We are happy to inform you about the formation of the Mizoram Chakma Development Forum (MCDF) in New Delhi on 11 October 2009, to undertake developmental and welfare activities in the Chakma inhabited areas of Mizoram and defend the rights of the Chakmas.

The MCDF has been formed keeping in mind the need to effectively campaign for the rights of the Chakma minorities and provide appropriate recommendations to ameliorate their problems. Chakmas undoubtedly face institutionalized discrimination, neglect, antipathy, apathy and deprivation in Mizoram and yet suffer silently without any ability to raise a voice of protest or concern. Acutely impoverished and extremely backward, the Chakmas live without having access to basic amenities of life. In order to safeguard their own distinct identity the Chakmas have been granted Chakma Autonomous District Council (CADC) under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India in Lawngtlai district in 1972. But unfortunately over half of the eighty thousand Chakmas have been excluded from the CADC territory. These “excluded Chakmas” living in Mamit and Lunglei districts face the worst kind of discrimination and neglect from the state administration.

The key areas of concern for the MCDF include education, primary health care, rural water supply and sanitation, development and livelihood. Regrettably, none of the development schemes, including the Border Area Development Programme (BADP), has been properly implemented in the Chakma inhabited areas. This is clearly visible from the absolute lack of development in the Chakma inhabited areas. Nearly 50% of the impoverished Chakmas are going to be displaced soon due to the India-Bangladesh border fencing but the state government does not care for their rehabilitation. Is it because the entire affected population belongs to a particular ethnic minority community?

We are happy to present before you the first issue of The Chakma Voice. This issue has highlighted some of the most serious problems faced by Chakmas in Mizoram today. And appropriate recommendations have been provided. It is time the Mizoram government ended discrimination and instead, took “positive discrimination policies” in favour of the Chakmas for their rapid development.

The language throughout the newsletter has been made as simple as possible keeping in mind our rural readers. We hope you will like this issue and encourage us further in our future endeavours.
Denial of Right to Education to Chakmas

There is no greater insurance in life than good quality education. Education is both a human right in itself and an indispensable means of realizing other human rights. The only way to improve our economic and social conditions and to end exploitation by others is through education. Right to Education is a “fundamental right” under the Constitution of India. But it has been systematically denied to the Chakmas in Mizoram. According to the Census of India 2001, the Chakmas are the most illiterate ethnic community in Mizoram. The literacy rate of the Chakmas is only 45.3% while Mizos are 95.6% literate. Among the Chakmas, men are 56.2% and women are 33.6% literate. This is not at all inspiring.

I. Denial of basic primary education

Under international human rights law, India has obligations to make education “available, accessible, acceptable and adaptable”. But the state government of Mizoram has failed to make basic education available and accessible to thousands of Chakma and other minority children. Even Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) has failed to deliver results. According to the government of Mizoram’s own admission, over 15,000 children mainly belonging to Chakma and Bru do not go to schools. This failure of the State to provide schooling constitutes a violation of the right to education. Instead of taking adequate measures, the state government has blamed the Chakmas saying Chakmas were not taking interests in education! Against this gloomy backdrop, the government of India has notified a new law, The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act of 2009 on 26 August 2009 which has made education up to Class VIII “free and compulsory”. Section 3 (1) of the Act states - “Every child of the age of six to fourteen years shall have a right to free and compulsory education in a neighbourhood school till completion of elementary education”. Elementary education means Class I to Class VIII. This Act has also made the state government and the local authority duty bound to establish schools in each and every village within a period of three years (Section 6). The MCDF shall monitor implementation of this Act and urges the Mizoram government to establish Middle Schools and High Schools in each and every Chakma inhabited village.

II. Lack of high schools and beyond

In this era, even a bachelor’s degree is not sufficient to get jobs but Chakmas do not have access to even High Schools. There are only 9 High Schools (6 govt and 3 private) in 111 Chakma villages in Mizoram. As many as 75 Chakma inhabited villages have no Middle School whatsoever. The terrains are hilly, dense jungles without proper roads or transport, and therefore children of one village cannot attend Middle School or High School in another village. Moreover, the distance between two villages is often greater.

Absence of Middle Schools and High Schools has left the Chakmas far behind educationally. Lack of schools has resulted in a large number of school-drop outs. There is simply no opportunity for impoverished Chakma students to pursue beyond high schools. The only college situated in the Chakma area is at Kamalanagar, the headquarters of CADC.

