

A Campaign to Halt the Killings in Bangladesh

By Johnson Thomas

Since 1980 a Buddhist Peace Fellowship member has served as coordinator for BPF's efforts to help the tribal Buddhists of the Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bangladesh. Recently, Johnson Thomas, of Washington, D.C., succeeded Nelson Foster with this responsibility. This is his first report to the BPF membership.

Recent reports from the Chittagong Hill Tracts—the site of the murders of tens of thousands of innocent tribal Buddhists over the last 15 years—clearly show that the Bangladesh military and newly-imported Bengali Moslem settlers are continuing the abuse, torture, rape, and murder of the Chakma Buddhists and of other hill tribes. These reports include documentation of 280 cases of gross human rights violations in just the first seven months of 1986, including massacres, burning entire villages, destroying Buddhist temples, gang rapes of young girls, torture and mutilation of Buddhist monks, forced conversions to Islam of kidnapped women, and the theft of tribal farmlands.

The Washington, D.C. Chapter of the BPF has begun the first of a series of media, letter-writing, and public outreach campaigns to bring the plight of the Hill Tract peoples to the attention of the world. Although as many as 200,000 of these forest people have been killed since Bangladesh gained independence in 1971, the story is yet to reach the international press.

The people of the Chittagong Hill Tracts are made up of 13 tribes, of which five are Buddhist, three Christian, four animist, and one Hindu. The largest by far are the Chakmas, who have been Buddhists since the 15th century. The Hill Tracts, comprising approximately 5,000 square miles of high ridges suitable for timber and small fertile valleys, have been targeted by the Bangladesh government for heavy settlement by landless Bengalis. Formerly comprising 98% of the hill region's population, the remaining 500,000 Hill Tract tribals now comprise 50%.

How We Can Help

BPF members who wish to assist in halting the killing and land theft can help by writing directly to the President of Bangladesh, the Bangladesh Ambassador to the U.S., their own representatives in Congress, and the Prime Minister of India. In January of 1986, some 4,000 Chakma people who had fled into India to escape a massacre were forced back into Bangladesh and handed over to the Bangla Desh Rifles. It is reported that the refugees were divided into groups and attacked. Their fate is unknown. Another 30,000 fled into India following new attacks on Chakma villages in July. Please write to:

General Hossain Mohammad Ershad
President, Republic of Bangladesh
Banga Bhawan
Dacca, Bangladesh

The Rt. Hon. Rajiv Gandhi
Prime Minister
The PM Secretariat
South Block
New Delhi, India 110011

His Excellency A.Z.M. Obaidullah Khan
Embassy of Bangladesh
2201 Wisconsin Avenue N.W.
Washington, DC 20007

Letters to Asia Development Bank, Roxas Boulevard, Manila, Philippines, urging the cut off of financial assistance to Bangladesh until the halting of human rights violations, would also be helpful. Bangladesh now gets 70% of its aid from western nations, much of it via the Asia Development Bank, and 50% of its annual sources of revenue are from aid.

*Buddhist Priests after the Kalampati Massacre at the Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bangladesh
Photo by Wolfgang Mey*



Storm over the Chittagong Hills

A border struggle between India and Bangladesh

Since Bangladesh won its independence from Pakistan 15 years ago, millions of Bangladeshi refugees have fled across the long, winding border into India to escape the poverty of their homeland. Many of them arrive to find that their lives in India are only marginally better than before. Others soon discover that they are unwelcome intruders on foreign soil. Still they keep coming. In recent months a new wave of Bangladeshi emigrants, members of the Chakma tribe that inhabits the Chittagong Hill Tracts of eastern Bangladesh, have been leaving their traditional lands for the Indian state of Tripura. But unlike most refugees of years past, the Chakmas, who are Buddhists, say that they are fleeing brutal persecution by Bangladeshi soldiers and armed Muslim settlers.

