

From: Dr. Ramendu S. Dewan,
c/o Dr. H.D. Locksley, Department of Chemistry,
Salford University, Salford M5 4WT, England, Great Britain.

Date: 20 Sept., 1988 Tel. 061-792 0736 (Home)

Sub: An appeal to save the Chakma, Marma, Tripura and other tribes of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) from the total extermination being carried out by the Bangladeshi regime.

Dear Rudi,

May I present to you the following information relating to the recent massacres and atrocities committed by the Bangladesh Government against the unarmed and innocent Jumma people (the people of the CHT):

1. A copy of "This report was sent by a Chakma who lives in Bangladesh. It was received on 26 August, 1988".
2. "A report on the recent visit to the tribal refugee camps in South Tripura, India, of the Bangladesh delegation headed by the Bangladesh High Commissioner to India, Mr. Faruque Ahmed Chowdhury".
3. A piece, "Chakma repatriation", from the Times of India of July 29, 1988.
4. An article, "Dhaka denies stalemate", from the Times of India of 16 August, 1988.
5. Articles, "The Islamic way", "Fundamental differences", and "Voice of the victims", from the Far Eastern Economic Review of 23 June, 1988.
6. A report, "Bangla law on Islam challenged", from the Times of India of July 8, 1988.
7. A news, "Bangla bar opposes statutory Islam", from the Times of India of 8 August, 1988.
8. A report, "Bangla religion law challenged", from the Times of India of August 16, 1988.
9. An article, "Repeal law: Bangla Hindus", from the Times of India of August 19, 1988.
10. A "Statement on behalf of the Anti-Slavery Society", sent by the Anti-Slavery Society to the U.N. Working Group on Indigenous Populations in August, 1988.

A. BAGAICHARI MASSACRES

On 3-10 August, 1988, the Bangladesh Army and the Bangladeshi settlers combinedly attacked Durchari, Khedarmara, Battuli, Sarwatuli, Bagaichari and some other villages in Bagaichari Upazilla (Sub-District) within Rangamati District. They took away stocks and all valuable things, burnt down the houses and killed at least 300 Jumma people most of whom were old people, women and children. The invaders abducted 25 young girls and took them to the army camps. On 5 August, 1988, the army personnel removed about 20 passengers from the motor launch that was coming from Bagaichari to Rangamati. Many of these passengers are women and young girls and the whereabouts of all kidnapped passengers are still unknown. The Bangladesh army-men and the Bangladeshi settlers also tortured many innocent Jumma people including the teachers of Bagaichari College and the Chairman of the Bagaichari Upazilla Parishad (Council), Mr. Lakshi Kumar Chakma. All the surviving villagers fled to the adjoining forests for safety and the Bangladeshi regime is now resettling the depopulated tribal villages and farmlands with the Bangladeshi settlers.

B. HARINATH PARA MASSACRE

On 2 July, 1988, the members of the Bangladesh Army attacked Hari-

the sleeping villagers killing and wounding many unarmed men, women and children. For example, i) Mr. Manmohan Chakma, 28 yrs, son of Mr. Bharat Chandra Chakma, ii) his mother, Mrs. Suramukhi Chakma, 55 yrs, and iii) one of his relatives, Miss Barun Bala Chakma, 15 yrs, daughter of Mr. Jalakka Mami Chakma, were shot dead. Mrs. Mandira Chakma, 22 yrs, wife of Mr. Lalit Kumar Chakma, and her one year old daughter, Rukhi Chakma, were seriously injured. The invaders terrorised the villagers in order to seize their village and farmlands for the Bangladeshi settlers.

C. ARSON

On 7 May, 1988, Mr. Theongya Badya's (a Jumma) house at Molonca Para village in Manikchari Upazilla was burnt down to ashes by one Farid, a leader of the Bangladeshi settlers from Lamua village in Manikchari Upazilla. A complaint was lodged against Farid with the Police and the Army. No action was taken against the culprit. Instead, the Army harassed Mr. Badya and dismissed the case. This is a typical example of how the Bangladeshi settlers in collusion with the Bangladesh security forces have been committing freely robbery, arson, abduction of women and raping, torture, murder, desecration and destruction of non-Muslim places of worship and all sorts of genocidal crimes against the innocent people of the CHT.

D. RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION

In mid-May, 1988, the Bangladesh Army and the Bangladeshi settlers jointly attacked and destroyed the Buddhist temple at Gandong village in Manikchari Upazilla. The raiders broke all the statues of the Buddha into pieces.

On 4 June, 1988, the images of the Buddha at Milanava Bouddha Vihara (temple) of Pujgang area within Panchari Upazilla were broken into pieces by the soldiers of the Bangladesh Army. The fanatic invaders also cut down the sacred Bo-tree, fruit-bearing trees and flowering plants in the garden of the temple in order to humiliate all non-Islamic religions.

E. HARASSMENT

On the orders of the Bangladesh Government, the members of the Bangladesh security forces and the Bangladeshi settlers frequently harass even the members of the Royal family of the CHT and other eminent Jummas. For instance, on 25 June, 1988, Mr. Rajib Roy, a member of the Chakma Raj family, on behalf of the Mong Raja of Manikchari, was going to the Chittagong cantonment to attend a meeting called by the General-Officer-Commanding of the Chittagong Division of the Bangladesh Army. On the way to the Cantonment of Chittagong, Mr. Roy was publicly insulted by one Col. Ibrahim of the Bangladesh Army without any reasons.

On 7 July, 1988, the Mong Rajguru of Manikchari, Venerable Usadira Mahathera was insulted at 8 a.m. near the Manikchari Upazilla Complex by the Bangladesh Army personnel deliberately.