III. Lack of adequate number of teachers

One of the biggest problems is the lack of adequate number of teachers in the Chakma dominated villages. Both in the SSA schools and in other government schools the number of teachers is highly inadequate. Several non-local Mizo teachers have been appointed in SSA schools in Chakma dominated villages and most of them do not stay in the villages of their appointment because they are not locals and hence, the question of their attending classes does not arise. Yet curiously, there is no scrutiny of their attendance records by the authorities and they continue to draw regular salaries despite being absent from duty.

The problem has become very acute after several non-local Mizo SSA teachers have taken transfer elsewhere. The vacancies created by such transfers were never filled up. Also, some Mizo SSA teachers have appointed substitutes (usually local Chakmas).
These substitute teachers teach the students in lieu of the original Mizo teachers who pay a meager part of their salaries to their substitutes. This is like sub-contracting the jobs. On the other hand, the hapless Chakma villagers are happy that they are at least getting “some thing” out of this arrangement. Their opinion is the Chakma substitute at least attends duty while the Mizo SSA teacher did not. It is therefore, important for the state government to know that local Chakmas must be appointed in Chakma areas as teachers. Due to sorry state of affairs, most SSA schools have become almost non-functional or are not in a position to provide quality education to children. This in turn has led to increase in drop-out rate. The parents are discouraged from sending their children to schools.

The situation is the same even in other non-SSA government schools. Once the teachers have retired, or died or have been transferred elsewhere the vacant posts have never been filled up. As a result, most schools in the Chakma areas have been running without adequate number of teachers. Schools can run without school buildings but not without teachers.

IV. Denial of right to education in mother tongue

Article 30 of Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) provides: “In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities or persons of indigenous origin exist, a child belonging to such a minority or who is indigenous shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of his or her group, to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess and practise his or her own religion, or to use his or her own language.” In blatant violation of Article 30 of the CRC, the government of Mizoram has taken no steps to teach the Chakma children in their own mother tongue.

The Chakmas speak their own language (Chakma) and they are one of the few tribes in India who have their own script (alphabets). The CADC in Lawngtlai district has been imparting Chakma mother tongue up to primary level in the CADC administered schools. But more Chakmas live in areas (Lunglei and Mamit districts) outside the CADC and they have been denied the right to learn their mother tongue. The Mizoram Chakma Development Forum demands that the Mizoram government immediately take steps to teach Chakma mother tongue to the Chakma children in Lunglei and Mamit districts in line with the syllabus prescribed in the CADC.

Border Fencing: Will the displaced Chakmas get rehabilitation?

I. Extent of displacement and its consequences

As many as 35,438 Chakmas from 5,790 families in 49 villages - constituting 49.7% of the total Chakma population - have lost their lands, houses and properties to make way for the ongoing India-Bangladesh border fencing in Mizoram. Their land, homestead, garden and forests have been acquired by the state government of Mizoram under the Land Acquisition Act, 1894. According to the Ministry of Home Affairs’ Annual Report 2008-2009, fencing of 150.15 km stretch out of the total 352.33 km sanctioned in Mizoram has been completed.

The India-Bangladesh border is inhabited by acutely impoverished and extremely backward Chakma tribals. Hence, the losses due to the border fencing will be enormous. Apart from loss of their immovable houses and properties, the villagers will lose already developed wet rice cultivation lands, horticulture gardens, gardens for growing vegetables and other cash crops, tree plantations of high commercial values like teak etc, community/government assets like schools, health sub-centres, community halls, market places, places of worship, play grounds, cemetery/grave yards, water ponds, water
supply, and other government/council office buildings, etc.

The consequences of the mass displacement will be disastrous unless the government takes concrete steps to provide all the facilities, including clean water supply, roads (as the rivers have fallen outside the fence), markets, schools and primary health centres and sustainable livelihood.

II. Struggles for compensation

In the beginning there was no opposition to the border fencing. The Chakmas who have always sided with the interests of the nation readily let the government acquire their lands to construct the fencing for “national security” purpose. In any case, the gazette notification issued on 27th October 2006 by the Mizoram government under the Land Acquisition Act had warned that “All persons interested in the said land are hereby warned not to obstruct or interfere with any Surveyor or other persons employed upon the said land for the purpose of the said acquisition” (Clause 3 of the notification). Effectively any possible opposition against the border fencing from the Chakmas had been gagged.