Desperate as their situation may be, the Chakmas are only part of a complex and intertwined regional conflict that is threatening the always testy relationship between India and Bangladesh. The Chakmas who have made the trek, about 50,000 of them, have walked into another of India's myriad ethnic conflicts. In Tripura, highland guerrillas who call themselves the Tribal National Volunteers (TNV) are fighting to gain a homeland of their own. In the last year TNV rebels have killed at least 127 people—many of them Bangladeshi settlers who over the years have become the state's most populous group. India accuses

Bangladesh of providing shelter for the TNV guerrillas, which Dhaka denies.

In recent months Bangladesh has been making some charges of its own. It says the Chakma refugee camps inside Tripura have become safe havens for Chakma rebels, who have been fighting a 14-year, hit-and-run guerrilla war in an effort to secure a semi-autonomous homeland. Dhaka says that since last summer the guerrillas have killed 44 Muslim settlers in the region.

Repatriation plan: So far, the governments in New Delhi and Dhaka have made little progress in resolving the border tension. Last year Bangladesh agreed to take back thousands of Chakma refugees. But the repatriation plan broke down when the Chakmas refused to leave India; many fled from the camps into the jungle. "We can't drive these people back across the border," one Indian Foreign Ministry official said last month. "They're terrified and don't want to go back." India has recently begun clearing ground—despite protests from Dhaka—for a road and fence along stretches of the border to keep more Bangladeshi refugees from entering its territory and to try to control the movements of TNV rebels. But it will likely take more than a fence to quell the strong religious and tribal loyalties that present so much trouble for the nations of the subcontinent.

WILLIAM BURGER with SUDIP MAZUMDAR in New Delhi and HASSAN SHAHRIAR in Dhaka



SOUTH CHINA MORNING POST

Hong Kong's new governor: Wilson

The Last to Wear the Plume

Sir David's distinction

It is not the last changing of the guard in the British colony of Hong Kong—that will not occur until 1997—but it may well be the second to last. When Sir David Wilson arrives at the Kai Tak International Airport this week, he will swap his business suit for an imperial uniform complete with ostrich plumes. After a bit of pomp and circumstance, he will become the 27th British governor of Hong Kong, probably the last to rule before the territory returns to Chinese control 10 years from now.

With Hong Kong's economy as vigorous as ever, Wilson's agenda is largely political. His first job is dismantling that most ubiquitous of colonial structures: Hong Kong's expatriate-led civil service. Wilson arrives at a time when "localization"—the process of replacing top-level British bureaucrats with ethnic Chinese—has become especially urgent. Though Chinese make up 98.5 percent of the 177,500-member service, only a handful have made it to the upper ranks. Wilson must also boost the sagging morale of fellow Britons, many of whom fear losing their jobs after 1997.

His most formidable task by far will be deciding just how much democracy Hong Kong should have before Beijing takes over. Emboldened by reforms in 1985 allowing indirect elections for some members of the Legislative Council, many residents are calling for direct parliamentary-style elections by 1988. That degree of popular democracy is anathema to many business leaders as well as to the mainland government—and Wilson will have to mediate the increasingly polarized debate. For Wilson, a career diplomat and a key negotiator in the talks on Hong Kong's future, the governorship amounts to a delicate political balancing act. The colony's residents, along with Beijing and London, are waiting to see how deftly he can manage it.



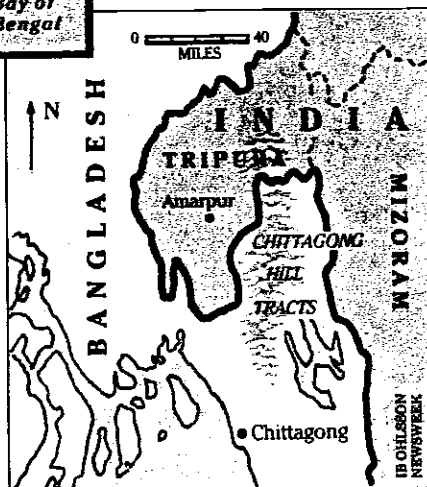
VIRENDRA SINGH

Another ethnic battleground: Indian soldiers guarding a captured TNV stronghold



Rebel Country

Guerrillas on both sides of the border are fighting for self-rule.



