

BANGLADESH

GHRD Submission to the United Nations Universal Periodic Review

16th Session to the UN Human Rights Council

22 April - 3rd May, 2013

Global Human Rights Defence

The Hague, the Netherlands

Global Human Rights Defence

Laan van Meerdervoort 70, 2517 AN The Hague, The Netherlands,

info@ghrd.org www.ghrd.org

GHRD Submission: Bangladesh, Universal Periodic Review, 16th Session to the UN Human Rights Council, 2013

1. Executive Summary

Given a contradictory Constitutional combination of secularism with Islam as the state religion, Bangladesh's religious, ethnic and sexual minorities remain highly vulnerable to violence, discrimination and intimidation. This is reinforced by weak legal procedures and institutions, corruption, poverty, illiteracy and traditional customs. In 2011 - 2012, indigenous peoples, Hindus, Buddhists and other minorities continued to have their rights violated and/or property seized by land grabbers, extremists and political leaders with authorities either directly involved or bribed into looking the other way. Minority women and girls were abducted, raped and/or killed while impunity ensued for the perpetrators. Often, victims who were willing to testify were threatened or bribed into silence, and thus denied justice, compensation and rehabilitation. As of September - October 2012, the largest attacks in recent history against Buddhist communities have added grave concerns in regard to the security and rights of minorities. Given credible information supported by both government and non-government sources of the failure of public representatives, officials and law enforcement agencies to take proper action to prevent the carnage, further questions have been raised about the credibility of the government's commitment to protect the rights of minorities.

Key issues addressed: *rights of ethnic, religious and sexual minorities, indigenous peoples, women and children, freedom of thought, conscience and religion, peaceful assembly and association anti-discrimination, right to land and property, personal integrity, freedom from torture and inhumane treatment, and right to family life.*

Global Human Rights Defence (GHRD) within the framework of Bangladesh

Global Human Rights Defence (GHRD) has monitored human rights for religious and ethnic minorities in Bangladesh since 2003. Beginning in 2010, GHRD expanded its target groups to include sexual minorities. This submission includes some key cases documented by GHRD between 2011- 2012, in response to the commitments made by Bangladesh under its previous UPR review, 4th session on February 3rd, 2009. The findings are based on fact-finding missions and interviews with victims, civil society leaders, experts, journalists, and lawyers by GHRD and its local partners in Bangladesh during that time frame. A substantial amount of documentation, including audio-visuals, official documents and news reports have also been collected, verifying the claims made. The submission was shared with local stakeholders, including members of the National UPR Forum for final verification. This is the first GHRD submission to the UPR Bangladesh. GHRD has previously submitted UPR reports to Bhutan (2009)¹ and Pakistan (2012).

2. Religious and Ethnic Minorities

Rights affected: *right to property, land, shelter, freedom of religion, peaceful assembly, association, and personal integrity.*²

¹ GHRD's report was frequently quoted in the final NGO Stakeholder's Report of the UPR Committee.

² UDHR, Article 17, ICESCR, Article 11 (1), ILO nr 169, (not ratified by Bangladesh) ICCPR, 18,21,22,27,

In the Islamic state of Bangladesh, GHRD's concern for religious and ethnic minorities has been for the Hindus (10%), Buddhists and Christians (1%) and the indigenous "Jumma" people, particularly in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT). An overwhelming majority of the indigenous minorities belong to a minority religion as well; thus their minority status – and vulnerability - is doubled.³

In 1988, Bangladesh introduced "Islam" as the state religion in the Constitution. The 15th Amendment in 2011 reintroduced the word "secularism" to the Constitution, but "Islam" is still named as the state religion. This Amendment also inserts the wording "the people of Bangladesh shall be known as Bangalees", not recognising the identity of indigenous peoples.⁴

When Awami League (AL) won the elections in 2008, it made many promises to improve human rights for religious and ethnic minorities. The promises were reiterated in the previous UPR session in the acceptance of recommendation nr 17 and this government's commitment to "investigate discrimination against members of minority religion".⁵ Some improvements have admittedly been made. But attacks against religious and ethnic minority communities have been steadily escalating in 2011/2012.