However, Chakmas began to show some revolt when the authorities failed to provide any compensation to the victims. From 13 – 18 January 2008, hundreds of Chakmas including women and children protested at Marpara village in Lunglei district and halted construction work of the National Buildings Construction Corporation Ltd (NBCC). On 18 January 2008, Mr SK Pandit, Deputy Project Manager of NBCC, Mizoram sector, signed an agreement with the protestors at Marpara to release compensation by 31 January 2008 following which the protest was temporarily suspended. But the NBCC failed to keep its promise. The Chakmas therefore re-started their peaceful protests indefinitely and vowed not to allow any further construction of the fencing in Lunglei district. On 3 February 2008, another meeting was held with NBCC officials at Marpara and a written agreement was signed between the Chakma leaders and Arun Kumar, a representative from the NBCC to provide compensation by 28 February 2008. The agreement was also signed by Officer-In-Charge of Marpara Police Station as witness. The meeting was among others attended by officials from the local Border Security Force camp and leaders of Marpara Village Council. Yet, the NBCC failed to release the compensation. It was only after the New Delhi-based Asian Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Network filed a complaint in March 2008 before the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) the compensation was began to be released to the Chakmas.

III. Discrepancies in awarding compensation

There has been no monitoring of the process of the award and disbursement of the compensation money to the fencing victims. The compensation amount has been decided against the name of the victims as per the whims and fancies of the surveyors and officials from the concerned contracting company, the Office of the Deputy Commissioner and Revenue Department. The victims who had lost everything they had (the government has acquired their properties) have had no say whatsoever in the process of determining the compensation amount. As a result, while some individuals have got over 50 lakhs in compensation, the others have been provided only a few thousands rupees as compensation. There is no one to explain as to how some families have received so high whereas some got extremely low when they had more or less the same area of land and properties in the border areas. Still there is a large number of Chakmas who have been victims of the Indian-Bangladesh Border Fencing Project but have not yet got any compensation at all. They do not know if they will ever get any. Lal Thanhawla administration which has promised clean and good governance must take serious note of this.

IV. Rehabilitation: No assurance from the state government

There has been no assurance from the state government officials that the Chakmas will be rehabilitated properly. On 17 July 2008, the Home Department of Mizoram replied that the state government does not consider the Chakma fencing victims as “displaced”. Mr Romawia, Deputy Secretary (Home) of Mizoram government stated that - “It may be mentioned that those families placed on the other side of the Fencing Line may not be called 'displaced' since the Fencing Line is not the boundary of Indo-Bangia Border...... and that there was no objection of dwelling outside the Fencing Line. It is also informed to the villagers that their shifting from outside to the inner side of the fencing will depends upon the will of the villagers. There is no compulsion to have their residence shifted to the inner side of the Fencing Line.”

It is clear that the Mizoram government has made up its mind not to provide resettlement and rehabilitation to the
displaced Chakmas. It is ironic that the Chakmas whose houses have fallen outside the fencing line have not been recognized as “displaced”. The government says Chakmas are free to stay outside the fencing line. But there is not a single Chakma who wants to stay outside the fencing line for the reasons explained below. Yet, the government of Mizoram has been forcing them to stay by denying them the rights available to the “displaced persons”.

V. What will happen if there is no rehabilitation?

There have been reports suggesting that the Chakmas might be asked to rebuild their homes and livelihood with the compensation money they have been provided. This struck fear in the hearts of the Chakma victims as majority of them have consumed up their compensation money, and they have now been living in penury. If not rehabilitated the Chakmas will face serious problems, some of which are given below:

First, if the out-fenced Chakmas are allowed to remain “outside the fencing line”, it will be disastrous for their wellbeing and security as they would be left totally at the mercy of the anti-social elements operating in the border areas, Bangladesh security forces and Bangladesh-based terrorist elements. In April 2008, the then Chief Secretary of Mizoram, Haukhum Hauzel while expressing security concerns stated that in Bindasora village, about 80 families fell outside the fence and the villagers were prevented by the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) from getting sand from the river which used to be their main source of income. The government of Mizoram and the Ministry of Home Affairs in New Delhi must understand that even the Chakmas who have fallen outside the fencing need security. Their security, happiness and wellbeing cannot be ignored while safeguarding the security of the nation through the Border Fencing.