310, Edgware Road, London WC2 DY, England, U.K., Tel. 01-839 3267

conflict is thus 'inevitable' he said, but can be 'tackled' by 'slipping' the local peoples into Transmigration sites.

Children to be separated

More light is shed on this kind of thinking by a recent announcement from the Indonesian Government, issued from Washington Embassy, that it is embarking on a new project which it calls 'Total Development of the Indonesian People', aimed at reeducating West Papuans, whom it describes as 'still living in a stone-age-like era'.

The Papuans are physically and culturally utterly different from the dominant Javanese. In order to bring them 'up to par with the rest of the country', children 'will be separated from their parents to keep them from settling into their parents' lifestyle'. This is necessary, according to the Government, 'because changing their parents' lifestyle would be very difficult, and necessitate considerable expenditure and time'.

The project reflects the thinking of the present Governor of the region, who has called for *more* transmigrants so that local peoples can intermarry with them. 'This will give birth to a new generation of people without curly hair, sowing the seeds for greater beauty'.

Skewered

For in spite of the check to Transmigration, Indonesia is not relaxing its grip on West Papua, which was handed over to it by the U.N. in 1963. On the contrary, the army has recently stepped up its operations against rebel activity there, in an offensive known as 'operation meat skewer'. Sources within the Indonesian occupied territory have reported that tribal communities all along the north coast and up into the western highlands have been shelled from the sea and bombed from the air.

Refugees from West Papua, deprived of their homes by Transmigration or fleeing from government repression, continue to cross the frontier into neighbouring Papua New Guinea (PNG). (See SI News 6, 9.) In June 1986 the total number who had entered PNG since 1984 was estimated unofficially at twelve or thirteen thousand. In August a further 750 arrived with reports of an Indonesian attack on their village in which several people were killed. After capturing the village, the soldiers shot a Catholic catechist and five other men. The refugees reported that many other communities were also on the move and were expected to cross the border soon.

For the people of West Papua the slowdown in Transmigration may provide a partial respite, but they remain under the

AUSTRALIA

SACRED SERPENT UNDISTURBED

The Aboriginal Fringedwellers of the Swan Valley near Perth, West Australia, led by activist and writer Robert Bropho, have won a three year battle to protect a sacred site from being invaded by a gas pipeline. Survival International and other organisations and concerned individuals worldwide had supported their campaign. What is now known as Bennett Brook, not far from the city, is according to their tradition the resting place of the great serpent Wagyl. The agreement reached with the State Energy Commission will involve rebuilding a section of the \$960 million pipeline, taking it in a conduit over the brook rather than disturbing the earth underneath.

BANGLADESH

NO FORCED REPATRIATIONS

Tribal refugees from the genocidal war in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, who have taken refuge in India, will not now be returned to Bangladesh against their will. The good news came on the very day that repatriation was due to begin.

Since April 1986, the situation of the tribal peoples of the CHT has worsened (see SI news 13) as the Bangladesh armed forces have carried out further brutal and indiscriminate attacks on tribal villages in this remote province. As a result, at least 24,000 refugees have poured into the neighbouring Indian states of Tripura and Mizoram. Children and old people have died while trekking through the hills. The Bangladesh army has even attacked fleeing tribals; in one case 200 refugees were lured into a narrow defile, and many killed in a hail of small arms fire.

The refugees are an embarrassment to both the Bangladesh and Indian Governments, who have been trying to patch up official relations. In November 1986, a border agreement was announced, with arrangements for the repatriation of the refugees, and a date was set in mid-January. In a telegram to the Indian Prime Minister, the refugees appealed against the decision. 'Repatriation will mean sure death to us,' they said.

Survival International protested to the Indian authorities urging them not to repatriate the refugees without their free consent. At the last minute, the decision to return them was revoked.

Now the Indian government must be persuaded to ask for international assistance



COMMENT

THE NEWS IS BETTER

A common reaction from people who hear of Survival International's work, even if they feel sympathetic towards it, is 'But surely you can never succeed? There can't be any hope for these people.' Often the speaker is subscribing, consciously or unconsciously — and mostly unconsciously — since few examine such assumptions — to a doctrine of History or Progress as an invincible force, independent of human wills, in whose way it is futile if not impious to stand. Others are merely being 'realistic' and supposing that history is on the side of the big battalions.