Hindu Minorities

In fairness, some legal and administrative improvements with regard to the Hindu minority have been made. The Vested Property Return Act was amended in November 2011, to return seized property to Hindus, and the Hindu Marriage Registration Bill, 2012 strengthened the rights of Hindu women. However, almost at the end of AL mandate, civil society leaders are worried that these changes were made too late to survive a potential regime change, and that corruption remains a challenge for implementation. There is considerable cause of concern for the risk of escalating violence in the upcoming national elections scheduled for 2013. Hindu minorities make up about 10% of the votes; potential swing votes. In the past, to prevent their voting, they have been intimidated and attacked.⁶

Attacks against Religious and Ethnic Minority Communities

In 2011- 2012, GHRD investigated numerous large scale and organised attacks against Hindu and Buddhist (including indigenous) villages. Hindus and Buddhists were beaten, their homes and businesses burnt down, property looted and damaged, temples destroyed, and women sexually assaulted. Due to the traditional stigma associated with sexual violence, most women do not dare to report such abuse, so the actual numbers of sexual assaults remains unknown. The attacks were often fuelled by extremist propaganda and hate speeches by local extremist leaders, from parties such as Jamaat-e-Islami. There were also allegations of involvement from "mainstream" lawmakers and

³ The majority of the 500,000 indigenous "Jumma" in the CHT are Buddhist, followed by Christians, Hindus and Animists.

⁴ GHRD, as well as many national and international organisations, maintain that the Jumma meet the available criteria to identify indigenous peoples. They have a close link to natural resources, a distinct social, economic and political system, a distinct language and culture, and particularly the most crucial element: self-identification (UN Permanent Forum for Indigenous Issues Fact Sheet).

⁵ Recommendation Nr 17, "Investigate complaints concerning discrimination against members of minority religions, while developing educational and awareness programs addressing these human rights violations."

⁶ Hindus recall with fear the 2001 elections when BNP last came to power in alliance in a four party coalition, including two extreme Islamic parties: Jamaat-e-Islami and Islami Oiko. Hindu villages were attacked, men were killed, and hundreds of women gang raped.

politicians from both the ruling party (AL) and the opposition (BNP).⁷ Frequently, the police stood passively by, “chatting and smoking cigarettes”.⁸ In other cases, they were actively involved, helping or protecting the attackers. In some cases, they even arrested the victims instead of the perpetrators.

Some cases from 2012 are highlighted below.

Persecution against Hindu Communities

- A Hindu community in Hathazari in the Chittagong District was attacked between February 9th and 10th. At least 13 temples, six Hindu homes, and six businesses were burnt to ashes, and properties and valuables were looted and vandalised. The attacks were executed by local leaders and supporters of the BNP, Jamaat-e-Islami, and the latter's student wing Islami Chhatra Shibir, and Islami Oikko Jot (Amini).
- In late March, in Satkhira District, local Jamaat-e-Islami leaders mobilised some thousand supporters to ‘defend their religion against enemies of Islam’ in response to a school play based on a traditional Bengali text, that was then alleged to insult the prophet Mohammad. Fuelled on by imams and a local newspaper, spreading false and inflammatory information,⁹ rioters burned down houses and looted mainly Hindu homes in two villages.¹⁰ The mob also included activists from AL, BNP, and JP (Jatiya Party). Hundreds of Hindus were rendered homeless, and GHRD interviewed one woman who admitted that she was sexually assaulted. Police stood passively by, as the rioters hindered the fire brigades coming to the people's rescue. Despite many prior warnings, no action was taken to prevent the attacks,¹¹ or to arrest the perpetrators in the immediate aftermath. Rather, the headmaster and school teacher were initially arrested.
- On August 4th, at least 57 Hindus were victims in an attack on a village in Dinajpur, and one woman admitted that she was sexually assaulted. 50 houses were looted by rioters. The incident followed a dispute over construction of a mosque in the Hindu dominated community. Authorities had made a public announcement blaming Hindus for obstructing the construction.¹²

Persecution against Buddhist Communities

- In May, a group of land grabbers, together with local police, attacked a Buddhist village in Teknaf. In addition to ransacking houses, they severely beat at least 11 villagers, including a heavily pregnant woman. Several women reported sexual violence.

⁷ A local lawmaker H M Reza (AL) allegedly threatened the police to face the consequences if they were to intervene in the attacks.

⁸ Testimony gathered by local partner. Available upon request.

⁹ The editor of “Dristipat”, daily newspaper in Satkhira, was arrested on the 29th of April for instigating violence, and its registration was cancelled.