F. THE SITUATION OF THE JUMMA REFUGEES

Initially the Bangladeshi regime flatly denied that any Jumma refugees fled to the Indian State of Tripura in mid-1986 as a result of the government violence in Manikchari, Lakshmichari, Panchari, Khagrachari and Dighinala Upazillas. However, under the heavy pressure of the compassionate international community, the Government of Bangladesh very reluctantly admitted that only 29,920 out of the total of 50,000 refugees were from Bangladesh and that its security forces committed atrocities on the unarmed Jumma people. To placate the indignant donor countries and human rights groups, the shrewd Bangladesh Government sent a 16-member delegation led by Mr. Faruque Ahmed Chowdhury, the Bangladesh High Commissioner to India, to talk with the Jumma refugees now sheltered in the Tripura State of India about their repatriation. Mr. Ranjit Narayan Tripura and Mr. Prabhakar Chakma led the Jumma refugee representatives in the talks.

The talks between the Bangladesh official delegation and the refugee representatives took place at Jatan Bari Duk Bungalow on 11 July 1988

from 1530 - 1700 hrs. Mr. Chowdhury told the refugee leaders that the Bangladesh Government had realised its blunders and so it was very much repentant for doing injustice to the refugees. He assured the leaders of the Jumma refugees that whatever wrong was done to the refugees in the past would not be repeated and that there would be no more victimisation of the Jumma people. The Bangladesh High Commissioner tried to impress upon the refugee leaders by saying that the situation in the CHT was normal and peaceful. He also promised that the refugees would be provided with full security of life and property and that they would be properly rehabilitated when they would return home.

The verbal assurance of the Bangladesh High Commissioner failed to convince the refugee representatives because his assurance was not relevant to the actual situation in the CHT. The refugee leaders pointed out that there was no peace in the CHT as the Bangladesh Government oppression on the Jumma people was continuing unabated. They gave many examples of atrocities committed by the Bangladesh armed forces and the Bangladeshi settlers. On hearing the stories of those brutalities, Mr. Faruque Ahmed Chowdhury said that he had no knowledge of those incidents and asked Mr. Khurshid Ansar Khan, the Deputy Commissioner of the Khagrachari District and also one of the members of the Bangladesh delegation, to speak on the reported atrocities. Mr. Khan admitted that those reports were true.

The refugee representatives also drew the attention of the Bangladesh delegation to the fact that on the four previous occasions of Jumma refugee repatriation, the Bangladesh Government did not keep its promises to the Jumma refugees. Although the Bangladeshi regime gave them all sorts of verbal assurances about their security and rehabilitation, the refugees were either abandoned or herded into concentration camps immediately after their repatriation. The Bangladesh Government did not rehabilitate them in their ancestral villages nor did it return their own agricultural lands to them. On the other hand, the Bangladesh security forces beat the Jumma refugees from Mizoram just after their repatriation. So the refugee leaders could not rely on the hollow promises of Mr. Chowdhury.

At the meeting Mr. Chowdhury claimed that the total number of the Jumma refugees was about 30,000 whereas the refugees numbered some 50,000. His refusal to recognise all the refugees led the refugee leaders to ask him about the fate of the unrecognized refugees. The Bangladesh official delegation could not give a satisfactory answer to this question as well. Therefore, the Bangladesh Government assurances lacked sincerity and they were dubious, illusive and motivated. The refugee representatives told the Bangladesh delegation that "peace could not prevail at all in the CHT while thousands of Bangladesh security forces and lakhs of Muslim Bengali infiltrators were grabbing the lands of the Jumma people by exterminating them". They "believe that if they return to their homeland on the verbal assurances of the Bangladesh Government then they would be subjected to further oppression and atrocities by the Bangladesh armed forces and the Bengali Muslim infiltrators".

The refugee leaders presented a 12-point memorandum to the Bangladesh delegation. The main points of the memorandum are: i) to solve the CHT issue by political means, ii) to remove all Bangladeshi settlers from the CHT, iii) to withdraw all Bangladesh armed forces from the CHT, iv) to open up the CHT to foreign journalists, neutral observers and human rights groups, v) to repatriate the refugees only after the restoration of peace and normalcy in the area, and vi) adequate financial help for the rehabilitation of the Jumma refugees. "The refugee leaders expressed clearly their views that they would return to their homeland only when their 12-point memorandum would be fulfilled". Soon after receiving the memorandum, the Bangladesh High Commissioner told the refugee delegates that "it was impossible for the Bangladesh Government to fulfil the demands of the memorandum".

The Bangladesh delegation visited the Takumbari refugee camp on 11 July, 1988, to persuade the refugees to go back to their homes. "It met

with angry demonstrations and protests from the refugees who declared that unless and until their 12-point memorandum would be fulfilled by the Bangladesh Government, they would not return to their homeland - the CHT". The Bangladesh delegation also visited the Kathalchari refugee camp the next day and it also came under bitter protests and criticism from the refugees there. The talks between the Bangladesh Government and the Jumma refugee representatives ended in failure because the Bangladeshi regime is not genuinely interested in repatriating and rehabilitating the refugees. Clearly the Bangladesh Government does not want a permanent solution of the CHT refugee problem. Therefore, international pressure should be brought to bear on the regime of Bangladesh in order to compel it to meet the genuine demands of the Jumma refugees.

G. ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM IN BANGLADESH

The fanatic regime of Gen. Ershad has made Islam the State Religion of Bangladesh against the will of almost all opposition political parties and all minority communities in Bangladesh. This Islamic law has really threatened the existence of all non-Muslims in the country as it is encouraging the Islamic fundamentalists to attack the members of all minority communities with greater zealotry than before. The Bangladesh Supreme Court Bar Association has filed a writ petition challenging the validity of this controversial law as part of a nation-wide campaign for the abolition of such a draconian decree. "The minority groups tried to spearhead a movement by forming an action council of Hindus, Buddhists and Christians" and the council handed a petition to the Speaker of the Bangladesh Parliament. The petition said: "Declaration of Islam as the only state religion will result in destroying national unity, curtail equal rights of other communities and even encourage them to take separatist stands".

The Christian churches - led by the Archbishop of Dhaka, Michael Rozario, and Bishop Barnabas Mondal of the Church of Bangladesh - appealed to the President, Government leaders and Members of Parliament to reconsider the move to "preserve the patrimony of independent Bangladesh". They said that "whenever a religion became a concern of the state, it passed in to the hands of those who possessed political power", and they believed that "religion cannot be legislated... only under the guidance of authentic religious persons will religion grow and advance properly".

The Bangladesh Hindu League, headed by Mr. Anukul Chandra Dev, has urged Gen. Ershad to repeal the Islamic religion law saying that this has triggered "systematic and motivated persecution of the Hindu community endangering their life and security badly". It also claimed in a statement - "After the enactment of the law in June last a reign of terror has been let loose by fundamentalist forces with the connivance of the authorities which resulted in a huge exodus of the persecuted minorities into neighbouring India". Mrs. Sheikh Hasina Wazed, the leader of the Awami League, has told reporters in Calcutta that at least 35,000 non-Muslims fled to India by July, 1988, as a result of an upsurge of the Government-inspired communalism in Bangladesh.

Since the declaration of Islam as the State Religion of Bangladesh, the Bangladesh security forces and the Bangladeshi settlers have been brutalizing the unarmed Jumma people with the highest degree of Jihad-fervour. Intoxicated with the Government-imposed State Religion, the fanatic Bangladesh armed forces are frequently launching frenzied attacks on the Jumma villages in order to seize the CHT for their co-religionists. They brutally murder old people, women and children like goats and cows, abduct young women and girls to rape them and to forcibly convert them to Islam, and desecrate and destroy non-Muslim places of worship. The afore-said massacres and atrocities testify clearly that the Jumma people are the worst victims of the recently introduced Islamic law. They also expose the true designs of the Bangladesh Government policy. The fanatic regime of Gen. Ershad is concentrating its efforts on the annihilation of the Jumma people at the moment. After exterminating the Jumma people it will

then turn against the other minority communities with its full Islamic fury. Perhaps, it is worth-mentioning that minority community school children are being compelled to study Islam.

H. INTERNATIONAL INTERVENTION

In response to our appeal for help, the oldest human rights group, Anti-Slavery Society has kindly taken the matter up with the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations again in August, 1988. It has focussed on the inhuman atrocities committed against the unarmed Jumma villagers by the Bangladesh security forces. The Anti-Slavery Society has been alarmed by the increased oppression in the CHT particularly after the legislation of Islam as the only State Religion of Bangladesh. Recognizing the fact that the policies of Dhaka have put the existence of the Jumma people at risk, this conscience-keeper of the compassionate British people has urged the Bangladesh Government to implement the following measures:

1. The end of Bengali settlement in the Chittagong Hill Tracts;
2. The removal of the Bengali settlers except those comparatively few families who pre-date the Bangladeshi state;
3. The withdrawal of all Bangladeshi armed forces including non-tribal policemen;
4. Financial and other help for the rehabilitation of tribal refugees.

CONCLUSION

The Jumma refugees could not return to their traditional homeland as the Bangladesh Government refused to create an atmosphere congenial to their return to their homes. So they will have to stay longer in India. It is not possible for India to take care of so many refugees for so long. I, therefore, appeal earnestly to you to look after the Jumma refugees from this time onwards. The kindness of India has helped them survive for two years and a half. Now they fully depend on your help and kindness for their survival. I should be most grateful to you if you would kindly take economic actions against the Bangladeshi regime with a view to compelling it to implement the demands of the Jumma people.

With my best regards.

Yours sincerely

To

Dr. Rudolph C. Ryser,
Chairman of the Center for World Indigenous Studies,
P.O. Box 82038, Kenmore,
Washington 98028,
U.S.A.

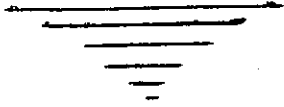
Ramendu

THIS REPORT WAS SENT BY A CHAKMA WHO LIVES IN BANGLADESH. IT WAS RECEIVED ON 26 AUGUST, 1988.

