words while speaking with them. They still use original Chakma words in numbering system. For example the number 21 is ‘huri ek’ not ‘ekush’, 96 is ‘nobboi chhoi’ not ‘chhia nobboi’. Education is ‘agar’ not ‘lega-para’. Village is ‘ruwa’ not ‘adaam’. After about an hour we left the village and arrived at Nankya around 5pm. I bade goodbye to my friends and left Nankya at 5:30pm.

**Culture of Arakan Chakmas:**

Arakan is divided into districts, townships and villages. Majority of the Chakmas live in the villages of Maungdaw, Buthidaung, Kyauktaw and Mrauk U townships. There may be Chakma villages in Paletwa township of Chin state. Chakmas in Rakhine are known as Daignets to the Rakhine people. But Chakmas do not call themselves Daignets, they prefer to call themselves Chakmas. Burmese people do not have surnames or family names. For that matter Chakmas in Arakan do not use surnames. The Chakmas in Arakan use Burmese name to register themselves for schools or ration cards, the state does not allow non-Burmese names. They learn Burmese in school.

Over the centuries Chakmas of Arakan have lost much of their language. They added many Rakhine and Burmese words just like we did many Bengali words. However, they have retained many Chakma words which we lost. They speak in an accent similar to the Chakmas of southern Chadigang (i.e. CHT). They lost the skill to weave traditional Chakma clothes which we still retain. The men mainly wear Lungi and women wear sarong like dress Thami instead of traditional pinon-haadi. As a result, unlike in Tripura, Mizoram, Arunachal and CHT its very difficult or impossible to distinguish the Chakma women from the Rakhines. They are very interested to learn how to weave traditional Chakma clothes ‘pinon’, ‘haadi’ and ‘burgi’. They asked me if I could bring ‘alaam’ or formula for making Chakma costume pinon/haadi in future visit. Their food habit is similar to ours in Bangladesh and India. Their favourite foods are shrimp paste or Chidol.

Compared to Rakhines and Bengalis, the Chakmas are economically very backward. They excessively depend on agriculture for livelihood. They build their houses with bamboo, thatched roof and timber. They have limited knowledge about the Chakmas of Bangladesh or India. Yet they are very proud of being Chakmas and have a strong sense of fraternity with Chakmas of Bangladesh and India.

Chakmas of Chadigang and Rakhine state have been living under different dominions for more than 800 years. Long ago northern Rakhine state was part of the Chakma kingdom. The Chakma king lost the territory to the Rakhine king in 13th century AD. After 8 centuries of separation we still speak the same language, profess the same religion and have the same food habit. It's a miracle that they did not assimilate into the Rakhine culture. ■
MOANOGHAR IS a social, non-political, non-profit and voluntary organization, founded in 1974 by a group of Buddhist monks. Its initial vocation was to provide education to the children of the region’s ethnic indigenous minorities. It was at the aftermath of the Liberation War that was particularly bloody and where the indigenous inhabitants were some of the worst victims of atrocities.

Moanoghar was founded on a simple basis. Buddhist temples receive donations from the devotees. The monks at that time, decided to spend these donations for the education of the poor orphan children, rather than spending for other purposes such, construction and/or renovation of temples. Indeed, throughout its existence, Moanoghar is run by public donations, government grants and occasionally, support from abroad.

The above two paragraphs are previous situation and history of Moanoghar in brief. I was working with CARE Bangladesh from the year 2000. At that time the project where I was working focusing with few government schools which basically non functional and with community schools. At that time I had found that community took so many initiative on education but, for less fund support they could not work on it fully. But if they get fund support they can do so many things. My focus is basically on community initiative, it’s about my recent visit to Bandarban. I look after one education program at Bandarban. I will discuss both issues in brief. My main focus is on community participation and creation of taste of blood for education inside community.

My last visit at Bandarban was mainly focus on what kind of community initiative going on and what was its importance. Bandarban is the most remote hilly terrain of among three districts of Chittagong Hill Tracts. Here community set up schools and started to support teachers salary. But it was not regular; it was depend on income of community. On that situation local organization GRAUS submitted a project proposal to Manusher Jonno Foundation focusing those community schools. On the project of GRAUS they focus on teachers’ salary, school renovation, teachers training and Income Generation Activity for community schools. From this income community can pay teachers salary and run school renovation other cost involvement of schools. Each school has one SMC (School Management Committee). They lease some land for cultivate ginger or orchard or garden or nursery. From the selling of ginger fruit or tree they get some money. According to their group policy paper they will create a fund first then by using those funds they did other activity for more income. From the portion of income they started to pay teachers salary. The initial income generation fund was bearded by project. Each school need one and half years to fully become self sufficient. It was one kind community support. The other community support I tried to focus in here is on temple base hostel support provided by community. On 23rd August last month I had visited one school, where temple committee is supporting 10 students, who were come from 15 to 20 kilometers far away of their school. Here I had found that community supporting six girls and four boys. They arrange bed for student inside meditation hall of temple on temporary basis. The temple committee provided food support for them. Project only provide two hundred taka for each student as management cost. As School Management Committee was well about their roles and responsibility in the very initial stage of the project, now NGO is gradually transferring so many activities to SMC gradually. I will write another write up on this.

My second focus is on Moanoghar. As I briefly described the history of Moanoghar on above. Once it was supported by foreign donor agency and government. But by the year 1999, foreign donation was stopped and government took the responsibility of Moanoghar. This funding was stopped at mid 2007. My involvement with Moanoghar was in the year 2006. Manusher Jonno Foundation was approved a project for Moanoghar on the same year. By default I was responsible and monitor the project. It was basically IT, human rights education and life skill support for Moanoghar children. When government support was ended after one year, most of the children and staffs of Moanoghar were panicked. They did not know what to do. As Manusher Jonno Foundation had
no mandate to full support like government, so I myself was worried. I opened a Facebook group for fund support and add so many people. Some people started to sponsor children of Moanoghar, but it was not up to the mark. By this time, I was trying my best writing to different former Moanoghar students and others. Some of them responded to my appeal. On 2007 Rotary Club (Kawran Bazar zone) interested to work with Moanoghar. By this time they visited the Moanoghar and decided to work. They are searching for key contact. One of my brother-in-laws who was involved with them proposed my name. Finally they decided to meet with me. I met with them and discussed the Moanoghar issue. As I am not an insider of Moanoghar, I decided to involve someone from Moanoghar. Finally I involved Kirti Nishan Chakma in the discussion with Rotary Club. I remember during my first meeting with them they promised me to start small scale activity with the assurance that if Moanoghar accomplish smoothly then they will increase their support. They kept their promise. By this time I involved some of my colleagues as sponsors who included my boss and her family. Here I have to thank Australian citizens, who support and sponsor Moanoghar children, such as Kabita Chakma and so many others via Bodhi, an NGO. There are also organization like Belo Sadak and so many others who are contributing to Moanoghar. Here I want to specially thank Dristipat freelance organization who are working as advocate for Moanoghar. I started my journey with Moanoghar with no hope but now I have found so many friends beside me. This proves that small initiatives could become bigger initiatives with hard work, commitment and cooperation of people.

The students of Moanoghar are doing excellent academically. The results of the Moanaghar students in the last Secondary School Certificates (SSC) examination, declared in May 2011, were inspiring, although a further improvement is necessary. A total 138 of students from Moanoghar took part in the exams. Among them 107 students passed which amounts to a pass rate of 79% - higher than the national average and even surpassed Moanoghar School’s own previous records. Of the 107 students who passed, one student obtained grade ‘A+’, 11 students obtained grade ‘A’ and another 20 students received grade ‘A-’ (source: Moanoghar news bulletin April-June 2011). In Bangladesh national education system ‘A+’ is the highest grade for school certificate exam, ‘A’ is second highest and ‘A-’ is the third highest.