¹⁰ The attacks in Satkhira District took place in villages the “Fatehpur and Chakdaha” between 31st March – April 1st 2012

¹¹ Senior Police Officer Mr. Sayed Nazrul Islam, Assistant Superintendent of Police, Kaligonj Circle was present with his forces

¹² Upazila Executive Officer Rashidul Mannaf Kabir (UNO) enraged the crowds with aggressive messages through the loudspeakers.

- On 29 - 30 September, extremists attacked and burnt down Buddhist villages in Cox's Bazaar and Patia under Chittagong District, in what some claim are the largest attacks against minorities since the Liberation War of 1971. Ancient Buddhist temples were destroyed, and hundreds of houses vandalised.

3. The Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) and the Accord

Implementation of the 1997 Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Accord was a key election pledge of AL, a commitment it reinforced in the 2009 UPR, in accepting recommendation nr 34.¹³ Yet crucial clauses of the Accord including demilitarisation and settlement of land disputes remain unresolved to date. The CHT Land Commission has not settled a single land dispute in its three year existence. It has been argued that, in fact, this government has taken regressive steps that work against the spirit of the Accord. While the participation of indigenous peoples is crucial to the implementation process, in 2011, the government began to publicly deny the very existence of the indigenous population, and refused them constitutional recognition. On numerous occasions since then, the government violated the indigenous people's right to freedom of assembly and association. In August 2011, police officials beat, assaulted and intimidated 22 Jumma students who were peacefully protesting for constitutional recognition in Khagrachari District.¹⁴ In May, 2012, a letter was leaked from the Home Ministry ordering districts not to celebrate World Indigenous Day.¹⁵ Following the instructions, police obstructed celebrations in at least two districts, and nine Jumma were injured.

Attacks and destruction of indigenous peoples in the CHT

Violence against the Jumma in the CHT escalated steadily in 2011/2012. Indigenous peoples continue to be dispossessed of their ancestral lands by Bengali settlers, with law enforcement agencies protecting the settlers. Some of the cases are listed below:

- On 17 February 2011, Rangamati: The police and the Border Guards of Bangladesh (BGB) stood by while Bengali settlers set fire to 23 houses and one school in Jumma villages, injuring two students. GHRD documented that at least one of the complainants received threats to withdraw their case.
- On 17 April 2011, some 200 Bengali settlers in the presence of security forces committed arson on seven Jumma villages in Khagrachari District. 87 houses and two Buddhist temples were burnt to ashes. At least 12 men and four women were injured.
- On 22 September 2012, there was an attack against Jumma people in Rangamati town. 60 persons, mostly from the indigenous community, were injured. This case is still being investigated.

¹³ "Fully implement the Chittagong Hill Tracts Accord as a matter of priority and develop a time frame for its implementation."

¹⁴ In line with international law (ICCPR, Article 21), Bangladesh's Constitution recognises the right to freedom of assembly, gathering, procession and demonstration.

¹⁵ See Annex, 2 "(Translation) Memorandum Home Ministry Confidential Directive (1)" The original (Bengali) document can be found on http://www.ghrd.org/FilesPage/4071/Home_Ministry_Confidential_Directive_Bengali2.pdf

Rapes and killings of indigenous women and children

Rights affected: *rights of women and children to their personal integrity, right to life and freedom from torture.*¹⁶

The fear of getting raped by settlers, the police or members of the army is widespread among Jumma women and girls in the CHT. Local women's organisations reported an "alarming rise" in murder, rape, abductions and sexual violence against indigenous women and children in 2012, by local Bengali settlers and sometimes the police. There is no systematic monitoring of sexual violence against indigenous women and girls in the CHT, thus no credible statistics are available. However, rapes were reported in the larger attacks against indigenous communities. In addition, GHRD reviewed 11 individual (rape and attempted rape) cases between January and September. The victims were all women and girls from different indigenous tribes, the majority in Rangamati and Khagrachari District. Around 50% of these cases consisted of victims under the age of 15. One such case took place on August 21, in the rape of an 11-year-old Tripura girl by a police officer in Khagrachari District. When the mother went to file a case, the policeman on duty tried to bribe her to settle the matter. Of these cases, two of the women were killed after the rapes, and two involved gang rapes. Despite police reports being filed in all these cases, the authorities failed to arrest the perpetrators in all but one case: the widely reported and condemned brutal rape-slay of an 11 year old Chakma girl in Longadu in May.