But even if one rejects these assumptions — and presumably most S.I. supporters have rejected them — it is often hard not to feel discouraged. The forces on the other side are vast. The bad news keeps coming in.

And yet there is good news too. Many of the stories published in SI News show what hard, concerted campaigning by international pressure groups can achieve. S.I.'s World Bank campaign is an example; the meeting in Washington between the Amazonian Indian representatives and the head of the Bank, reported in SI news 15, was a breakthrough, and has drawn the attention of the media to the Indians' struggle. In a case like that of the Philippine tribes threatened by the Chico dam, similarly, the obstinate resistance of the people themselves was supported by mobilised world opinion. In other cases a downturn in the national economy comes to the rescue of a tribal group by making a monster project too obviously uneconomic.

Such successes are always limited and precarious, however. Politicians may change their minds; the vested interests remain and will not give up. All the more reason to renew our own efforts. Many tribal peoples have survived, even against enormous odds. Our best response to their survival is to throw our weight behind those who are still threatened; for the real struggle is their own.

Bangla is willing to accept refugees

By ZAGLUL A CHOWDHURY
The Times of India News Service
DHAKA, April 2.

BANGLADESH today reiterated its willingness to take back "genuine" Bangladesh nationals from India who crossed over from the Chittagong Hill tracts region.

"We hope India also wants to resolve the refugee issue as soon as possible," the Bangladesh deputy foreign minister, Mr. Wajed Ali Khan Panni, told newsmen here today.

He said the Bangladesh authorities were fully prepared to accept the "genuine tribal refugees" and hoped that India would co-operate in clearing the decks for their repatriation to Bangladesh without further delay.

Mr. Panni, replying to a question, disputed reports in a section of the Indian press that the number of refugees had swelled to about 50,000 and said Dhaka would accept those refugees whose identity as Bangladesh nationals had been established.

In this context, he referred to the annual meeting of the chief of the Bangladesh Rifles and the Indian Border Security Forces beginning here tomorrow and said the situation along the borders of the two countries would be discussed during the four-day meeting.

"We want to settle the Chakma refugee issue in a spirit of friendship

with India," he said. Earlier yesterday, the Bangladesh information secretary, Mr. Nurunnabi Chowdhury, who is the spokesman of the government on internal affairs, has told newsmen that Dhaka had proposed to New Delhi for a home secretary-level meeting between the two countries but no response to the proposal had been received as yet.

He opined that the repatriation of the refugees was not taking place despite Dhaka's eagerness for it. Interested quarters were preventing the repatriation, he said.

The spokesman further said the influx of the refugees was the result of "the propaganda and intimidation" by a handful of so-called "Shanti Bahini" insurgents.

Filipino rebels' stronghold taken

MANILA, April 2 (AP): Government troops searched for escape routes around a rebel camp in northern Luzon today after taking the stronghold in the largest military operation against the rebels this year, an armed forces spokesman said.

Col. Honesto Isleta told reporters that the some 1,000 troops who launched the offensive on Sunday were searching in the Pacu valley of Kalinga-Apayao province for the estimated 300 to 500 communist rebels who had occupied the camp 320 km. north of Manila and fled when it was attacked.

A crisis of Tam road

THE TIMES OF INDIA, BOMBAY, WEDNESDAY, APRIL 8, 1987, PAGE 16

ing role in the supervision of all ne

do-Bangla border talks 'fruitful'

ZAGLUL A. CHOWDHURY
Times of India News Service

DHAKA, April 7.

A and Bangladesh have tid up their three-day border talks with both sides describing meeting as very useful and for maintaining peace. The common international They have also pledged to rate with each other to curb activities along the com- order.

talks were routine in nature and Mr M. C. Mishra, chief of the Security Forces (BSF), and Shahi Ahmed Chowdhury, direc- tional of the Bangladesh Rifles

meetings take place annually in the two countries, but the talks are assumed special significance of the insurgency along the ong Hill tracts region of the dadesh and repatriation of the a refugees from India.