Second, the out-fenced Chakmas will face enormous problems if they are forced to remain outside the fencing line. The BSF will set up “gates” which shall remain close from 6 PM to 6 AM. Hence every night the Chakma villagers will be living at the mercy of Bangladeshi nationals, anti-social elements and Bangladesh Rifles (BDR). There is no guarantee that there won’t be attacks, looting and sexual harassment and other human rights violations by the Bangladeshis. The vil-

Finally, in absence of proper rehabilitation there will befall a humanitarian disaster on the Chakmas which will make them economically further impoverished, and backward for generations to come. The Chakmas will take the denial of rehabilitation as betrayal and the State will have to be ready to face the long term consequences.

VI. Deplorable response from the state government of Mizoram

The border fencing is also being constructed in the states of Assam, Tripura and Meghalaya in addition to Mizoram. In terms of response to the problems of the victims, other state governments are better. At least they think the people who are affected by the border fencing are their own. The state government of Meghalaya had even suspended the fencing works in response to the protests from the victims and this provided itself and officials of Border Management to investigate the grievances expressed by the affected people. Nothing of that sort has happened in Mizoram. On 1 September 2009, Tripura Chief Minister gave an assurance in the State Assembly that all the displaced families (7,997 families) will be provided proper rehabilitation in the state (The Sentinel, 3 September 2009). He was replying to a query by an opposition Congress MLA. Compare this with the position adopted by the Mizoram Home Department with regard to the Chakmas: “It may be mentioned that those families placed on the other side of the Fencing Line may not be called ‘displaced’ since the Fencing Line is not the boundary of Indo-Bangla Border.” How Funny! Does the Mizoram government trying to say that the fencing affected people will not be provided any resettlement and rehabilitation?

Such insensitivity on the part of the Mizoram government is highly deplorable and condemnable. Although 50% of the Chakmas in Mizoram will be displaced, Chief Minister Lal Thanhawla, or his predecessor Zoramthanga of MNF, has never made any policy statement in the Assembly House or anywhere. No resolution has been passed on the Rehabili-
tation issue in the State Assembly. The problems faced by half of the Chakma population should have been discussed in the Assembly House. Instead the Chakmas have been kept guessing in the dark. As a result, they feel rejected and alienated in their own homeland.

VII. Recommendations: As the state government has failed, the Ministry of Home Affairs, govt of India, must intervene to ensure that all the displaced persons – whether they are Chakmas or Mizos who have been affected by the border fencing must be properly compensated and fully rehabilitated with due respect and dignity. They should enjoy all the human rights and fundamental freedoms and equal protection of the law.

Mizoram Chakmas Visit Parliament House

On 13 October 2009, a group of 11 Chakma students, parents and members of the Mizoram Chakma Development Forum visited the Indian Parliament House as education tour. (See the picture on the right side) The group visited the Lok Sabha, the Rajya Sabha and the Central Hall, among others.

The aim of the visit was to acquaint the Chakmas from Mizoram including the little kids and students with the Parliament of India, India’s heritage and our freedom movement to instill a sense of discipline, dedication towards the society and nation.

A group of Mizoram Chakmas in front of the Parliament, New Delhi

Why was MCDF formed?

The Mizoram Chakma Development Forum was formed on 11 October 2009 in New Delhi on the auspicious occasion of the Buddha Puja, to undertake developmental and welfare activities for the Chakmas in Mizoram. The MCDF is a non-profit and apolitical social organization with the following objectives:

a. To campaign for and protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of the Chakmas of Mizoram as enshrined under the national and international laws,

b. To undertake developmental and welfare activities in the rural areas,

c. To monitor implementation of various developmental and welfare schemes of the Central government and state government of Mizoram in the Chakma areas,

d. To create awareness about the Chakmas’ problems, mobilize public opinion and support with a view to solve those problems,

e. To engage in constructive dialogue with the state government of Mizoram, the Central government and civil society to realize the objectives.

Request for funds to ensure nonstop publication of Newsletter:

The Chakma Voice newsletter is a historic and noble initiative started by the MCDF to raise awareness among the Chakmas on various issues concerning the Chakma society and their problems. The MCDF shall endeavour to ensure that this Newsletter reaches to each and every Chakma village in Mizoram, students studying in the towns and cities, to the global Chakma community, national and international NGOs, Members of Parliament, Ministers, diplomats etc. There are various forms of expenses, including printing and postage. We are deeply in need for funds to publish and distribute the Newsletter every month. Kindly help us in our efforts.