There is another good news from Moanoghar. Moanoghar received two lac taka from Trust Bank Dhaka and received 1 lac taka from Dristipat as donation. Moanoghar launched a website www.moanoghar.org. Now around 1200 students from three hill districts of Chittagong Hill Tracts are receiving education support via Moanoghar. This year Moanoghar started language class on Chakma, Marma and Tripura. Gradually it will expand course on other indigenous languages.

It’s my cherished dream to help the children of Chittagong Hill Tracts to access basic and higher education. I am dreaming and moving to establish Moanoghar as a university like Shanti Niketan. I think to fulfill my dream I have to wait only one more year. This year Manusher Jonno Foundation and one organization from abroad will be starting a training program. This program will expand gradually. With some help from my friends, both at home and abroad, I am hoping to upgrade Moanghar as an institution of higher study. It is part of my future plan. Hopefully, with the help of “friends of Moanoghar” we can together advance this plan and achieve it.

(The writer is Program Manager at Manusher Jonno Foundation, Bangladesh)
We would again like to congratulate our friends at The Chakma Voice and the Mizoram Chakma Development Forum (MCDF) for another year of compassionate and thoughtful social activism. Reviewing the last twelve months of the activities of our own group (Benevolent Organisation for Development, Health and Insight –BODHI), I see that we have had a period of evaluation, reflection, consolidation and enrichment.

**Evaluation**

For some time we have wanted to increase the efficacy of our projects scattered across Asia but predominately in India and Bangladesh. The opportunity arose to work with Mr Krishan Chakma, who has previously worked in India with sSTEP Northeast and ActionAid. We followed his work with the Guwahati railway children for about eighteen months on Facebook before asking him to evaluate our project with the SNEHA school in Diyun, Arunachal Pradesh, India. We were so happy with the result that we then hired Krish for one year as Program Coordinator BODHI South Asia. His job is to meet with local partners at project sites, review the projects, make recommendations about their functioning and long-term viability, ensure that our funds are used properly and encourage regular reporting by local partners. In addition to Diyun, Krish has already travelled on BODHI’s behalf to Mizoram, Kolkata, Bodh Gaya, Delhi and Pune in India, to meet partners and potential partners. He will go to Dhaka and the Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bangladesh early in 2012.

We at BODHI have long been aware of the limitations of not being physically located in India. We also regret that we do not speak any local languages. Both facts make it more difficult to follow our philosophy of trying to work especially with people who are the most neglected, disenfranchised and ignored by traditional aid. An example is Chakma Mahila Samity (CMS), the women’s group in Mizoram. Our relationship with the good women at CMS has always been cordial but communication has been difficult, not only due to language and cultural barriers but also because of the infrastructural aspects of computers and reliable power supplies. Krish Chakma is helping us to reduce these obstacles and to resume the mobile medical camps.

**Reflection**

Discussions among BODHI directors and advisers have ushered in a period of reflection. One issue concerning us (like many small NGOs) is how to attract and keep younger donors. Many of our current donors have been with us since the beginning or the early days, and we treasure that (ie two decades). We hope that through the social media (website, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn), we are increasing the chance of building a community for BODHI that will persist after us, if possible.
Consolidation

Some of our projects have reached the end of their BODHI lifespan; it is time to let them go. Doing this allows new ones to appear—and we have two in development.

One local partner with whom we are very happy to continue working is the SNEHA school in Diyun, Arunachal Pradesh. Mr Susanta Chakma fundraises tirelessly and has recently found a donor to fund construction of more permanent school buildings. We think the Diyun schools reflect excellent values and a realistic curriculum to equip the children for modern life and its challenges.

Enrichment

Our lives are enriched by association with the Chakma community in many ways. One example is our Community Adviser Kabita Chakma in Sydney, Australia, who is always available for discussion.

Kabita recently made an interesting post on our Facebook page about a new approach to foreign aid called Cash on Delivery. ‘This tries to improve the effectiveness of aid by increasing accountability, aligning the objectives of funders and recipients and sharing information about what works.’ It emphasises outcomes rather than inputs. ‘At its core is a contract between funders and recipients that stipulates a fixed payment for each unit of confirmed progress toward an agreed-upon goal. Once the contract is struck, the funder takes a hands-off approach, allowing the recipient the freedom and responsibility to achieve the goal on its own. Payment is made only after progress toward the goal is independently verified by a third party.’ Most of the book focuses on primary education and presents a COD Aid proposal for Mexico’s upper secondary schools. While it targets aid on a government-to-government level, it is interesting to think about adapting this approach to a small NGO-donor relationship. On the negative side, it would seem to require a lot of policing. Also, it stresses tangible, immediately measurable outcomes, and sometimes benefits take time to ripen. You can read this book by going to http://www.cgdev.org/content/publications/detail/1423949/ and clicking on the link to Table of Contents (at the bottom). Then click on whatever chapter you wish to read.

Projects

As mentioned above, we are consolidating projects and deepening relationships with existing local partners. We have two project commitments, but other than that, sorry, we’re not accepting new project proposals. We have discontinued one project in northern Thailand and substituted another one for it. The Comprehensive Sexual and Reproductive Health Program for Underprivileged Young People in Northern Thailand begins in early January, 2012 and runs for one year.

The aim of the project is to provide holistic and comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services to underprivileged young people (aged 24 years old and
medical treatment for STIs, family planning materials including condoms and contraceptive pills). Such a program will function effectively in promoting sexual and reproductive health as well as preventing illnesses or other negative consequences of sexual risk behaviors among this group. The services will be based on adolescent-friendly atmosphere and will employ psychosocial and medical basis aiming to ensure the better and sustainable service for them. Moreover, the program will examine the change in young people’s perceptions and attitudes regarding sexuality, with respect to gender sensitivity, and their sexual practices. Clinics will be located in Chiang Mai and Lamphun.

We hope this will become a model for similar programs in other areas, possibly with Chakmas in CHT and India; to this end, Kabita Chakma will meet with the project director in Chiang Mai in December, 2011. Please feel free to contact me for further information, and watch our website for details.

A new newsletter, BODHI Times, is available on our website at www.bodhi.net.au/html/bodhitimes.html. Please join our Facebook discussion group at https://www.facebook.com/groups/bodhi.group/, became a Tweeter at http://twitter.com/#!/BODHIgroup, see us on LinkedIn and visit the website at www.bodhi.net.au/html.

We are always happy to chat with you, so please feel free to contact us at bodhiaus@gmail.com.

(The writer is President, BODHI, Australia. She along with her husband Colin co-founded BODHI in 1989. Susan can be contacted at csbutler@sctelco.net.au. Susan is also a published writer of fiction and non-fiction. To know her literary works, readers are encouraged to visit: http://www.susanbutler.com.au)

**MCDF in the news**

**A few selected news items of 2011**


“Damdawi lam mumal loh vangin Parva-I khuaah mipui an mangang”, Vanglaini, Mizoram, 9 May 2011


By Paritosh Chakma

Introduction:
What future holds for the Chakmas in Mizoram? Will they manage to survive and if yes, under what situation and status?

Mindful of the present situation of the Chakmas in Mizoram, these questions often prop up in my mind. These are questions related to the future. These questions are pertinent, as we no longer can brush aside the realities of our situation in the state.