Chakma issue figured promi- in the talks, the leaders of the legations told newsmen at the before the departure of the team for home this afternoon. sra yesterday morning called on the non-aligned movement, accord- ing to the Zairean news agency of i (AZAP).

Of this amount, India has con- tributed 40 million dollars.

The fund is to be used to assist the frontline states and victims of for- aparthoid in South Africa.

but the matter was not exactly under the purview of the BSF and the BDR. He said appropriate talks at different levels, including the level of local administration, and diplomatic channels, were necessary for a solution to the issue.

Stating that India was keen for an early solution to the issue, he added, "we are involved because we are on the border; the solution of the matter does not lie with us (the BSF and the BDR)," like Major Chowdhury said, "the re- patriation should take place immedi- ately... we want them to be back in their homes as early as possible." He said the conditions in the Chittagong Hill tracts were alright for the return of the refugees.

Informed sources said the talks cov- ered all major border problems be- tween the two countries, with the two sides having agreed to resolve them in a spirit of friendship and co-operation.

\$70m collected for African Fund

DAKAR, April 7 (PANA/Pool): Sev- enty million dollars have so far been collected for the African solidarity fund launched early this year in New Delhi by the non-aligned movement, accord- ing to the Zairean news agency of i (AZAP).

Of this amount, India has con- tributed 40 million dollars.

The fund is to be used to assist the frontline states and victims of for- aparthoid in South Africa.

The Times of India News Service

DHAKA, April 4: India and Bangladesh opened a four-day meeting here today to discuss the problems about the common international borders between the two countries.

The repatriations of the Chakma refugees from India to Bangladesh prominently figured in the talks. The Indian Border Security Force Chief, Mr. M. C. Mishra, led the Indian delegation while the Bangladesh side was headed by Maj. Gen. Shaif Ahmed Chowdhury, chief of the Bangladesh Rifles.

The meeting is taking place in a routine manner as it takes place annually. But this time it has special significance because of the Chakma repatriation issue. A large number of Chakma refugees have crossed into the Indian territory from the Chittagong

8 killed in mishap

Times of India News Service

LUNCKNOW, April 4: Eight persons were killed and 40 injured when a bus in which they were travelling from Ghazababad to Ayodhya collided with a truck in Tilhar in Shahjahanpur district around noon today.

Indo-Bangla talks

The two sides differ about the number of the refugees in India but both agree on the immediate need for the repatriation of the refugees to Bangladesh.

The two sides also discussed matters about strengthening of the security measures along the border and measures against smuggling and trafficking etc.

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Indo-Bangla talks on Chakmas fail

The Times of India News Service
NEW DELHI, April 8.

THE three-day talks between the chiefs of the border policing forces of India and Bangladesh held in Dhaka failed to reach an agreement on the repatriation of the 50,000 Chakmas now in Tripura relief camps.

The Bangladesh government continues to link the exodus of Chakmas from the Chittagong hill tracts into Tripura to the activities of the insurgent group, the Santi Bahini. It also roundly accuses India of aiding the insurgents.

There is however, another view about the cause of the massive exodus. It is the operation launched by the Bangladesh army to settle people from the plains on tribal land in the hill tracts.

There are as many as 75 reports by foreign observers since the Pakistani days in what has come to be known as "genocide operations in the Chittagong hill tracts." Some international humanitarian agencies have also commented on it.

These operations may now have been suspended by the Bangladesh authorities. Dhaka has in fact launched a campaign for creating a favourable international opinion. It is taking groups of diplomats to the hill tracts to convince them of Dhaka's intentions about the repatriation of the Chakmas and resettling them in the hill tracts.

The Chakma refugees are however, not convinced that they will get the treatment promised by the Dhaka authorities. However, New Delhi's unwillingness to force the Chakmas to return against their will is providing grist to Dhaka's propaganda mill that India was trying to keep the problem alive by not sending the Chakmas back.