For subscription or donations, please feel free to write to us at: Email: chakmavoice@gmail.com

Present postal address: C3/441-C, Janakpuri, New Delhi—110058, INDIA
I. Introduction

Equality and non-discrimination are two of the main fundamental rights guaranteed to all citizens by the Constitution of India. All are born equal, and the State cannot discriminate against any citizen on grounds of “religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them” (Article 15(1) of the Constitution). Yet this does not prevent the state government of Mizoram from resorting to flagrant discrimination against the minorities in particular the Buddhist Chakma tribals.

The most tangible proof of discrimination on the basis of ethnicity and language in Mizoram is available in the form of various official Recruitment Rules (RRs), notified by the government of Mizoram, which prevent the linguistic minorities from availing jobs. The RRs make anyone ineligible for government jobs under Mizoram government if he/she did not study Mizo subject up to Middle School level. Although the RRs are application to even the Mizos the main intention is to target the linguistic and ethnic minorities. Even more outrageous is the denial of any opportunity to the Chakmas to learn the Mizo subject in schools. The government of Mizoram has deliberately failed to appoint any teacher to teach the Mizo subject in any of the schools in Chakma dominated villages. Studying the Mizo subject by the Chakma children by themselves is out of question.

II. Knowledge of Mizo is must to get jobs

One of the important safeguards guaranteed to the linguistic minorities in India is “No insistence upon knowledge of State’s Official Language at the time of recruitment” (see the website of the National Commissioner Linguistic Minorities, [http://nclm.nic.in](http://nclm.nic.in)). This safeguard has been blatantly violated by the Mizoram government. The government of Mizoram has officially admitted that “knowledge of Mizo is a pre-requisite for recruitment”. This is available in the reports of the National Commissioner Linguistic Minorities (NCLM).

There has been no public debate on the Recruitment Rules and the public have been kept in the dark. Even today, these RRs are little known to the Chakmas.

III. Mizoram govt prevents study of Mizo subject in schools

In a report the National Commissioner Linguistic Minorities (NCLM) stated that although knowledge of Mizo up to upper primary standard is mandatory for jobs, “But in the visit to the Nepali school, it was found that Mizo was not taught there up to upper primary standard. Since they can then pursue higher studies through English medium, those desirous of joining the services are at a disadvantage” (43rd Report of the NCLM). This fact applies to the Chakma and other minorities who have been deprived of teaching of Mizo subject in English medium or Bengali medium schools.

Strangely the Mizoram government has made knowledge of Mizo up to Middle School level compulsory to get jobs but has not made any arrangement to provide the facility to the minorities like Chakmas to study the Mizo subject in school. The government has not appointed any teacher to teach the Mizo subject in any of the schools in Chakma dominated villages. Studying the Mizo subject by the Chakma children by themselves is out of question.

IV. Why minorities must oppose “study of Mizo” requirement

The Mizoram Chakma Development Forum agrees with the majority opinion of the Mizos that residents of Mizoram must be able to communicate in Mizo language. Surely, any public official if posted in Mizo dominated areas would not be able to function effectively if he can’t speak Mizo with the public who are Mizos. But there is a vast difference between learning (or knowing) the Mizo language and studying the Mizo subject in school. The Mizos in general and
the Mizoram government in particular must realize this difference and take corrective measures as soon as possible.

While the Mizo tongue can be learnt at subsequent stage by the Chakmas (say even after completion of their graduation) but the fact that they have been deprived of studying the Mizo subject in school still deprive them of government jobs under the RRs. That is, even qualified Chakmas who know how to speak the Mizo language fluently do not qualify for competitive examinations due to the discriminatory RRs. The Mizos and the Mizoram government must appreciate the fact that the Chakmas, for example, can learn the Mizo language but they can never legally change their school certificates/ mark sheets when they have not studied the Mizo subject. More importantly, the RRs violate the rights of those students whose parents are Central government employees posted outside Mizoram. Surely, they have no chance to study the Mizo subject in schools. Therefore, a student may complete his graduation from prestigious Delhi University or Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) but still would not qualify for jobs in Mizoram under RRs because he had not studied Mizo subject up to Middle School. This is most absurd and constitutes flagrant violation of the fundamental right to equality and non-discrimination.