The threats, which are of political nature, coming from some fringe elements will always be there. They can call the Chakmas whatever they like - “foreigners”, “illegal infiltrators”, “not sons of the soil”, “non Mizos” etc – but the matter of the fact is that every citizen is equal in the eyes of the Indian laws and each citizen will be protected against such threats to their safety and security. I think today the Chakmas are much more capable of (though not adequate) safeguarding the community from civil and political rights violations. When Chief Minister Lalthanhawla allegedly made a ‘racist’ reference to the Chakmas (he allegedly called them “hnawksak”, meaning nuisance) in April 2011, eleven Chakma organizations protested and demanded his apology. This was unthinkable 10 years before or even 5 years before.

Therefore, the actual threats to the Chakmas’ future are coming in the forms of economic deprivations, exclusion from the development agenda, and dispossession of their lands. These forms of deprivations cannot be seen with the naked eyes and there are no statistical data to prove them; but they exist and have scuttled the Chakmas’ development and clouded their future.

Consequences of an “exclusionist policy” on Chakmas:

The Mizoram government is practicing an “exclusionist policy” whereby the minorities have been kept outside the development agenda of the government. The minorities in particular the Chakmas have been systematically denied the right to development. According to a study published by the acclaimed human rights group, the Asian Centre for Human Rights in July 2011, the State government of Mizoram has been willfully diverting the minority development funds meant for the Buddhists to the Christian dominated areas in Mamit and Lawngtlai districts under Multi-sectoral Development Plan (MsDP) for Minority Concentrated Districts, a scheme of the Ministry of Minority Affairs, Government of India. The MsDP is aimed to address the “development deficits that were either not met fully by existing schemes/programmes or catered to by any scheme/programme of the State or Central Government” in the minority concentrated districts which “have a substantial minority population and are backward, with unacceptably low levels of socio-economic or basic amenities indicators, requiring focused attention and specific programme intervention.” In Mizoram, two districts namely Mamit and Lawngtlai having substantial Buddhist population (Chakmas) have been selected as Minority Concentrated Districts by the Ministry of Minority Affairs. During 2009-2010, a total of Rs 3245.84 lakh has been approved by the Ministry of Minority Affairs, which included Rs 3009.64 lakh as Central share and Rs 236.2 lakh as state share for implementation of various MsDP projects which included construction of schools, health centres, Anganwadi Centres, houses under Indira Awas Yojana, girls and boys hostels, drinking water and sanitation, Industrial Training Institute (ITI) etc. The Ministry of Minority Affairs has released a total of Rs 397.4 lakh to Mizoram during 2009-10. But the Mizoram government threw the rule book out of the window to deprive the Chakmas of these development funds. While the Christians are also “minorities” at national level, but Para 1.7 (viii) of the MsDP guidelines states, “In the minority concentration districts in the States of Jammu and Kashmir, Meghalaya and Mizoram, where a minority community is in majority, the schemes and programmes should be focused on the other minorities.” Therefore, the Christians minorities who are the majority community in Mizoram are not the “minorities” under the MsDP. This has been confirmed by the Ministry of Minority Affairs (see below).
Responding to the NHRC, the Ministry of Minority Affairs stated that “The focus for the minority concentration districts of Lawngtlai and Mamit in Mizoram would be for minority communities (Muslims, Sikhs, Buddhists and Parsis) other than the one in majority (Christians) in that State.” The Mizoram government has denied development to the Buddhist minorities (Chakmas in particular) by shifting the projects to non-Buddhist areas.

A mechanism in place to verify the Mizoram government’s claims. Majority of the projects – be these schools, hostels or health care facilities – were located in the Christian dominated areas. For example, the Mizoram government falsely claimed that a girls hostel is proposed at Lawngtlai town because it has “more than 30% minority population of Buddhist community”. In reality, Buddhist population is not more than 0.13%, according to ACHR survey. When cornered, after ACHR filed a case before the NHRC (Case No. 3/16/0/2011), the Mizoram government replied that the minority population of Lawngtlai town including “Buddhists, Muslims and others population” together was only 15%. The Ministry of Minority Affairs wanted to know which communities constituted the “others” to which Mizoram replied on 8 June 2011 that the term “others” was meant for Santals and Gorkhas who are not even recognized as minority communities (as per the Mizoram government’s own admission)!

Responding to the NHRC, the Ministry of Minority Affairs vide letter No. 3/16(2)/2008-PP-I dated 13 May 2011 made it clear that “The focus for the minority concentration districts of Lawngtlai and Mamit in Mizoram would be for minority communities (Muslims, Sikhs, Buddhists and Parsis) other than the one in majority (Christians) in that State.” The Ministry of Minority Affairs put “on hold” implementation of all projects in Christian majority areas or locations and asked the Mizoram government to implement the projects in minority areas.

The Mizoram government took the position that “claiming of the benefits of Multi-sectoral Development Programme Schemes by only one section of the minority community i.e. Buddhists may not be fair and just.” (Letter of B. Sairengpuii, Secretary to the Government of Mizoram, Social Welfare Department, to Vivek Mehrotra, Secretary, Ministry of Minority Affairs, vide letter No. A.14014/78/2010-SWD dated 8th June 2011). But this position is opposed to the very purpose of the MsDP whose sole aim is the uplift the “minorities” (i.e. non-Christians in the context of Mizoram as per the MsDP guidelines). The Annual Conference of State Minorities Commissions held on 31.03.2010 at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi also recommended that “Funds allocated should be utilized in areas having minority concentration rather than utilizing the fund for the entire district. For this purpose, identification of concentration of Minorities at Taluka/Block/Village level in a MCD should be taken up and funds be utilized in units having large proportion of minority population. The Central Government should review the flow of funds in a MCD and make course correction to ensure that funds are utilized in areas where there is concentration of Minorities and lack of development.” (Recommendation No. 13) (http://ncm.nic.in/pdf/Recommendations%20Annual%20Conference%20of%20State%20Minorities%20Commission%20held%20on%2031.03.2011.pdf)

MsDP is certainly not the only scheme where the Mizoram government is insincere in implementation vis-à-vis the “non-Christian” minorities. There seems to be a pattern to deny the right to development to these minorities. Funds provided by the Central government for the Border Area Development Programme (BADP) are never used properly to develop the international border areas (Bangladesh and Myanmar). It is important to note that the entire Mizoram-Bangladesh border is inhabited predominantly by the Chakmas. A recent report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG), tabled in the Mizoram Assembly on 29 March 2011, made startling revelations that the Rural Development Department used the funds towards execution of “ineligible” works, mainly pertaining to construction of office buildings, residential accommodations and rest houses. Expenditure under infrastructure sector constituted 55 per cent of the total expenditure while social, education, security, health and agriculture sectors were utterly neglected. This only proves that majority BADP funds have been spent on construction of office buildings, residential accommodations and rest houses from which the Chakmas do not benefit. The CAG report also confirmed that the Village Council authorities are not consulted in implementation of the scheme and no village wise baseline survey was conducted, as provided in the BADP guidelines.
Secondly, the Ministry of Home Affairs had to revise the BADP guidelines in February 2009 to ensure that the state governments utilize the funds only in those villages of the blocks, which are located “within 0-10 km” from the international border with the villages nearest to the border receiving the first priority. This would have benefited the Chakma villages but there is simply no independent monitoring.