Dhaka has suggested raising the talks on the Chakma issue to a higher level — between the home secretaries of the two countries — like the meeting that took place between India and Pakistan.

The intention presumably is to attract international attention to the Chakma problem and gain political advantage from it. Dhaka's activities point to that direction.

Another complication that has arisen is that after initially accepting the figure of 24,000 Chakma refugees who have taken shelter in Tripura, Dhaka is refusing to raise the figure although, according to New Delhi, another 26,000 refugees had crossed over since December when the first repatriation agreement was made.

Pak eyes on Dutt march

Indian hopes on Chakmas' safety

The Times of India News Service
NEW DELHI, April 9.

INDIA would like Dhaka to create congenial conditions in the Chittagong hill tracts for the return of the Chakmas who are now camping in Tripura and are apprehensive of their safety back home.

A foreign office spokesman, commenting on the recent talks between the chief of the Border Security Force (BSF) and head of Bangladesh Rifles in Dhaka, said India had the "friendliest of relations" with Dhaka and would like to see the Chakma issue resolved.

India continues to maintain that there are now nearly 50,000 Chakma refugees in Tripura camps, though Bangladesh has not yet accepted this figure. According to the home ministry, there were 31,480 refugees on January 14, the day before the process of

repatriation was scheduled to begin. However, owing to the disturbed conditions in the hill tracts and resistance by Chakmas, the repatriation could not take place. In fact, the influx continued in waves till the figures of refugees in Tripura camps rose to 49,000 on April 1.

The Dhaka meeting did not discuss the Chakma problem alone. The publicity given to this issue appears to have overshadowed a more important issue which can have serious implications for India. It is the continuous and unending illegal infiltration by Bangladeshis through all sectors of the Indo-Bangladesh border.

The BSF chief, Mr M. C. Misra, is understood to have provided to his Bangladesh counterpart figures of Bangladeshis caught on the border in the process of illegally crossing over and pushed back. The urgent need for stopping this illegal infiltration is said to have been brought up at the meeting.

Dhaka has been consistently contesting the figures of infiltration provided by India. Its stand has been that no Bangladeshi has crossed over to India. However, the Indian authorities are finding it difficult to shut their eyes to the problem, having to face the serious consequences political, economic and social — of this infiltration on this side of the border.

The "foreigners agitation" in Assam is only one of the consequences flowing from the illegal influx. Bangladeshis are now found almost everywhere in the entire northern belt of India. They have changed the demographic character of the border areas of West Bengal and Bihar. They are also found in the slums of the capital city, Delhi. Even in Punjab, some of the persons shot in the anti-terrorist and anti-smuggling operations on the Pakistan border have been found to be Bangladeshis.

According to census figures, there has been an extraordinary rise in the population in the border areas of Bengal and Bihar. In as many as 28 villages in the border districts of West Bengal, the population increase has been more than 100 per cent. In another 153 villages, the population has grown by more than 40 per cent. Ten new villages have come up where none existed.

It is suspected that illegal infiltrators from Bangladesh have significantly influenced the results of the recent assembly elections in the border districts of West Bengal, where, social tensions have surfaced and the law and order has considerably deteriorated.

It is feared that the influx will grow in the coming months, with the continuous deterioration in the economic situation in Bangladesh. According to a World Bank study, some 23 million people in Bangladesh have become landless destitutes and have no alternative but to migrate. They can only

Amnesty concern over killing of Chakmas

LONDON, April 12 (UNI).

AMNESTY International has expressed "deep" concern at the continuing unlawful killings and torture of the Chakma tribals by the Bangladesh security forces in the Chittagong hill tracts.

In a just published report, it says that to escape death and torture, the Chakmas were fleeing to the Indian border states of Tripura and Mizoram.

The report says repatriation of the tribals as agreed to between the government of Bangladesh and India, did not commence on January 15 this year. There were 31,000 tribal refugees in India on January 14, a day before the planned repatriation, and today this number has risen to 49,000.