Investigations of violations against the indigenous peoples remained unaddressed by the NHRC. The government refused to ratify ILO Convention nr 169 in the previous UPR session.¹⁷

4. International monitoring and participation

Bangladesh accepted recommendation nr 38, to "Further continue its efforts to improve the human rights situation on the ground." However, the government repeatedly dismissed human rights criticisms as 'unsubstantiated' or rejected them as 'anti-national' activities. Indeed, the government has increasingly taken steps aimed at exercising more control over NGOs, including the new draft "Foreign Donation Regulation Act". Although NGOs were able to engage with the government to scrutinise the draft and make recommendations which appeared well-received, concern over possible shrinkage of the space for civil society will remain until the final version of the law comes out. The government continued to restrict access to the CHT region and blacklisted NGOs for allegedly conducting 'suspicious activities'. At least three foreigners were expelled without explanation. Even the CHT Commission, set up to monitor the implementation of the CHT Accord, was denied access to the region in November 2011. The UN Special Rapporteurs for Religious Freedoms and Indigenous Peoples have still not visited Bangladesh.

¹⁶ Legal framework: Article 22, United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Article 19, Article 37, Convention on the Rights of the Child

¹⁷ UPR Recommendation nr 2

Recommendations (religious minorities)

1. Return to the original secular Constitution of 1972 with no reference to any state religion.
2. Conduct independent and impartial judicial investigations into attacks and violations of rights of minorities to stop impunity, irrespective of the identity and status of the perpetrators.
3. Ensure that the mission of the UN Special Rapporteur on Religious Freedoms takes place at the latest before the elections in 2013.
4. Closely monitor implementation of the Vested Property Return Act, and enact the Hindu Marriage Registration Bill.

Recommendations (ethnic minorities)

1. Dismantle all temporary military camps in the CHT and demilitarise the region according to the Accord.
2. Conduct independent judicial investigations into human rights violations (including rape and sexual violence) against indigenous peoples by settlers, police and security forces and ensure commensurate sentences for the guilty to prevent further recurrence. Systematic monitoring of violence against women and a mixed, specially educated police force is needed.
3. Solve the land disputes fairly with full respect to traditional land rights of the indigenous people before undertaking any new land survey, and amend the Land Dispute Settlement Commission Act of 2001 according to the spirit of the Accord.
4. Give constitutional recognition to the indigenous peoples of Bangladesh.
5. Extend an invitation to the UN Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Peoples to visit CHT

5. Sexual Minorities

“Sexual orientation is not an issue in Bangladesh.”¹⁸ “There are no men raped in Bangladesh.”¹⁹

Rights affected: *non discrimination, equality, freedom from torture, liberty and security of person, freedom of speech, and association, right to a family life, the right to equal recognition before the law.*²⁰

Traditional conservatism in Bangladesh frowns on anything overtly sexual, thus providing little room for sexual diversity. The government rejected recommendation nr 27,²¹ so consensual sexual acts between adults remains criminalised with penalties up to life imprisonment under Section 377.²² This fact and the ‘justification’

¹⁸ Government response to recommendation nr 27, in the previous UPR 2009

¹⁹ Quote from a GHRD Interview with a lawyer in Bangladesh

²⁰ ICCPR Art 2,3,7,9,19,22,23, 26

²¹ To consider abolishing article 377 of the penal code, which “criminalizes sexuality against the order of the nature”

²² Section 377 of THE PENAL CODE, 1860 (ACT NO XLV OF 1860, definition: “Whoever voluntarily has carnal intercourse against the order of the nature with any man, woman or animal, shall be punished with imprisonment for life, or with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to ten years, and shall be liable to fine.”

that: “Same sex activity is not an acceptable norm in the country”²³ also contradicts the Constitution²⁴ and government’s commitment in accepting recommendation nr 17, and its claim not to “discriminate against anybody [sic!] on the basis of race, colour, sex, religion, or any other status.” The government’s statements that “sexual orientation is not an issue in Bangladesh” and “there has been no concern expressed by any quarter of the country on this” reaffirm the marginalisation of LGBT organizations and their work. NGOs report that LGBT (Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender) issues are mainly rejected from national forums addressing human rights, including the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and the UPR country reports, although there have been some small positive steps forward recently made by NHRC to include LGBT in its scope, taking a “right to health focus.”²⁵ Fearing persecution, sexual minorities remain largely invisible. Although Section 377 is rarely enforced, it reinforces stigma and public contempt against them, making them vulnerable to discrimination and violence, including torture, rape, forced marriages, discrimination in employment, health, and family life, and restrictions in enjoying freedom of expression, personal liberty, freedom of movement and assembly. Section 377 is repeatedly abused by law enforcement agencies to arbitrarily arrest, extort, torture and rape LGBT persons and sex workers from cruising areas. There is no reference to male to male rape (or woman to male) in the archaic Penal Code,²⁶ and male rape remains a taboo (with consequences for heterosexual men as well).