Whenever Chakmas allege discrimination at the hands of the State machinery, we are likely to get a terse one-line response: “Chakmas enjoy autonomy in Mizoram”. The Mizoram government fools the world every time with the misinformation that Chakmas (which signifies the entire community) enjoy their rights under the Chakma Autonomous District Council. For example, recently Mizoram Chief Minister Lalthanhawla boasted before the visiting Bangladeshi delegation led by CHT Affairs Minister Dipankar Talukdar (himself a Chakma) that “the minority tribes in the state - Chakma, Lai and Mara - each have their own Autonomous District Councils, where they even enjoy direct funding from the Centre.” (http://dipr.mizoram.gov.in/press-release/bangladesh-state-minister-calls-on-mizoram-chief-minister-/-lang/en)

The fact, on the contrary, is that over half of the Chakma population in Mizoram is outside the CADC jurisdiction. When the majority has been excluded from the CADC, how can the Chakma community enjoy autonomy? The CADC Chakmas may enjoy this autonomy or direct Central funds, but what about the rest who reside outside the territorial jurisdiction of CADC and form the majority? Therefore, the claim/statement that the Chakmas of Mizoram enjoy autonomy is utterly misleading.

The greatest irony is that while all their lands and livelihood have been taken over and they are facing impending eviction/displacement, the Chakmas feel as if they got the compensation money for “free” from the Central government. Because they thought the money came for free, they spent luxuriously without a thought for the future of themselves and their children. It was a fad to live “king size life”. A now-famous tale goes that the shelves of all the big electronic and mobile shops in Lunglei town went empty as the Chakmas bought everything they had, leaving only the less expensive items. Each Chakma hired his own cab from Lunglei to carry his goods home in remote hinterlands on Indo-Bangladesh borders.

There was a time, post the fencing compensation, when you would find almost all hotel rooms occupied by Chakmas, mostly in Lunglei. They bought, ate, drank and enjoyed. As a result, the prices of the essential commodities in the villages went up. After nearly two years since the fencing money, the Chakmas’ economic conditions are back to the square one. As they didn’t save for the future, they have become poorer, even as the prices of commodities remained high. I would say, now Chakmas have become poorer not only economically but morally too, as they have lost some of the humane qualities they had prior to the fencing.

Are Chakmas prepared for the future?

The Chakma society is changing faster, as the world is changing. However, we the Chakmas of Mizoram are not prepared for the future. We therefore must be ready to brace for the worst times which is still to come.

The India-Bangladesh border fence has brought interesting social and economic changes. The “border fencing money” has made the Chakmas materialistic, proud and arrogant. The Chakmas feel as if they got the compensation money for “free” from the Central government. Because they thought the money came for free, they spent luxuriously without a thought for the future of themselves and their children. It was a fad to live “king size life”. A now-famous tale goes that the shelves of all the big electronic and mobile shops in Lunglei town went empty as the Chakmas bought everything they had, leaving only the less expensive items. Each Chakma hired his own cab from Lunglei to carry his goods home in remote hinterlands on Indo-Bangladesh borders.
So, definitely the border fencing has had, and will have a strong bearing on social and economic security of the Chakmas, and in their overall future. Life is becoming more complex. Today, Chakmas understand that they have no future in the Jhums. Neither have they utilized the money the government distributed under the New Land Use Policy (NLUP) which is meant to do away with the Jhum practice. The border fencing money having been spent, they lost their homes and hearths. Since they could properly utilize the NLUP or border fencing money, they also have lost their livelihood. Neither have they thought of educating their children. So, what are they going to do? How will they survive in the fast changing environment?

Apart from the border fencing, the Chakmas are also losing their lands to reserved forests. While 227 Chakma families from Andermanik village in Mamit district were displaced by luring them with money (each family received Rs 5 lakhs but now I hear that they are penniless and indebted!), the Mizoram government has quietly converted the entire Puankhai-Demagiri range (271 sq km) in Lunglei district into “Puankhai Reserved Forest” (PRF). The question is how long will the villagers will be allowed to live within the PRF? Where will they go if evicted eventually?

The world around them is becoming much more complicated, but there is none to explain what happening with them. On 9 December 2011, Border Trade Facilitation Centre at Demagiri on Mizoram-Bangladesh border, was jointly inaugurated by CHT Affairs Minister of Bangladesh, Dipankar Talukdar and Mizoram Trade and Commerce Minister Lalrinliana Sailo who also unveiled the “India-Bangladesh Shared Vision of Peace, Prosperity and Partnership” stone at Kawruichhuah, the proposed border trade centre for Indo-Bangladesh trade. But neither Mr Talukdar, who belongs to the Chakma ethnic community, nor the Mizoram government officials explained as to how the border trade would benefit the Chakmas who are the dominant inhabitants of the border areas, and therefore one of the principal stakeholders of this vision.

On the other hand, the Chakmas, who are linguistic minorities, have been deprived of jobs in the state under the discriminatory Recruitment Rules which bar a candidate if s/he has no “working knowledge of Mizo” (which means the candidate should have studied Mizo subject up to Middle School standards). Traditionally, in Mizoram, Chakmas have been excluded from any office jobs, but now even the School Teachers jobs are becoming difficult to get.

In absence of jobs, livelihood, proper education coupled with dispossession of their lands and discrimination, how will the Chakmas survive? The future of the Chakmas in Mizoram is really bleak. They will survive, but under what conditions? The answer is: they will survive under social, economic and political servitude of the majority.
A PASSAGE through the way for Arunachal Pradesh Chakma people leading to the secured destination seems gloomy, bleak and uncertain. It feels there is no option left for them to resort in order to acquire the dream mission set to achieve than simply passing through this misty path.

Thanks to thousands of Chakma people for their patience and self-belief that has been steadily maintained for a couple of decades despite their unsuccessful attempts.

The self-belief taking so long to get actualized is still in need of big push by the entire community. A simple visit to the villages in Arunachal Pradesh will narrate the whole story that how hopeful are the people there. It is quite pity and understandable on the part of old and aged ones in the villages who are often found motivating the today’s young educated generation every now and then.

It’s getting more than the triple decades for the mission regarding the acquisition of basic political rights set by Chakmas of Arunachal Pradesh to achieve within the given time frame. However, it sounds like a thirsty person walking through the endless desert who is still hopeful of making it. It has been a common tendency often seen in people that it is the painful blossom that triggered the pursuit of basic right by Chakmas in Arunachal Pradesh that looks uncertain so near yet so far.

It looks oddly pity that there are many aged villagers who are simply surviving with a ray of hope that their loss of lands to the river will be rehabilitated some days. In fact, it is not likely to be as the state government is deaf enough to ignore.

Subsequently, we all should re-ignite our zeal, passion and vision with integrity, only then we can realize our mission truly.
Students Page
By APCSU

ABOUT APCSU

The Arunachal Pradesh Chakma Students’ Union (APCSU) represents thousands of Chakma students of Arunachal Pradesh studying in the state and across the country. It has been working on the vast canvas of Chakma community reconstruction with education field as the launching pad. APCSU, since its formation on 2nd Nov. 1991, has been motivating young minds and leading the torch of student activism.

APCSU has embarked on a revolutionary journey which saw young leaders like Mr Subimal Bikash Chakma, Mr. Santosh Chakma, Mr. Sushanta Chakma, Mr. Mahendra Chakma etc. emerge from the grass root. We have played a remarkable role in mobilizing Chakma students in Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and Delhi with the band of dedicated workers of its own. APCSU has its synchronized units in Gawahati, Dibrugarh, Digboi, Diyun and Delhi being the central unit.

APCSU at a glance in 2011

Jan, 2011

APCSU kicked off its mission with a special public awareness campaign which witnessed students and public thronged in thousands. The campaign was motivated to create awareness and educate students and public alike against abuse of drug and alcohol, denial of good education and health care facilities and making the best use of the existing infrastructure. We emphasised on obtaining Birth certificate from the authorities which has been neglected for a long time. We appealed publicly for giving birth in hospital rather than the usual way with the help of an 'OJA'. We also warned about drop outs of students and getting married at a premature age.