Therefore, the MCDF does not think the Recruitment Rules of Mizoram (those providing for mandatory knowledge of Mizo up to Middle School level) will be legally sustainable in the Court of law if the Chakmas challenge the legal validity of these RRs.

V. Recruitment Rules deny jobs to Chakmas

According to the government of Mizoram, there are 546 Recruitment Rules which provide that the knowledge of Mizo is desirable or compulsory for direct recruitment for jobs under government of Mizoram. These RRs blatantly violate the fundamental rights of the Chakmas and other minorities as enshrined in the Constitution of India including Article 14 (Equality before law), Article 15 (non-discrimination), Article 21 (right to life, including right to livelihood) and Article 16 which states that “(1) There shall be equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State. (2) No citizen shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, descent, place of birth, residence or any of them, be ineligible for, or discriminated against in respect of, any employment or office under the State.”

In February 2008, a public examination was held by government of Mizoram for selection of primary Hindi teachers. In this very exam, 50% of the questions were asked in Mizo language, which, as any sane individual will admit, the linguistic minorities such as Chakmas, Nepalis or Bengalis or Gorkhas or Reangs, who are citizens of Mizoram, will find difficult, if not impossible, to answer. This is against the fundamental right to equality and non-discrimination in state employment. The audacity of the education officials to engage in such type of discrimination springs from the discriminatory law. According to the Recruitment Rules for Group ‘C’ posts in the Department of Education and Human Resources Development, 2007, the essential educational qualifications for recruitment of primary school Hindi teachers are “1. Hindi Prabodh/ Parichay/ Army First Class Certificate of Education or equivalent examination recognized by government of India. 2 Class VIII passed in general education 3. Working knowledge of Mizo language at least Middle School Standard.”

The government of Mizoram has officially admitted that “knowledge of Mizo is a pre-requisite for recruitment”. In response to this, the National Commissioner Linguistic Minorities (NCLM) rightly observed that “In such a case there is no chance for linguistic minorities to get Government jobs” (see the 41st Report). This explains as to why the representation of non-Mizos like Chakmas and Reangs in government departments is so negligible.

In the 41st Report the Commissioner Linguistic Minority recommended that "Mizo should not be essential for entry into services though it can be stipulated that it will have to be learnt in the prescribed period and before the end of probation period". The Commissioner repeated this recommendation in the Forty Third Report 2004-2005 stating that the requirement of knowledge of Mizo should either be relaxed or should not be made “compulsory at the time of recruitment” but that “since Mizo is the Official language, the knowledge of Mizo must be acquired with a stipulated period after joining service.” The government of Mizoram failed to heed to these repeated recommendations but continues to insist “knowledge of Mizo language” as a qualification for jobs in Mizoram.

Continued in next page..........> >>
VI. Recommendations:

Majority of the Chakmas still engage in Jhum cultivation (shifting cultivation) but their life is increasingly becoming harder due to lack of green forests and dwindling productivity in Jhum cultivation. The Chakmas who form over 8% of the total population of Mizoram (2001 census) are one of the most backward communities in terms of social and economic development. Recently the government of Mizoram has even referred them as “primitive tribe” due to their extreme backwardness. Due to lack of jobs and insignificant representation of the Chakmas in the state government, the Chakmas are less empowered to deal with their own problems. For Mizoram to develop wholesomely there is a need to look after the needs of each and every community and the state government must therefore undertake some positive discrimination in favour of the Chakmas for their rapid socio-economic development. Only educated and developed Chakma society can contribute to the progress of the state. Therefore, the MCDF fervently urges the state government of Mizoram to take the following measures:

1. Provide 8% reservation for the Chakmas in all government jobs including Mizoram Civil Services in proportion to their population as a positive discrimination towards the Chakma minority community who are one of the most backward tribes in the state;

2. Immediately abolish the discriminatory Recruitment Rules or suitably amend them by deleting any reference to the requirements for knowledge of Mizo; and

3. Appoint teachers to teach Mizo language in all the schools in Chakma inhabited villages. In such appointments Chakmas who are qualified to teach Mizo must be given first priority for appointment. In the absence of enough qualified Chakmas the government must train them by providing financial assistance and later appoint them as Mizo subject teachers.