Recommendations (sexual minorities):

1. Revoke Section 377 and decriminalise sexual practices between consensual adults to combat the reinforced violence and stigma against sexual minorities.
2. Amend the Penal Code, Section 375, so that the crime of rape is defined as gender neutral.

6. ANNEX:

1. Overview of Cases observed by GHRD and its partners January – September, 2012
2. Leaked memorandum from the Home Ministry

ANNEX 1 - Overview of Cases observed by GHRD and its partners, January – September 2012

Date	Case
07-01-2012	Indigenous: An indigenous girl raped by Bengali driver

Date	Case
27-01-2012	Indigenous: Buddhist temple attacked by Bengali settlers

Date	Case
------	------

²³ Bangladesh response in the UPR 2009, to the same recommendation (nr 27)

²⁴ Bangladesh Constitution, Article 27- 28, proclaims Equality before the law and Non-discrimination against any citizen.

²⁵ Conclusion made during a National Stakeholder Consultation meeting on the human rights of sexual minorities with NHRC Chairman Dr Mizanur Rahman, June 14, 2012, Dhaka, reported by Bandhu Social Welfare Society.

²⁶ Rape is defined in *Section 375* of the *Penal Code* 1860 (Act XLV of 1860) as an act committed by “a man” against a “woman”.

01-02-2012	Indigenous: Jumma girl gang raped by Bengali settlers
------------	--

Date	Case
09-02-2012	Hindu: Communal attack against Hathazari community

Date	Case
23-03-2012	Indigenous: 11 year old Marma girl raped by Bengali settlers

Date	Case
27-03-2012	Hindu: Arson attack in Satkhira District

Date	Case
07-04-2012	Indigenous: Indigenous youth killed allegedly by forest guards in Kaptai

Date	Case
23-04-2012	Indigenous: Communal attack against indigenous Santal villagers

Date	Case
28-04-2012	Indigenous: Indigenous woman sexually assaulted by Bengali settlers

Date	Case
29-04-2012	Hindu: Attack on human rights defenders and land grabbing in Chittagong District

Date	Case
04-05-2012	Indigenous: Four indigenous labourers killed in Noagaon District

Date	Case
09-05-2012	Indigenous: Indigenous Jumma girl killed after rape in Longadu District

Date	Case
10-05-2012	Indigenous: Three houses belonging to indigenous people burnt down by Bengali settler

Date	Case
20-05-2012	Indigenous: Grenade attack on PCP in Rangamati

Date	Case
26-05-2012	Indigenous: Indigenous woman gang-raped in Sylhet

Date	Case
27-05-2012	Hindu: Minority woman gang-raped at Golapgonj Upazila

Date	Case
29-05-2012	Indigenous: Police attack on indigenous village in Teknaf

Date	Case
05-06-2012	Indigenous: Tripura girl raped by two Bengali settlers

Date	Case
12-06-2012	Indigenous: Indigenous girl attacked by settler in Rangamati

Date	Case
30-06-2012	Indigenous: Attempted land grabbing of indigenous peoples land in Barkal

Date	Case
07-07-2012	Indigenous: Jumma woman killed allegedly by settlers in Rangamati

Date	Case
11-07-2012	Hindu: Attack on Hindu houses in Jatarpur

Date	Case
20-07-2012	Indigenous/Christian: Tripura children exposed to forced conversion through Madrassas in Dhaka

Date	Case
30-07-2012	Hindu: Attack on Hindu Village in Bagerhat

Date	Case
04-08-2012	Hindu: Attack on minority villages in Dinajpur

Date	Case
04-08-2012	Indigenous: Attempt attack on Jumma villagers in Matiranga

Date	Case
10-08-2012	Indigenous: Land grabbers killed Santal villager in Noagaon

Date	Case
21-08-2012	Indigenous: Tripura girl raped by a police officer

Date	Case
26-08-2012	Indigenous: Three Jumma villagers attacked by Bengali settlers

Date	Case
22-09-2012	Indigenous: Communal Attack on indigenous communities in Rangamati

Date	Case
29-09-2012	Buddhist: Communal (religious) attack on Buddhist villages in Cox Bazaar and Patia under Chittagong District.