1. On 1.8.'88, the members of the Shanti Bahimi attacked a contingent of the Bangladesh Army while on patrol duty at Durchari, a place within the Bagaichari Upazilla (Sub-District) under the Rangamati (District), (The Chittagong) Hill Tracts & killed seven Army Personnel. In retaliation the Bangladesh Army & the new (Bangladeshi) settlers attacked the nearby tribal villages & killed about 300 tribals including women and children on the following days, 3.8.'88-10.8.'88. About 25 young girls were also kidnapped and taken to the Army camp. Their whereabouts are still not known. On 5.8.'88, the Army personnel also lifted about 20 passengers including women and girls from the motor launch that was coming to Rangamati from Bagaichari. The Army and the new (Bangladeshi) settlers also attacked the tribal villages, burnt them & took away the cattle heads, poultry and other valuables. The people of the affected villages fled away to deep jungles. The Chairman of the Bagaichari Upazilla, Mr. Lakshi Kumar Chakma and the tribal teachers of the Bagaichari College were assaulted by the Army personnel & the new (Bangladeshi) settlers. The affected villages are Durchari, Khedarmara, Battuli, Sarwatuli, Bagaichari etc. Now there is not a single tribal in those villages as all of them fled away to jungles. The dead bodies of the tribals (including women & children) were given mass burial by the Army as there are no tribals to cremate them.
2. On 28 April, 1988, Mr. Arabindu Chakma, 28 years, of Khagrachari area, was hacked to death by the Bangladeshi settlers.
3. In April, 1988, Mr. Shashanka Chakma, son of Mr. Sabinda Chakma of Baradam village in Dighinala Upazilla, was shot dead by the Bangladesh Army personnel while he was ploughing his land.
4. In April, 1988, Mrs. Gurikani Chakma, wife of Mr. Naramya Chakma of Banchara village in Dighinala Upazilla, was shot and seriously wounded by the soldiers of the Bangladesh Army.
5. In May, 1988, Mr. Nirupam Chakma, son of Mr. Hoga Chakma of Tarabanya village in Dighinala Upazilla, was hacked to death by the Bangladeshi settlers with a broad knife.
6. On 2 July, 1988, the members of the Bangladesh Army attacked Harinath Para village near Khagrachari at 1-30 a.m. They opened fire on the sleeping villagers and killed i) Mr. Manmohan Chakma, 28 yrs, son of Mr. Bharat Chandra Chakma, ii) his mother, Mrs. Suramukhi Chakma, 55 yrs, and iii) one of his relatives, Miss Barun Bala Chakma, 15 yrs, daughter of Mr. Jalakkamani Chakma, and seriously injured i) Mrs. Mandira Chakma, 22 yrs, wife of Mr. Lalit Kumar Chakma, and ii) her one year old daughter, Rukhi Chakma.
7. On 7 May, 1988, Mr. Theongya Badya's house at Molonca Para in Manik Chari Upazilla was burnt by one Farid, a leader of the Bangladeshi settlers from Lamua. Complaint was lodged against the culprit with the Police and the Army. No action was taken against Farid. Instead the Army harassed Mr. Badya and dismissed the case.
8. On 10 May, 1988, the Bangladeshi settlers attacked the tribal people, who were coming to the market, in front of the Manik Chari Upazilla Complex. The Police and the Army arrested the rioters for show only and did not take any further actions against the attackers.
9. In the first week of May, 1988, the Bangladeshi settlers of Lamua hacked i) Mr. Aungjosai Marma and ii) his wife, Mrs. Anima Marma to pieces. The murdered victims lived in the Rangapani Mouza within Manikchari Upazilla.
10. In mid-May, 1988, the Gandong Buddhist temple at Gandong in Manikchari Upazilla and the statues of the Buddha were destroyed by the Bangladesh Army and the Bangladeshi settlers.
11. On 25 June, 1988, Mr. Rajib Roy was representing the Mong Chief of Manikchari at a meeting called by the General Officer Commanding of the Chittagong Division of the Bangladesh Army at Chittagong Cantonment. On

the way to the Chittagong Cantonment Mr. Roy was publicly insulted on the main road by Col. Ibrahim of the Bangladesh Army.

12. On 7 July, 1988, the Rajguru of Manikchari, Venerable Usadira Mahathera was insulted at 8 a.m. near the Manikchari Upazilla Complex by the Bangladesh Army personnel.



A REPORT ON THE RECENT VISIT TO THE TRIBAL REFUGEE CAMPS IN SOUTH TRIPURA,
INDIA, BY THE BANGLADESH DELEGATION HEADED BY THE BANGLADESH HIGH
COMMISSIONER TO INDIA, MR. FARUQUE AHMED CHOWDHURY.

A sixteen-member Bangladesh delegation headed by Mr. Faruque Ahmed Chowdhury, the High Commissioner in India, visited the Chakma refugee camps in south Tripura, India, on 11 and 12 July, 1988. The Bangladesh team also had talked with the Chakma refugee leaders during the visit. Mr. Chowdhury and Mr. Akram-Ul-Qadir, the Counsellor in the Bangladesh High Commission in New Delhi, arrived in Agartala on 9 July, 1988, to join the other members of the Bangladesh delegation who arrived at Sabrum, south Tripura, from the border town of Ramgarh, the Chittagong Hill Tracts, on 10 July, 1988.

The Indian Government, through the Government of Tripura State, extended diplomatic facilities and cooperation to the Bangladesh High Commissioner and his team to talk with the Chakma refugee leaders. Talks were held at Jatan Bari Duk Bungalow on 11 July, 1988, from 1530 hrs to 1700 hrs.

The sixteen-member Bangladesh delegation was led by the Bangladesh High Commissioner to India. Mr. Ranjit Narayan Tripura and Mr. Prabhakar Chakma led the Chakma refugee representatives in the talks. The members of the Bangladesh delegation were: 1) Mr. Faruque Ahmed Chowdhury, the High Commissioner of Bangladesh, New Delhi, India, 2) Mr. Akram-Ul-Qadir, Counsellor, Bangladesh High Commission, New Delhi, India, 3) Mr. Mohammad Khurshid Ansar Khan, the Deputy Commissioner of the Khagrachari District, 4) Major Hasan of the Bangla Desh Rifles (BDR) wing, Rangarh, 5) The Additional Superintendent of Police of the Khagrachari District, 6) Mr. Debashish Roy, the Chakma Chief, Rangamati, 7) Mr. Gautam Dewan, the Chairman of the Town Committee, Rangamati, 8) Mr. Charu Bikash Chakma, a contractor, Rangamati, 9) Mr. Jnanendu Bikash Chakma, an Advocate, Rangamati, 10) Mr. Phani Bhusan Tripura, a business man, Ramgarh Upazilla, 11) Mr. Nagendra Tripura, the Chairman of the Guimara Union Parishad (Council), Matiranga Upazilla, 12) Mr. Saithong Chowdhury, the Headman of No. 242 Pujgang Mouza, Panchari Upazilla (Sub-District), 13) Mr. Satish Chandra Chakma, the Chairman of the Logang Union Parishad, Panchari Upazilla, 14) Mr. Lal Nuk Bawm, the Head Master of Ruma High School, Ruma, Ruma Upazilla, 15) Mr. Pijush Kanti Chakma, the Chairman of the Dighinala Union Parishad, Dighinala Upazilla, and 16) Mr. Hla Ching Prue Marma, Bandarban, Bandarban District.