FEB, 2011

APCSU inducted young bloods in its executive body for a great blend of youth and experience that saw many youngesters coming forward to join the band and carry forward the torch of student activism.

APRIL, 2011

APCSU and MCDF jointly organised the inaugural Bizu festival in Rajghat, New Delhi with joy and enthusiasm. The event was immensely successful and witnessed Chakmas from Mizoram, Tripura, Arunachal and Bangladesh in the same colour.

JUN/JUL 2011

APCSU has done survey in Arunachal Pradesh for those child who don’t have Birth Certificates or being denied, schools in Chakma villages were surveyed in terms of Teacher-Students ratio, basic facilities and infrastructure.

Meanwhile APCSU launched itself on Facebook which became the most important mode of communication, then started its own blog apcsu.wordpress.com and apcsu.chakma.info

AUG, 2011

APCSU celebrated Fresher’s Day on 21st Aug with joy and gaiety held in Rajghat, New Delhi. New faces were welcomed with open hands, open minds and most importantly with open hearts.

APCSU joined Anna Hazzare at Ramlila Ground to protest against corruption. One of our banners read 'Corruption is oppression' against corrupt policies AP Govt. towards Chakmas.
SEP, 2011

APCSU helped 22 disqualified students of Class IX to go back to school who were terminated after the Extra-Assistant Commissioner, Diyun Circle termed them fraud on the ground that they were from a private school of a different jurisdiction or circle. APCSU went into dialogue with EAC and local authorities and finally the order was revoked.

NOV, 2011

APCSU took the admission denial issue of at least 88 students in Miao Sub-division to Asian Centre for Human Rights (ACHR). The leading Human Rights organization (ACHR) filed a complaint to National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and taking the cognizance of the complaint, the NHRC has issued a notice to Arunachal Pradesh Govt. seeking a report on the issue within two weeks.

DEC 2011

APCSU has released its annual calendar for the year 2011 on 15th Dec, the theme of the calendar is 'there is no problem we cannot solve together, and very few that can be solved by ourselves'. This is one of our ways to reach out to students and public and raise donation for smooth functioning of the Union.

ACHIEVEMENT

Prem Chakma

Prem Chakma, son of Kali Mohan Chakma of Baraponsury-II (presently residing at Kamalanagar-II), CADC, Mizoram, made the entire Chakma community proud by winning the Gold Medal in High Jump and Bronze Medal in Long Jump competitions in Mizoram State Level PYKKA (Panchayat Youva Kel Karida Abhijan) Tournament held in October 2011 in Champai, Mizoram. He will now represent Mizoram State at national level competition in Long Jump.

This is the first time any Chakma has won gold medal at state-level sports competition in Mizoram.

Prem Chakma is a Class XI student of Government Higher Secondary School, Kamala Nagar.
ABOUT MCSU-Aizawl zone

The Mizoram Chakma Students’ Union (MCSU) is the apex students body of the Chakmas of Mizoram. It has different zones. The MCSU Aizawl Zone was created in 2004. Aizawl being the capital of Mizoram, MCSU Aizawl zone holds special importance and needed to be most active. The Chakma students studying in Aizawl lived up to the expectations and today, they are Mizoram Chakmas’ pride.

The MCSU-Aizawl has its own office, located at the “Chakma House” compound in Hunthar Veng, Aizawl. The students’ body holds regular meetings and other activities at their office.

RECENT ACTIVITIES

Since its establishment in 2004, the MCSU-Aizawl Zone has successfully conducted a number of programmes. The two most recent events are Freshers’ Social, and Voluntary Blood Donation Camp. These two events are organized every year.

Freshers’ Social

The annual function is organized to introduce the new students (freshers) and seniors to each other. Apart from introduction, the students are also given chance to show their talents in various cultural activities like dancing and singing.

The 7th Freshers’ Social was organized at Archive Hall, Babutlang, Aizawl on 20 August 2011. The function was graced by John Rotluangliana, Hon’ble Deputy Speaker, Mizoram Legislative Assembly (Chief Guests), Nihar Kanti Chakam, Minister, Government of Mizoram, and Nirupam Chakma, MLA (Special Guests).

Due to its uniqueness and importance, the MCSU-Aizawl’s 7th “Freshers’ Social” found mentioned in the official website of the state government of Mizoram (http://dipr.mizoram.gov.in/press-release/mscu-aizawl-zone-7th-fresher-social/lang/mz )

Blood donation camp

Blood can save lives. Chakma students volunteer to donate blood in hospitals each year to overcome the scarcity of blood needed by patients coming from different villages and different communities.

This year the MCSU Aizawl zone has organised its 7th Voluntary Blood Donation Camp at Presbyterian Hospital, Durtlang, Aizawl on 2 July 2011. The MCSU volunteers donated a total of 47 units of blood (39 males and 8 females).

Apart from blood donation, MCSU members also help patients coming from rural areas in different ways. They help them to see doctors, stay overnight with the patients in the hospitals, and when the patients die, students make the arrangement to carry the dead bodies to their homes. Students also accompany the dead bodies if needed.

Other activities

The MCSU Aizawl Zone publishes its calendar each year. It has already published its calendar for the year 2012 and it is available at its office in Aizawl.

The MCSU Aizawl Zone will organise an “Education Awareness Campaign” in Mamit district, in December 2011, sponsored by the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyana, government of Mizoram. The MCSU Aizawl will visit to all the Chakma inhabited villages within the district to educate and spread awareness.
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.

The association hold its general meeting twice in a month alternatively to guide the students spiritually, morally and especially to work for development of the society.

RECENT ACTIVITIES

The BVCSA has carried out various programmes to uplift the Chakma community ranging from education to medical assistance provided to several individuals. It has also worked in the field of religion.

Rescue of two traffic victims

In the recent times, one of the most important achievement of the BVCSA is the ability of the association to rescue two trafficked Chakma minor girls at Silchar on 26 August 2011. These Chakma girls were intercepted by the Chakma students at Silchar while they were being kidnapped from Mizoram by a person name Islam Uddin with an intention of child trafficking.

The BVCSA took care of the girls during their detention with the Assam Police so that they are not further exploited. When the girls were produced before the court, BVCSA helped in the interpretation of language, as the Chakma girls could not understand or speak any language other than the Chakma.

Later, with the assistance from Mizoram Chakma Development Forum, an FIR was registered at Kamala Nagar Police Station in CADC, Mizoram against the accused by the relatives of the girls. Following this, the Assam Police handed over the girls to their guardian under the supervision of the BVCSA.

Building Network

The BVCSA has cordial relations with a number of Chakma NGOs such as Mizoram Chakma Students Association, Young Chakma Students Association, Meghalaya Chakma Students Union, Guwahati Chakma Students Union, Tripura Chakma Students Association, and MCDF etc.

The office bearers of BVCSA were invited to attend various cultural programmes organized by the above mentioned associations.

In appreciation of the activities of the BVCSA, its General Secretary Jagat Shanta Chakma was invited to a national capacity building training programme for indigenous rights activities organized by the Asian Indigenous Tribal People Network at New Delhi in October 2011. The aim of attending the programme was to learn about human resource development and thereby equip the activists with various plans and issues pertaining to human rights.
The Meghalaya Chakma Students’ Union (MLCSU) was registered in 1987 under the Registration of Societies Act 1983. In 2011, the name of the Union was changed to Chakma Students’ Union, Shillong to represent all the Chakma students community irrespective of their native states. The new Executive-Body was reconstituted on 16th August 2011 for the session 2011-2012 wherein Mr. Suman Chakma and Mr. Dipayan Chakma were appointed President and General-Secretary respectively to lead the students union.