ANNEX 2 –Memorandum regarding World Indigenous Day

IMG-1.pdf

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development & Cooperatives
Local Government Department
Upazila-2 Branch

Memorandum No: 46.045.022.10.04.004.2011-546

Date: 11 March 2012

Subject: Regarding celebration of World Indigenous Day

Reference: Ministry of Home Affairs Memorandum no: **xxx-xxx/4-6/2011-881**, Date: 11 August 2011

District Commissioners are hereby directed to provide instructions/directives to all of their Upazila Parishad in light of the aforementioned subject and reference regarding report obtained from the Intelligence Agency of the Home Ministry.

Dr Mohammad Sarowar Bari

Deputy Secretary

Phone: 7173058

Attachment: As stated.

1) District Commissioner: (all)

_____ district

Memorandum No: 46.045.022.10.04.004.2011-546

Date: 11 March 2012

Copy:

1) Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs, Bangladesh Secretariat

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the District Commissioner, Rangamati Hill Tracts District
(General division)
Post code no: 4500
www.dcrangamati.gov.bd

Memo No: 05.42.84xx.2xx.xx.xxx.xxx-xxx

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the District Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO)
Longodu, Rangamati Hill Tracts District

Memo no: 05.42.8458.000.11.004.12-407

Date: 04 April 2012

(You are) hereby requested to take necessary steps according to the letter above.

Mohammad Johirul Islam

UNO, Rangamati Hill Tracts District

1. Officer in Charge, Longodu Police Station

2. Chairman, Atarokchora, Kalapakuijja, Gulshakhali, Bogachotor, Mainimukh, Longodu,
Bhashainnadam Union Parishad

[IMG-2.pdf](#)

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Ministry of Home Affairs

Political Wing

(Confidential)

Memorandum no: xxx-xxx/4-6/2011-881

Date: 11 August 2011

Subject: Regarding celebration of Indigenous day

(You are) hereby directed to take necessary actions in line with the report obtained from one intelligence agency (quoted and attached herewith) on the aforementioned subject.

Dr Shahida Akter

Deputy Secretary

Phone: 7166895

Attachment: 1 page

- 1) Secretary, Local Government Department, Bangladesh Secretariat, Dhaka
- 2) Inspector General of Police, Police Headquarters Dhaka
- 3) Police Commissioner, DMP, Dhaka

[IMG-2_0001.pdf](#)

Regarding celebration of World Indigenous Day

1) On 23 December 1994, a decision to observe ninth(9th) August as the “World Indigenous Day” every year was taken in a meeting of the General Assembly of the United Nations (UN). Very recently, it has been observed that the practice of celebrating the World Indigenous Day has started in Bangladesh. Fairs, musical programmes, seminars, rallies and other activities are carried out to mark the World Indigenous Day.

2) Earlier in April 2010, the “Small ethnic group cultural institute” bill was passed in the national parliament terming different tribal groups as ethnic groups in order to preserve their interest. Recently, these groups were also stated as small ethnic groups in the constitution. It can be noted that, on 26 July 2011 the Honourable Foreign Minister Dr Dipu Moni briefed the development partners of the three CHT districts, diplomats, high commissioners of different countries in Dhaka and

ambassadors regarding this issue. During that briefing, she informed everyone that the tribal people are not indigenous.

3) It has been informed that the tribal leaders, like previous year, have taken preparations to celebrate 9th August this year. Special supplements in various newspapers might be published marking this day. Sources informed that indigenous people might be organizing fairs, musical programmes, seminars, rallies and other activities at Shahid Minar, different places in the country including Cox's Bazar, including electronic media.

Comments/recommendations:

a) Necessary instructions may be sent to the concerned persons so that (on Indigenous day) government high officials do not give speech/comments that are conflicting/contradictory to the policies of the government undertaken at different times.

b) It might be monitored so that no government patronization/support is provided during the World Indigenous Day.

c) Steps might be taken to publicize/broadcast (by providing related information) in the print and electronic media that there are no Indigenous people in Bangladesh.

d) The month of August is recognized nationally as the month of Mourning. Hence, such unnecessary amusement programmes in the name of Indigenous Day in this month should be avoided.