OBJECT OF THE TALKS

About fifty thousand Jumma (the people of the Chittagong Hill Tracts) refugees from the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) have been compelled to take shelter in the Indian State of Tripura, as a result of the killing, raping and arsoning committed by the Bangladesh security forces in league with the Bengali Muslim infiltrators since May, 1986. The refugees are reluctant to be repatriated to their homeland without a guarantee of security to their lives and property. To the Indian Government, this refugee problem is totally a humanitarian question and this is the reason why the Government of India is kindly bearing the huge burden created by such a large number of refugees. In the eyes of the Indian Government, it will be simply inhuman to send these helpless refugees back to their homeland against their will. Obviously, the responsibility of building confidence amongst the panic-stricken refugees lies with the Bangladesh Government. The regime of Bangladesh should do so by creating an atmosphere which will guarantee the security of the lives and property of the refugees. This measure will certainly encourage the refugees to return to their homeland and thus the refugee problem can be solved once and for all. The visit of the Bangladesh delegation to Tripura was aimed at meeting the refugees and persuading them to return to their homeland at their earliest convenience.

GIST OF THE TALKS

Mr. Faruque Ahmed Chowdhury tried to conciliate the refugee leaders at the meeting by saying that his delegation was sent by President Ershad to convey his message to the refugees regarding their return to their homes.

that the Government realised its blunders. Mr. Chowdhury also said that the Bangladesh Government was very much repentent for doing injustice to the refugees. He assured the refugee leaders that whatever wrong was done to the refugees would not be repeated and that there would be no more victimisation. Mr. Chowdhury promised that the refugees would be provided with full security of life and property and that they would be properly rehabilitated when they would return home. To assure the refugee representatives, he said that the situation in the CHT was normal and peaceful and that the tribal members of his delegation had come with him to tell the refugees about the prevailing conducive atmosphere in the CHT. President Ershad sent him to convey the following messages to the refugees: I) Peaceful situation prevails in the CHT and the refugees could go back, II) Development activities in the CHT is going on in full swing, III) The Government would properly rehabilitate the refugees when they return home, IV) Security of life and property shall be guaranteed, and V) Lands grabbed illegally shall be returned to the actual owner.

With the above-mentioned points the Bangladesh delegation verbally tried to persuade the refugees to return to their homes. Only verbal assurances of the Bangladesh delegation could not satisfy the refugees and win their confidence. The refugee representatives raised a question about the sincerity of President Ershad's intention to repatriate the refugees because according to the Bangladesh Government delegation the total number of the refugees was about 30,000 out of which 8,000 refugees had already returned to their homes on their own. Therefore, only 22,000 refugees remained at the refugee camps in India. On the other hand, the refugee representatives claimed that they were about 50,000 in number. So, even if the Bangladesh Government agrees to repatriate the refugees what would be the fate of those refugees who have not been recognised by the Bangladesh Government? The Bangladesh official delegation could not give a satisfactory answer to this question. The refugee representatives believe that if they return to their homeland on the verbal assurances of the Bangladesh Government then they would be subjected to further oppression and atrocities by the Bangladesh armed forces and the Bengali Muslim infiltrators. They termed the assurance of the Bangladesh Government as dubious, illusive and motivated. It was not relevant to what was happening in the CHT. They further told the Bangladesh delegation that peace could not prevail at all in the CHT while thousands of Bangladesh security forces and lakhs of Muslim Bengali infiltrators were grabbing the lands of the Jumma people by exterminating them. The refugee leaders cited a number of instances of gross violation of human rights and also the fresh military build-up in the area. The instances were as shown below:

1. On 28 April, 1988, Mr. Arabindu Chakma of Naran Khiya village near Khagrachari was hacked to death by Muslim infiltrators. His wife, Mrs. Sobha Chakma and his father-in-law, Mr. Taranga Mohan Chakma were also severely wounded by the same culprits for which they had to be admitted into a hospital.

2. On 28 April, 1988, Mr. Sashanka Chakma of Baradam village in Dighinala Upazilla was gunned down by the Bangladesh army personnel. On the same day the culprits molested Mrs. Kalpana Chakma, a teacher of a Government Primary School, and then shot her in the breast.

3. On 30 June, 1988, Mr. Kamal Chakma of Harinath Para village adjacent to Khagrachari, his mother and his three daughters were killed during an attack at dead of night by the Bangladesh army personnel. His wife and her child were also wounded seriously by the raiders and they had to be taken to a hospital for treatment.

4. On 4 June, 1988, the images of Lord Buddha at Milanava Bouddha Vihara of Pujgang area in Panchari Upazilla were broken into pieces by the soldiers of the Bangladesh army. The invaders also cut down the sacred Bo-tree, fruit-bearing trees and flowering plants in the garden of the Buddhist temple.

5. All trees within a distance of two hundred metres from both sides of

the orders of the Bangladeshi regime.