A. Follow up of demand for Students Hostel at Shillong

The setting up of a students hostel for the Chakma students at Shillong has been at the core of the CSU, Shillong’s agenda. The demand was first formally placed before the Chief Executive Member of Chakma Autonomous District Council, K K Tonchangya, on 19 May 2010, but nothing so far has happened. (Kindly refer to The Chakma Voice – Global Edition 2010 for more details).

On 20th August 2011, General Secretary (Dipayan Chakma), President (Suman Chakma) and Vice-President (Mr. Priyotom Chakma) made an official visit to Aizawl, the capital of Mizoram to discuss several issues including the Chakma Students’ Hostel at Shillong with Mr. Nihar Kanti Chakma, Hon’ble Minister of State and Mr. Nirupam Chakma, Hon’ble MLA.

B. Annual Games and Sports

This year (2011) for the first time, the CSU, Shillong conducted 1st Annual Games and Sports from 10th to 13rd September 2011. The outdoor items included Football, Valley ball, Cricket, Kabadi, Race, Gudu Hara and Potti Hara (for girls only) and Relay Race. The indoor items included were Carom, Chess etc.

Winners (Boys):

- Football was won by Longpuighat Zone, CADC, Mizoram. Mr. Amarjit Chakma of this team was declared the Best Player.
- Cricket was won by Kamalanagar Zone. The “Man of the Series” went to Mr. Tapas Chakma from Barapansury Zone.
- Valley ball was won by Marpara-Tlabung Zone under the Captainship of Mr. Narendra Chakma
- Carom was won by Mr. Dhanabijoy Chakma and Mr. Nepolion in doubles and Mr. Ashis Chakma in single from Kamalanagar Zone.
- Chess was won by Mr. Mounton Chakma (a Class X student) from Marpara-Tlabung Zone who was recognized as “Player of the Year 2011”.

Winners (Girls):

- Football was won by Green House under the Captainship of Miss Munisha Chakma.
- Valley ball was won by Yellow House under the Captainship of Miss Mery Chakma
- Gudu Hara won by Yellow House under the Captainship of Miss Mery Chakma
- Potti Hara won by Green House under the Captainship of Miss Munisha Chakma.

(N.B.: All the participants from Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh and Chittagong Hill Tracts were divided equally and included in all the four teams Zones. And girls were included in both two Houses teams.)
C. Annual Function cum Freshers Meet

Like the last year, this year too the CSU, Shillong celebrated its 24th Annual Function Cum Fresher’s Meet on 4th Oct. 2011 at Assam Club Hall, Laban, Shillong. The Chief-Guest was Mr. Nirupam Chakma, Hon’ble MLA, Mizoram. Also Representatives from different NGO’s were present like MCSU -Aizawl Zone, TCSA, GCSU and the Shillong Buddhist Association.

More than 800 students were present at the function. The unique items included in this year function were Taekwondo, Hip-Hop Dance, Fashion Show, Cultural Songs and Dance etc.

D. Network with other Students bodies

Meeting among Chakma, Mara and Lai students organizations

Spreading communal harmony and unity has been one of the major aims of the CSU, Shillong. The first ever meeting among the three minority communities Chakma, Mara and Lai students (from Mizoram) was held at 35th Freshers Meet of Mara Students’ Organization (MSO) on 24th September 2011 at Anton Hall, Don Bosco Square, Shillong. The Chief-Guest Mr. H. Siku, Member, Mizoram Public Service Commission (MPSC) praised the Chakma students in Shillong for their zeal and dedication.

At Chakra students bodies’ Freshers Social

The three top office bearers of CSU, Shillong also attended the 8th Fresher’s Social of the Mizoram Chakma Students’ Union (MCSU), Aizawl Zone at Aizawl.

President Suman Chkama and Mr. Kalasoga Chakma (Chairman, Audit committee of CSU, Shillong) also attended Guwahati Chakma Students’ Union (GCSU) first Fresher’s Meet on 2nd October 2011 where also met with representatives from Tripura Chakma Students’ Association (TCSA) and Dibrugarh Chakma Students’ Union (DibCSU) for the first time.

E. Petition on Lobindra Chakma

On 29th November 2011, the CSU, Shillong submitted a petition to Mizoram Chief Minister Lalthanhawala regarding the missing of Mr. Lobindra Chakma from the Lungsen Block Development Officer (BDO)’s custody after brutally beat up by the BDO, John Tanpuia,

F. Picnic

On 6th Oct. 2011, the CSU, Shillong organized a “Picnic cum Open Discussion Meet” near Umium Lake, Barapani, Shillong where representatives from CYCA, MCSU, TCSA and GCSU were present. We discussed the problems facing by the Chakmas in Mizoram, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh and CHT, Bangladesh.
The significance of Guwahati lies in the fact that it is the “gateway to North East India”. There also lies the importance of the Guwahati Chakma Students’ Union (GCSU). In September 2010, the GCSU adopted the motto “Ujei Jei” (Let’s march ahead), and never looked back. We have conducted general meetings from time to time to build a strong relationship amongst the students.

**Freshers Meet 2011**

On 2 October 2011, the GCSU organized its “Freshers Social” where Dangu Nirupam Chakma, MLA, Mizoram, was present as the Chief Guest and Dangu Gautam Talukdar, Controller of Accounts, Steel and Mines, Govt. of India as the Guest of Honour. Student leaders of various other organizations were present.

The Freshers Social event is an occasion when the new students are introduced to the community. Miss Fresher and Mr Fresher were chosen based on their overall personalities. Dangu Rakesh Chakma and Dangubi Jidoli Chakma were declared Mr fresher and Miss Fresher respectively.

During the fresher meet the GCSU demanded a Chakma House in Guwahati from the CADC government and the Hon’ble Chief Guest (Dangu Nirupam Chakma) assured us to build a Chakma House in Guwahati.

**Khatina Chibar Dahana**

This year, the GCSU members participated in two Kathina Chibar Dhana and played active role to make them successful at Guwahati. The first one was held at Kharguli Buddhist Temple on 16 October and the second was held on 6 October 2011 at Chakma Buddhist Temple near ISBT.

**Helping patients**

The GCSU has always been helpful to the needy including patients coming for higher medical treatment at Guwahati. When a patient from Mizoram was admitted at Dispur Hospital, Ganeshguri, Guwahati and underwent brain surgery in November 2011, the GCSU volunteers helped his family in several ways. The family was poor and they could not afford the money for the surgery. The GCSU appealed to several students unions and individuals in India to help financially and we received a good response. The GCSU also donated from its own funds.

**Future Plans**

In 2012 GCSU has several plans/programmes including a “blood donation camp”, picnic, 1st “Alumni cum fresher meet” in September, 2012, and setting up of a ‘Career Counseling Cell’ to provide students and their parents the necessary education/career guidance.
By Shambhu Lal Chakma, Assistant General Secretary, TCSA

The Chakma Students’ Association (CSA) was established on 19 November 2000 at Abhoynagar, Agartala with the sole aim to develop Chakma community and work for its betterment. The name was changed from Chakma Students’ Association to Tripura Chakma Students Association at a conference at Perchartal on 13 September 2010.

Some of the important activities conducted by the TCSA since 13 Sept 2010:

On 12-13 September 2010

On this auspicious day the name TCSA has been given to CSA in August presence of Chakma Autonomous District Council (Mizoram)’s Executive Member Dr. Buddha Dhan Chakma, Mizoram CSU President Shanti Bikash Chakma, CADC Chakma Script and Language Development Committee Vice Chairman Jayan Chakma, Tripura Tribal Area Autonomous District Council (TTAADC) Chief Executive Member Ranjit Debarma, TTAADC EM Shandhya Rani Chakma, well known poet Anil Baran Chakma, MAADI newspaper Editor Motilal Chakma, social workers like Kusum Kanti Chakma and Aniruddha Chakma, among others.