Education:

Delhi University, New Delhi

With more than 80 colleges under its umbrella, the University of Delhi (DU) is definitely among the most prestigious universities in the country. DU is known for its high standards in teaching and research. Established in 1922, it offers courses at the undergraduate and post-graduate and doctorate level in all streams (Arts, Science, Commerce, Engineering etc). Prof. Deepak Pental is the Vice-Chancellor of the university.

There are two campuses - North Campus and South Campus. The DU issues application form for Under Graduate Courses in the month of June followed by admission in the same month. Academic session starts in the month of July followed by Autumn break in October, Winter break in December-January and Final examination begin in March.

Admission is very competitive due to large number of students flocking to get enrolled under the University. Sometimes the cut off marks for admission reaches to staggering 90% plus. However, there is a little bit of relaxation for student belonging to ST/SC category.

DU has good recruitment records. Various Multinational Companies, PSU Companies and Defence Establishments recruit students from the University. Good numbers of recognized coaching institutes are located in the peripheries of its two campuses, North Campus & South Campus for students who would like pursue Govt. Administrative career like UPSC, popularly known as IAS.

The Delhi University also facilitates aspiring students to take advantage of its academic courses who do not get an opportunity to study in its colleges by offering Distance Learning Courses with equal standard of Syllabus. The Institution is known as University of Delhi-School of Open Learning popularly known as Delhi University Correspondence Courses. It was established in 1962. For details online please visit www.du.ac.in or www.sol.du.ac.in

Chakma students intending to study in Delhi University in 2010 academic year or need any specific information may contact: In-charge, Education Information & Counseling Cell, MCDF, Mr Hemanta Chakma. Or, simply email us at: chakmaforum@gmail.com
Chakma Diaspora

[In this column, we shall discuss interesting facts about Chakmas living in various foreign nations across the globe. In this issue, it is about Chakmas living in Australia.]

Australia:

There are about 200 Chakmas living in Australia in different provinces and cities like Sydney, Melbourne and Western Australia. Most of the Chakma working families are settled in Sydney whereas Melbourne is home to most of the Chakma student community under the scholarship from the government of Australia.

Chakma Buddhist Meditation Centers are quite well known to most of the Buddhist Diaspora who have migrated from Burma, Thailand and China. Western Australia is home to a large number of Indigenous Australians who are also known as Aborigines. The capital city Perth which accommodates 75% of total Western Australia’s population is quite well known across the globe. The booming economy of Western Australia which is mostly driven by extraction and processing of a diverse range of mineral and petroleum commodities complements the Chakma Buddhist Meditation Centers for dhamma practitioners.

MCDF delegation meets Chairman of Mizoram Education Reforms Commission

On 31 October 2009, a delegation of MCDF met the Chairperson of Mizoram Education Reforms Commission Prof. AK Sharma, former Director of NCERT, in Noida, Uttar Pradesh and submitted a Memorandum requesting for urgent intervention into the lack of access to education for the Chakma tribals and the urgent need for undertaking educational reforms by the government of Mizoram. This 11-member Commission was set up by the state government of Mizoram in May 2009 to suggest measures for reducing drop-out rate and improve the quality of education up to university level, among others. Prof. Sharma assured the MCDF delegation that the Commission would look into the educational problems of the Chakmas in Mizoram.

MCDF welcomes the efforts of Pu Lal Thanhawla, Hon’ble Chief Minister of Mizoram to improve quality of education in the state and requests the CM to take special interest in the education of the Chakmas, who are the most illiterate community in the state, according to Census of 2001 findings.

NEWS IN BRIEF:

Tribal Forest Rights Act to be applicable in Mizoram

On 29 October 2009, Mizoram Assembly passed a resolution to make the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 applicable in the state with effect from 31 December 2009. The Central government passed this Act in 2006 but under Article 371G of the Indian Constitution, no Central Act relating to land rights, customary rights etc is applicable to Mizoram unless Mizoram Govt so decides by passing a resolution in the State Assembly. MCDF welcomes the resolution passed by the Mizoram Assembly.

The Tribal Forest Rights Act, 2006 is very important for the Chakmas as it recognizes the land rights of the tribals. This law protects tribals from forcible occupation of land by the govt and forcible eviction by any authorities. Under the Act, no tribal can be evicted from their habitations if he is living prior to 13 December 2005. The state government cannot arbitrarily take away private or community land.

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