6. The Bangladesh Government has built up new military camps at i) Khedar Chara, ii) Rupa Sen Karbari Para, iii) Bamer Mukh Chara in Panchari Upazilla iv) Gallua Mun in Dighinala Upazilla and so on. This fresh military build-up is a threat to peace and normalcy in the region.

When the aforesaid instances were cited, the Bangladesh High Commissioner told the refugee representatives that he had no knowledge about the incidents. Then he asked Mr. Khurshid Ansar Khan, the Deputy Commissioner of the Khagrachari District, to speak on the matter. Mr. Khan admitted the facts but dismissed them as sporadic incidents. The refugee representatives told the Bangladesh delegation that the refugee problem had started since the emergence of Bangladesh. The Jummas have been compelled to take refuge in India many times. Every time they were repatriated by the Bangladesh Government with verbal assurances only and after being repatriated they found to their surprise that the Bangladesh Government had gone back on its words and commitments. Past experiences reveal the untold sufferings of the repatriated Jumma refugees. For example, 18,000 refugees were repatriated from Tripura in 1981, and 4,000 refugees from Mizoram in 1986. The refugees who were repatriated from Mizoram were even beaten up by the B.D.R. (Bangla Desh Rifles) personnel immediately after their repatriation in the presence of the Indian Border Security Forces on the Indian soil in Mizoram. In stead of rehabilitating these ill-fated refugees properly the Bangladeshi regime subjected them to torture and rape and then abandoned them. Most shockingly they found that their ancestral lands were occupied by the Muslim settlers.

The refugee representatives handed over a 12-point memorandum to the Bangladesh delegation. It was addressed to President Ershad. The contents of the memorandum are:

1. Not to repatriate the Jumma refugees until total peace and normalcy is restored in the CHT.
2. To repatriate the Jumma refugees only after a tripartite talk among the representatives of the Indian Government, Bangladesh Government and the Jana Samhati Samiti of the Chittagong Hill Tracts.
3. To arrange a visit to the CHT by neutral observers such as Indian Parliamentarians, journalists from the news agencies - PTI, UNI, BBC, VOA, AFP etc. together with refugee representatives to see whether the situation in the CHT is really conducive to the repatriation of the refugees.
4. To stop the infiltration of Bengali Muslims in the CHT, and to withdraw all Bengali infiltrators from the CHT.
5. To restore to the Jummas the lands which have been grabbed by the Muslim infiltrators, to rehabilitate the refugees with proper security arrangement, and to wind up the so-called cluster villages or ideal villages.
6. Proper compensation to the refugees for their losses in life and property.
7. To stop immediately all activities for the propagation of Islam in the CHT and to return the Jummas, who were converted to Islam, to their religious belief.
8. To give entrance to all Humanitarian Organizations and foreign journalists into the CHT to observe the overall situation in the CHT.
9. To stop all sorts of repressions on the Jummas.
10. To withdraw all military and para-military forces and also the Cantonments at Dighinala, Ruma and Alikadam from the CHT.
11. To settle the CHT problem politically through bilateral talks between the Jana Samhati Samiti and the Bangladesh Government.
12. To give regional autonomy to the CHT with a separate legislature with a view to safeguarding the Jumma national existence and land rights and also to settling the refugee problem permanently.

The refugee leaders expressed clearly their views that they would return to their homeland only when their 12-point memorandum would be fulfilled.

Soon after receiving the memorandum from the representatives of the refugees, the Bangladesh High Commissioner told the refugee representatives that it was impossible for the Bangladesh Government to fulfil the demands of the memorandum. He further stated that no sovereign state could fulfil such demands.

The talks between the Bangladesh delegation and the CHT refugee representatives ended in total failure. After the talks were over, the Bangladesh delegation visited the Takumbari Refugee Camp in order to persuade the refugees to return to their homes. It met with angry demonstrations and protests from the refugees who declared that unless and until their 12-point memorandum would be fulfilled by the Bangladesh Government they would not return to their homeland - the CHT. The Bangladesh delegation left the Takumbari Refugee Camp in total despair. It also visited the Kathalchari Refugee Camp the next day. The outcome of its Kathalchari visit was the same as that of its Takumbari visit.

In an attempt to mislead the world opinion, the Bangladesh Government included so-called tribal leaders of the CHT in the delegation as members and thus it tried to make a political gain by forcing them to speak of normalcy and peace in the CHT during the talks with the refugee representatives. The so-called tribal leaders were - Mr. Charu Bikash Chakma, Mr. Debashish Roy and Mr. Gautam Dewan - and they spoke like a record Of His Master's Voice at the beck and call of their Master - the Bangladesh Government. However, their efforts failed like a sudden stomping on banana peels. They met with bitter criticisms from the refugee representatives and they were not given any importance by the refugee representatives during the talks.

REMARKS:

It has become clear from the recent visit of the Bangladesh official delegation to the Jumma refugees in South Tripura that the Bangladesh Government does not want a permanent solution of the CHT refugee problem. Therefore, international pressure should be brought to bear on the Government of Bangladesh in order to permanently solve the CHT refugee problem.

XXXXX

This report is based on the information sent by an Indian Observer on 21st July, 1988.

-----THE END-----

No compromise on security

NEW DELHI, July 28 (UNI) and (PTI):

The Prime Minister, Mr Rajiv Gandhi, assured the Rajya Sabha today that "on no account" would India's "security be compromised" in the light of Pakistan's attempts to acquire a nuclear bomb.

The Prime Minister was intervening during question hour on queries about reports in the American journal, "Newsweek", about Pakistan's acquisition of four bombs.

The external affairs minister, Mr P.V. Narasimha Rao, said India's own information was that Pakistan was very close and had "probably already" acquired the bomb.

Mr Rao told Mr Thangabalu and Mr N.T. Reddy that India had taken up the matter with the U.S., but the results "have not been encouraging so far."