Due to the presence of eminent guests from Mizoram we had build a bridge of friendship which will help us in co-operation between the two states.

On 23 November 2010

The TCSA investigated the burning down of Dhamma Dipa School in Manu Bankol, South Tripura by unidentified persons in the night.

On 28 November 2010

With the help of TCSA in the region of Manu Gang, Gummet Hul, Feni Hul, Der Gang Hul and many other regions of Tripura, Chakmas demanded the enforcement of Chakma Script in schools and gave a deputation to the member of Chakma Script and Language Development Committee.

On 25-29 December 2010

The TCSA conducted a five-day seminar on Chakma Script. The main objective of the seminar was to teach Chakma Script to every Chakma people and to educate them about the need to learn the Chakma script.

On 14 January 2011, Chakma script proposal was passed by the Chakma Script and Language Development Committee due to consistent movement in which the TCSA played a crucial role.

On 16 January 2011

TCSA and the Young Chakma Association, Tripura Chapter, submitted a memorandum to the Chakma Script and Language Development Committee to press for recognition of the Chakma script by the state government of Tripura and introduce the same in schools.

On 14 April 2011

On this Bizu day, TCSA cultural team performed in the state level Bizu Mela with bizu dances and Chakma modern dance songs. We took an orchestra team. We got high appreciations from the audience.

Every year on the occasion of Bizu festival, TCSA published a magazine called “Bizu ful” (Bizu flower).
On 19 April 2011

On 17 April 2011, Bengali Muslims tried to capture lands of the Chakmas in Khagrachari district of CHT. They set fire to the houses and caused damage to people and property of our Chakma community. In the attack, they killed 3 persons and injured more than 50 people.

The TCSA held a press conference in press club at Agartala to protest against the atrocities against the Chakmas in Bangladesh and demanded a fair and independent investigation in a memorandum sent to the Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina through the Bangladesh Visa Office.

On 18 August 2011

The TCSA organized a huge rally with the joint involvement of YCA, AICC, Tajimpura Club, Chakma Socio-Cultural Organization, Chakma Cultural Youth Forum, etc demanding introduction of Chakma script in Tripura. More than 2,000 people attended the rally from different places of Tripura. A memorandum was submitted to Tripura Education Minister Tapan Chakraborty for the enforcement of our demands.

MAADI (monthly) is the only newspaper in Chakma language in India. This newspaper is published from Dharmanagar, Tripura. It is a wonderful effort from the Chakmas of Tripura to promote the Chakma language. Presently, the newspaper is written in two scripts—Bengali and Chakma. It is edited by Dangu Debal Chakma and Dangu Matilal Chakma.

It is priced Rs 5 (five) only.

MAADI, which is a not-for-profit endeavor, seeks financial support from kind hearted, social minded people in order to enable the newspaper to continue its existence. Any one who wishes to help MAADI may kindly contact at the following:

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By Jhanu Chakma

It gives me a great pleasure to put forward a little piece of message conveying the importance of saving and conservation of cultural and medicinal plants and herbs in our traditional medicinal system. We the Chakmas have been an integral part of nature since our forefathers. Our lives are totally dependent on the nature, in every aspect, for survival and livelihood. Our deep attachment with nature has helped us to identify and develop a traditional herbal medicinal system of our own. Chakmas have their own nomenclatures of all the medicinal herbs.

Long ago when the modern medicines (allopathic) were beyond our reach in the rural areas and forests, we used medicinal plants and herbs to treat the diseases/illness. In that regard, pure and fresh typical medicines made from herbs and plants were prepared by the “vaidyas”/herbal physicians who played an imp role in the field of treating and curing patients from diseases. Thus, use of such medicines was very popular and the only way to survive from diseases.

Besides having the potential to work effectively, these medicines induce no side effects in the body. It is safer to use even when a patient is suffering from multiple diseases. These traditional medicines and therapies may take longer time but once it starts working, it works more effectively against the diseases.

Vaidyas need recognition, respect

It is extremely regrettable that the number of traditional herbal physicians (vaidyas) is fast decreasing. The rate in which their number is getting smaller by the passing years, they will soon become an “extinct species” in Chakma society.

The vaidyas act as connection between the patients and knowing and preparation of the medicines. They are a vast storehouse of traditional knowledge system. Sadly no one is interested to learn their knowledge, including their children as there is no economic opportunity. Along with their deaths, all the knowledge and virtues they possess vanish off as there are no such students who like to learn from them and practice in future. On the other side, they are often criticized and paid little or no heed in the society. This shows our ignorance. They are not paid satisfactory reward in terms of monetary fees after treating the patients even when the treatment is successful. Everyone knows that most of the vaidyas/physicians are elderly and belong to poor families. They are jobless; therefore, the only means for them is their practice. They save lives but live a life of hardship and often die poor. We the Chakmas have never learnt to recognize the contributions of “our doctors” and respect them.

Vanishing medicines

I was once said by an elderly man that there were times when they sensed the fragrance of medicinal plants and herbs as they enter into the forest, which helps to keep few diseases at bay. It is quite incredible to think but, in fact it was very true. One can bring in one's thought that why the people living in touch with forest are lesser prone to disease than people living in big towns and metro cities.

But not only the vaidyas, even our traditional herbal medicinal plants are fast vanishing. One could see how the nature in our areas is destroyed for the daily needs and especially by jhuming cultivation. As a result, there is a negative affect i.e. many of the medicinal plants are lost in the fire.

In order to save and conserve, hard work and patience of people are to be utilised in collecting them from every possible parts of the forests and planting them in suitable lands, keeping all the necessary optimum temperature that is best suited to grow them.

Conservation of the medicinal plants and herbs will go a long way to help the Chakmas in preserving our ancient medicinal system which continues to effectively cure several diseases and continues to save lives in rural areas in the absence of doctors.

(The writer is 1st year student of Bachelor of Ayurvedic Medicine and Surgery (BAMS), Ch. Brahm Prakash Ayurved Charak Sansthan, New Delhi)
Ode to a beautiful Chakma girl

By - Bhabana Chakma
BSc II yr (Chemistry)
Pachingga college University, Aizawl

The sun descending in the west,
The evening star does shine;
the birds are silent in their nest,
And I must seek for mine.

The moon like a flower
In heaven’s high bower
coith silent delight
sits and smiles on the might.

As i walked out on the sultry night,
I heard the stroke of one;
The moon attained to her full height,
stood beaming like the sun.

No spring nor summer beauty hath such grace,
As i have seen in her autumnal face.
she sings of brooks, of blossoms, birds and bowers,
Of April, May, June and July flowers.

She is sweet on her the twenties springs,
With the fragrance of her virtue in full swing.
she is on the morning of life ground
Add serving the nineteen thousand Chakmas crown.

Her modest looks the cottage might adorn,
Sweet as the primrose peeps beneath the thorn,
Where’re she walks, cool gales shall fane the glad;
Trees, where she sit, shall crown in to a shade;
Where’re she tread, the blushing flowers shall rise.

And all the things flourish where she turns her eyes
Go you, oh winds that blows from north to south,
Convey my secret sighs unto my sweet.
Deliver them from mine unto her mouth,
And make my commendation till we meet.
The Poor Man’s Child

When I was born, 
I had a dream. 
I dreamt, I would be better, 
Some one great. 
But alas! it couldn’t be fulfilled, 
As I was born in poor family.