In late December, 1986, it was finally announced that more than 24,500 Chakmas would be returned to Bangladesh. The state authorities in Tripura were apparently unwilling to return those who had protested against their repatriation for fear of being tortured on return home.

The report says that on the night of January 14 this year, the Shanti Bahini forces reportedly attacked a Bangladesh border post. The incident is said to have increased the tribal people's fears.

The report, which contains vivid accounts of the killings and arrest of tribals by the security forces and other human rights violations says "more people had sought refuge in India during December, 1986, and January, 1987."

In October, 1986, Amnesty International published a 38-page report "Bangladesh" — unlawful killings and

torture in the Chittagong hill tracts. It contained eyewitness accounts of the torture and extrajudicial killings of tribal people.

The organisation had asked the Bangladesh government to establish an independent commission to investigate all such reports and urged Dhaka to make public the findings of the commission.

It also asked Bangladesh authorities to ensure that law enforcement personnel responsible for human rights violations were prosecuted.

The Bangladesh government subsequently responded to the information contained in Amnesty International's report in a private communication to the organisation.

The latest report says that there was a marked increase in violent clashes between the Shanti Bahini and law-enforcement personnel throughout last year.

Amnesty International has obtained detailed reports of torture in military camps or villages and of many rapes of tribal women by military personnel between June, 1986, and January, 1987. In some instances, tribal villagers are reported to have been summarily killed.

It says during December, 1986, and January, 1987, several thousand tribal people from Chittagong hill tracts sought refuge in Tripura.

Amnesty International "condemns as a matter of principle the torture or execution of prisoners by anyone, including opposition groups. It recognises that the Bangladesh government has a responsibility to maintain law and order in the Chittagong hill tracts."

Chakmas' return on earliest date

DHAKA, April 26 (UNI): India and Bangladesh today agreed on the need for early repatriation of Chakmas from India at the foreign secretaries level talks held here.

A joint press release issued at the end of today's talks said the two sides agreed to continue official level discussions on the modalities of repatriation of Chakmas.

The foreign secretary, Mr K. P. S. Menon and his Bangladesh counterpart, Mr Fakhruddin Ahmed, led their respective delegation at the talks.

The press release said the two sides discussed the entire gamut of bilateral issues, including Tin Bigha, river waters, SAARC and economic co-operation.

Mr Menon explained to his host a number of steps taken by India to expedite the leasing in perpetuity of the Tin Bigha corridor to Bangladesh.

On the issue of river waters, the two sides agreed to fix dates for the meetings of the joint committee of experts and Indo-Bangladesh joint rivers commission through diplomatic channel.

THE TIMES OF INDIA, BOMBAY, MONDAY,
APRIL 27, 1987, PAGE 14

sources. It has been estimated that 90 per cent of India's development

Chakmas appeal to U.N. for help

GARTALA, April 26 (UNI). FACING with what they call increased torture and oppression the Bangladesh army, Chakmas, Buddhist tribals living in the Chittagong hill tracts have appealed for help to the United Nations and various human rights organisations.

A booklet listing the alleged atrocities has been published by the newly-formed "Parbatya Chattagram Samhati Samiti," which is addressing the cause of these tribals.

The publication also contains the names of army units and officers of various ranks. As many as 48,000 Chakmas have crossed over since 1986 Bangladesh border to India and are presently lodged in makeshift refugee camps set up by the Tripura government.

The Chakmas have also protested against the rehabilitation of Bengali Muslims in the hill tracts, by the Bangladesh government.

The booklet includes names and addresses of 684 tribals, who, it says, have been killed by the soldiers of the Bangladesh army during sudden raids on Chakma villages in the hill tracts.

The 84-page publication also gives details of the atrocities allegedly committed by raiding soldiers of the Bangladesh army on innocent people including women and children.

The tribals who came over to Tripura narrated tales of brutality at the hands of the Bangladesh rifles and re-settlers who were rehabilitated on the hill tracts.

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No aid to Bangla rebels, says India

The Times of India News Service at the airport.

DHAKA, April 25.

THE Indian foreign secretary, Mr K. P. S. Menon, today denied Indian assistance to the Bangladesh tribal insurgents along the Chittagong Hill tract region.