CHAKMA REPATRIATION: India will continue to "forcefully" take up with the Bangladesh government the question of repatriation of all Chakma refugees now in Tripura till the issue is resolved.

Giving this assurance, Mr Rao said India looked into this issue on humanitarian grounds and the dialogue will continue with Bangladesh for creating conditions for their safe return.

But on no account, he made it clear, will India be a partner to any agreement reached between the Chakma refugees and the Bangladesh government. This is a matter between the Chakma refugees and the Bangladesh government, he said.

Mr Rao said he had personally met the Bangladesh President, Gen. Ershad, in August last year at the behest of Mr Gandhi. Despite assurances from Gen. Ershad that all the refugees would be taken back, Mr Rao

said he was sorry to note the issue was still hanging fire.

DEFENCE LOSSES: Losses in defence stores have registered a steep rise in the past three years as it touched Rs 15.09 crores in 1986-87.

The minister of state for defence, Mr Chintamani Panigrahi, said in a written reply that losses amounted to Rs 32.46 crores in the past three years from 1984-85.

Losses in aviation items during this period amounted to Rs 29 crores, he said.

Periodic stock taking, vigilance checks and monitoring the movement of store items closely in compliance

with the prescribed procedure are among the steps being taken by the government to check the losses.

TEST RANGE PLAN: There is no change in the government's decision to set up the national missile test range in Ballapur-Bhoprai coastal area of Balasore district in Orissa. This was stated by Mr Panigrahi, who said no one had been so far displaced from the Ballapur region as the process of land acquisition had not yet started. It was, however, estimated that about 6,500 families of 41,000 persons were likely to be displaced when the range is established. They would be suitably rehabilitated, he said.

IPKF DEATHS: As many as 511 IPKF personnel were killed and 1,526 injured in Sri Lanka till July 17 this year.

Stating this in a written answer, Mr Panigrahi said in an operation of the kind undertaken in Sri Lanka it was not

possible to determine the exact number of militants killed.

About Rs 97.80 crores had been spent so far up to the end of May this year on IPKF operations, Mr Panigrahi said.

The present strength of IPKF in Sri Lanka is about 49,000, he said.

PENDING CASES: There were 3,540 cases pending before the supreme court for more than ten years as on January 1 this year.

Cases pending before the apex court for more than three and five years were 26,223 and 16,277, respectively.

This information was given by the minister of state for law and justice, Mr H.R. Bharadwaj, in a written reply to Mr T.R. Bala.

There were 185,930 cases pending before the supreme court as on June 30 this year of which 39,936 were regular hearing matters and 146,014 were admission and miscellaneous matters.

Mr Bharadwaj said there were nine vacancies in the authorised strength of 26 judges. In a written reply to another question, he said the office of chief justices was vacant in the three high courts in Madhya Pradesh, Madras and Calcutta from January 19, March 14 and May 2, 1988, respectively.

HC JUDGES: The government has accepted the policy of having one third of judges from outside each high court and to implement this decision by transfer as well as by initial appointment, Mr Bharadwaj said.

In a written answer, he said a beginning in this direction had been made by implementing the policy of having chief justices in the high courts from outside. Transfers and appointments were being made pursuant to this policy.

Rajya Sabha Questions

with the prescribed procedure are among the steps being taken by the government to check the losses.

TEST RANGE PLAN: There is no change in the government's decision to set up the national missile test range in Ballapur-Bhoprai coastal area of Balasore district in Orissa. This was stated by Mr Panigrahi, who said no one had been so far displaced from the Ballapur region as the process of land acquisition had not yet started. It was, however, estimated that about 6,500 families of 41,000 persons were likely to be displaced when the range is established. They would be suitably rehabilitated, he said.

IPKF DEATHS: As many as 511 IPKF personnel were killed and 1,526 injured in Sri Lanka till July 17 this year.

Stating this in a written answer, Mr Panigrahi said in an operation of the kind undertaken in Sri Lanka it was not

possible to determine the exact number of militants killed.

About Rs 97.80 crores had been spent so far up to the end of May this year on IPKF operations, Mr Panigrahi said.

The present strength of IPKF in Sri Lanka is about 49,000, he said.

PENDING CASES: There were 3,540 cases pending before the supreme court for more than ten years as on January 1 this year.

Cases pending before the apex court for more than three and five years were 26,223 and 16,277, respectively.

This information was given by the minister of state for law and justice, Mr H.R. Bharadwaj, in a written reply to Mr T.R. Bala.

There were 185,930 cases pending before the supreme court as on June 30 this year of which 39,936 were regular hearing matters and 146,014 were admission and miscellaneous matters.

Mr Bharadwaj said there were nine vacancies in the authorised strength of 26 judges. In a written reply to another question, he said the office of chief justices was vacant in the three high courts in Madhya Pradesh, Madras and Calcutta from January 19, March 14 and May 2, 1988, respectively.

HC JUDGES: The government has accepted the policy of having one third of judges from outside each high court and to implement this decision by transfer as well as by initial appointment, Mr Bharadwaj said.

In a written answer, he said a beginning in this direction had been made by implementing the policy of having chief justices in the high courts from outside. Transfers and appointments were being made pursuant to this policy.

Dhaka denies stalemate

By ZAGLUL A. CHOWDHURY
The Times of India News Service

DHAKA, August 15: Bangladesh denies any "stalemate" in the return of the Chakma refugees from India.

The foreign secretary, Mr Mohamad Mohsin, told newsmen here yesterday that Dhaka and New Delhi were in touch with each other on the issue. However, there was an impression in different quarters that little progress has been made on the issue.