Due to poverty, 
There was no education for me. 
My parents wages spend in daily bread. 
No options left for me, 
Rather to be friend with taagol instead of pen.

Life is dull, 
For a poor man child; 
Childhood was misery, 
For a daily bread earner. 
When i seek laughter and joy, 
They pushed to be in darkness.

I shed my tears alone, 
As I was to young. 
Nobody even hear me out, 
And I was just there; 
Helpless and denied with out a voice.

Clouds and sorrows and 
Labour are my work. 
We are the buds, 
That will bloom for a better tomorrow. 
We will shine across the world 
Give us the right; 
Give us the right;

So we can dance without 
The chains of labour.

Era to come, Era to go

(A song by Xacooh Thet alias Doya Moy Chakma)

Each time we come together 
Nowhere but in a family we are 
Chakma I am, Chakmas we are 
Together we’ll exert our strength and have the victory 
Walking together, forgetting our fear to challenge and cope 
We’ll strive to build a better home

CHORUS

Era to come, Era to go 
But we know our exertion 
We’ll always keep our effort on 
Conquering the giants, that stand on our way 
We’ll grab the glory, our ambition 
That’s why we are.

In the place of being ignominious – Taking the disgrace off 
We will bring the reign and fame 
And being esteemed we’ll stand eminent 
Into the history of time our notation 
Will remain, will remain.
Chakmas protest Mizo CM

On 27 April 2011, The Aizawl Post reported that Mizoram Chief Minister Lalthanhawla while speaking at a function organised by Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZP) at Vanappa Hall, Aizawl referred to the Chakmas as “hnawksak” (meaning “nuisance”). In a joint statement signed by 11 Chakma organisations on 14 May 2011, the Chakmas slammed the Chief Minister for indulging in “racial profiling” against the Chakma community and insulting the Chakmas. Pointing out that the Chakmas are the most backward and disadvantaged in all fields, they demanded constitution of a judicial committee in the line of “The Rajinder Sachar Committee” appointed by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh at national level, for preparation of a report on the social, economic and educational status of the Chakmas and other minorities in Mizoram. They further appealed the state government of Mizoram to pursue an inclusive growth policy, which will lead Mizoram to a peaceful, democratic and prosperous state where all citizens, irrespective of caste, creed, language or religion, live side by side in harmony and prosperity.

Chakma tortured by BDO

On 23 September 2011, Lobindra Chakma and his wife Milebo Chakma of Siphirtlang village in Lunglei district were beaten up by Lunsen Block Development Officer (BDO), John Tanpuia for demanding wages under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. Lobindra Chakma was picked up by the BDO from where he escaped. He remained untraceable for about a week. The BDO was angry with Lobindra Chakma because he had complained before the Deputy Commissioner for withholding his job card by the BDO.

Protest letter to Bangladesh minister

On 10 December 2011, 15 Chakma civil society organizations submitted a joint “protest letter” to the visiting Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs Minister of Bangladesh, Mr Dipankar Talukdar at Kamala Nagar, headquarters of Chakma Autonomous District Council (CADC) in South Mizoram, protesting against his support to the unacceptable reference of the Chakmas and other indigenous peoples as “Bengalees” in the recently amended Constitution of Bangladesh. 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.

Rally for Chakma scripts

On August 18th, over 400 Chakma men, women and children marched in the streets of Agartala, capital of Tripura demanding official recognition of Chakma script and its introduction in schools. The protestors who came from different corners of the state carried placards and colourful banners written in Chakma, Bengali and Roman scripts. A banner read, “Chakma script is our heart”.

Chakma customary law

On October 8-9th, a meeting was convened at Madhab Master Para (Manu Gaang) in Dhalai district of Tripura to draft Chakma Customary Law. The three contentious issues which cropped up during the discussion were (i) whether Chakma women marrying to non-Chakmas will be allowed to inherit properties (whole or a part of it) of her father/parents, (ii) whether to allow Chakma men to have more than one wife, (iii) what shall be done with Chakmas who do not obey adjudication under Chakma customary law?

Assam

On 20 July 2011, the NHRC issued notice to the Chief Secretary, Assam, seeking a factual report about the eviction of about 18 Chakma families by Muslims from No.3 Sarthagaon Chettongala Chakma Basti under Lumding police station in Nagaon district of Assam. The Muslims wanted to grab their lands.
Students’ woes

In December 2011 the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) of India issued a notice to the state government of Arunachal Pradesh seeking a report on the issue of denial of admission to 88 Chakma students to secondary schools in Changlang district in the current academic session. At least 88 Chakma students, including more than 25 girls, were denied admission to class IX in secondary schools under Miao Sub-Division in Changlang district despite orders from the higher authorities to admit these students. The school authorities refused to admit these students on the ground of overcrowding, lack of infrastructure, lack of adequate number of teachers, etc in the schools.

Earlier, in August 2011, 22 Chakma students of Class IX were expelled from Government Secondary School Diyun under Changlang district. Their admission was terminated after it was learnt that they passed out from a private school in a different administrative namely Bordumsa. Following the intervention by the Arunachal Pradesh Chakma Students’ Union (APCSU), these students were taken back in September 2011 at the order of the Extra-Assistant Commissioner (EAC), Diyun circle.

Talks for citizenship

On 27 September 2011, the Political Department, Government of Arunachal Pradesh issued notification inviting all the members/special invitees to the “First Meeting of the Committee constituted by the Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs, New Delhi under the Chairmanship of Shri Shambhu Singh, Joint Secretary (NE) to discuss issue relating to Chakma and Hajong Refugees of Arunachal Pradesh” to be held at Itanagar, Arunachal Pradesh on 17 October 2011. But the meeting was postponed due to political instability in the state. The talks for citizenship will be held on 9 January 2012.

Bangladesh

Communal attacks

On 17 April 2011, Bengali settlers attacked, burnt down Jummas’ houses and destroyed Buddhist temple in Ramgarh upazila and Manikchari upazila in Khagrachi district, Chittagong Hills Tracts. The motive was to grab land. The Jummas resisted the settlers clearing bushes and making temporary makeshift huts on the Jummas’ land at Guimara village leading to communal clashes. Thereafter, the settlers under the protection of Bangladesh security forces attacked four Jumma villages namely Shankhola Para, Riyong Morong Para, Toikarma Para and Chhika Para/Remra Para under Hafchari union in Ramgrah upazila. At least 32 houses of Jumma villagers including one Buddhist temple have been burnt to ashes at Shankhola Para while four houses at Riyong Morong Para, 11 houses at Toikarma Para and 5 houses at Chhika Para/Remra Para have been burnt down. By 6.30 pm of 17 April 2011, almost all the houses of the Jumma people situated on both sides of the Chittagong-Khagrachi roads from Manikchari sadar to Jalia Para covering about 7-8 kms and Jalia Para to Gacchabil another 10 kms have been looted and many houses burnt down. Jumma passengers forcibly taken off the buses and beaten up along Chittagong – Khagrachi road.

“Bengali” identify for indigenous peoples

The Bangladesh Parliament passed 15th Amendment to the Constitution on June 30th, retaining “Islam” as state religion, with safeguards for religious minorities. Every national will be known as “Bangalees”; indigenous peoples/ adibashi were not recognized. A new Article, 23A, was inserted to refer to the IPs as “upajati” (tribes), “khudro jatishotta” (minor races), “nrigoshthi o shomprodai” (ethnic sects and communities) whose culture and tradition will be protected.

The indigenous peoples of Bangladesh protested across the globe against the constitutional amendment and demanded the rights as indigenous peoples.
The Chakma Voice is the bi-monthly newsletter of the Mizoram Chakma Development Forum (MCDF). 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 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: chakmavoice@gmail.com

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