"We have denied these charges earlier also," he told newsmen on his arrival here on a three-day visit to Bangladesh.

Most of the questions he faced from newsmen were about the Chakma refugee issue vis-a-vis the tribal insurgency in the Chittagong Hill tract.

Mr Menon said he had no fixed agenda for talks with the Bangladesh side and anything that the two sides considered important would come up for discussion.

It seems that the Chakma tribal issue will figure prominently in the official talks beginning tomorrow.

The Indian foreign secretary said that tribal refugees from Bangladesh were still entering into Indian territories.

It is the first visit of Mr Menon to Bangladesh after his assumption of office. Mr Menon, who served here as the Indian envoy in the late 70s, described his visit as "sentimental," and recalled his "good days" here that spanned for more than three years.

The Indian foreign secretary was met at the airport by his Bangladesh counterpart, Mr Fakhruddin Ahmed. The Indian high commissioner in Dhaka, Mr I. S. Chadha, and the Bangladesh envoy to New Delhi, Mr Farook Chowdhury, were also present

"As neighbours, it is nothing uncommon that we have some problems, but what is important is that we always talk on such problems," Mr Menon said. He stressed that the main thrust of his talks with the Bangladesh side would be "friendship and understanding" between the two countries.

About the Chakma refugees, Mr Menon put the figures at 48,000. However, the Bangladesh foreign secretary hastened to add that the figured need to be verified and he put the figure at 27,000, as accepted by Bangladesh.

Mr Menon denied a suggestion by a newsman whether the Chakma issue had become a new "irritant" in the bilateral ties and added that the subject was a new issue. He opined that the term "irritant" was something different that affects the entire bilateral ties and there was no reason to jump to the conclusion that any issue had become an "irritant."

Ugandan rebels kill 30 passengers

KAMPALA, April 25 (AP). Rebels attacked a train at a station in north-eastern Uganda this week and killed 30 passengers, a Kampala newspaper reported today.

The daily newspaper, "Munno," which is part-owned by the Catholic church, said an undetermined number of gunmen began shooting indiscriminately into a crowd of passengers who were about to board the Uganda railways train at Soroti.

No solution to Chakma issue

The Times of India News Service

DHAKA, April 27# The Indo-Bangladesh foreign secretary-level meeting concluded here today without making much progress on the issue of repatriation of Chakma refugees from India. The two sides could not evolve any modalities or fix any tentative date for the repatriation of the refugees.

"We have reiterated our proposal that Bangladesh district officials and the tribal leaders should visit refugee camps in India and convince the refugees to return home," the foreign secretary, Mr K.P.S. Menon, told newsmen. The Bangladesh foreign secretary, Mr Fakhruddin Ahmed, was present when Mr Menon spoke to the press.

The two sides today held talks for another two hours in addition to four hours of talks yesterday. They discussed South Talpatty (New Moore) island issue, maritime boundary and issue of waters of common rivers.

Talks a let-down, says Bangla press

The Times of India News Service in the two sides to take steps to allot lands in the diplomatic enclaves in their respective capitals for each other's high commission.

DHAKA, April 28: The outcome of the just-concluded foreign secretary-level talks between Bangladesh and India is viewed here as somewhat disappointing as the Bangladesh side sees no breakthrough in the vex issue of the repatriation of Chakma refugees from Indian territory.

Mr Menon also informed Bangladesh that New Delhi was exploring all possible avenues for the early handing over of Tin Bigha to Bangladesh. He added that dates for the meetings of the joint rivers commission and the joint committee to experts would be fixed soon.

However, the news and views in the Bangladesh press about the results of the meeting were essentially about the Chakma issue.

SA freedom curbs

Indian foreign secretary, Mr Menon, said at the end of the talks that India had nothing to do with repatriation since Bangladesh had to convince the refugees to return. He added that India hoped that a deal place as early as possible, accord on repatriation of Chakmas, was the headline in the circulated English daily, the "New Nation," today while the "New Nation," captioned Chakmas, "no breakthrough on refugee

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