Mr Mohsin referred to the visit of the Bangladesh delegation led by its high commissioner, Mr Faruq A. Chowdhury, to the refugee camps in Tripura last month. He said the delegation found that a vast majority of the refugees were keen to return. In fact, the refugees were returning to their homes on their own, he added.

Asked whether the refugee issue was discussed between the foreign ministers, Mr Humayun Rasheed Chowdhury, and Mr P. V. Narasimha Rao, recently in Kathmandu during the SAARC meeting Mr Mohsin said all issues of bilateral interest were discussed between the two. He did not, however, elaborate. "We want to resolve the issue and we are working in that direction," he said.

Asked whether five Bangladesh army personnel had been killed by tribal insurgents recently, he said he had no confirmation on the killings.

Japan's economy

BANGLADESH

The Islamic way

Ershad's religious amendment steals Zealots' thunder

By S. Kamaluddin in Dhaka

The 7 June constitutional amendment making Islam the state religion of Bangladesh has confounded the opposition. Mainline opponents — who boycotted the March elections — and other groups agitating against what they see as exploitation of the majority religion, are unlikely to generate enough feeling within the country to force the repeal of the amendment.

While the move has cut the ground from under fundamentalist groups calling for an Islamic state, it continues a trend towards Islamisation which began in Bangladesh in late 1979. Then, a constitutional amendment removed the four state principles, including secularism, and inserted *Bismillah-ar-rahman-ar-rahim* (in the name of Allah, the beneficent, the merciful) in the preamble to the constitution.

Bangladesh differs from those Islamic countries preaching fundamentalism in that its people, while devout, are relaxed about their religious beliefs. But some observers believe President H. M. Ershad may eventually be forced into creating an Islamic state, despite his expressed view that such a development is not his government's intention.

The government has argued that the latest amendment gives recognition to the Muslim religion practised by the majority of the population, and removes a propaganda tool from the hands of fundamentalist groups. But critics in the rift-prone mainline opposition charge the move was unnecessary and illegal, while the fundamentalist groups are divided, with some believing the amendment does not go far enough.

Voice of the victims: page 16

A recently formed Committee for Resistance against Repression, said on 10 June that the amendment would result in "religious extremism and discrimination" (against minority groups), obstruct intellectual freedom and ultimately put medieval restrictions on the rights of women. It was, the committee stated, a move taken to perpetuate the authoritarian rule of the Ershad government.

The passage of the bill was opposed in parliament by the so-called loyal opposition, which staged a walkout. The leader of the parliamentary opposition, A. S. M. Abdur Rab, said the move would divide the nation further. Protest marches and a one-day strike on 12 June were organised by the mainline opposition, made up of the eight-party alliance led by the Awami League's Sheikh Hasina, the seven-party grouping led by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party's (BNP) Khaleda Zia, and the five-party Left-wing alliance.

Hasina told a large protest meeting in Dhaka on 9 June that whenever her group had an opportunity, it

would scrap the amendment bill. She charged that it was "a heinous move to destroy the spirit of the liberation war and reunite Bangladesh with Pakistan. (Bangladesh, formerly East Pakistan, became independent in 1971.)"

The BNP's Khaleda said the amendment was "highly politically motivated" and was an attempt to exploit religion to divide the nation and generate a communal atmosphere. She described the present parliament as "illegal" and said that it did not have the authority either to amend the constitution or even pass any law.

Prime Minister Moudud Ahmed countered the opposition charges by emphasising that the bill would help consolidate national unity and resist the growth of fundamentalism. Ahmed, who fought in the war for secession from Pakistan, argued that the amendment did not negate the spirit of the liberation war "which was not fought on the basis of secularism."

A senior official, who did not want to be quoted, told the REVIEW that the

amendment bill was drafted along the lines of the Malaysian Constitution where Islam has also been given the status of state religion. "Perhaps it makes some sense in a country like Malaysia where the Muslims barely maintain their numerical superiority," he said. "But in Bangladesh about 90% of the people are Muslim and it was not necessary." It also did not mean anything since there was no constitutional provision to ensure any Islamic tenets were enacted as law, and that the basic



Ershad: more pressures ahead.

Fundamental differences

Orthodox groups cautiously critical

While the passage of the constitutional amendment bill to make Islam the state religion has been welcomed by the country's rightwing political parties in general, there are a range of views within fundamentalist groups on the move. The orthodox Jamaat-e-Islami and other groups have expressed cautious criticism, suggesting the amendment does not go far enough in setting up a truly Islamic state, while another influential group, the Tablig Jamaat, believes that religion and politics should remain separate.

The Jamaat-e-Islami's contention is that the constitutional change was a shrewd and calculated step by the government to "subvert" the "genuine" pro-Islamic parties' movement to establish Islam as a social system based on *sharia* (Islamic law), and exploit the peoples' religious sentiments in the government's favour.

However, it and other fundamentalist groups, which believed that the amendment did not change the basically secular character of the constitution, were careful in voicing their criticism. As both the government and the secularist mainline opposition alliances accuse the Jamaat — the most organised and powerful fundamentalist group — of exploiting religion to hoodwink simple-minded people for political gains, it has to be extremely cautious on the subject.

For tactical reasons, the Jamaat has largely followed the position of the three mainline opposition groups: the eight-party alliance led by Sheikh Hasina, the seven-party alliance headed by the Bangladesh National Party's Khaleda Zia and the leftwing five-party alliance. These groups have said that the controversial fourth parliament — elected on 3 March in polls boycotted by the opposition — did not have the people's mandate to amend the constitution and therefore any such move should be considered illegal.

The amendment had, according to some Islamic fundamentalist scholars, merely inserted in the constitution a new article, which reads: "The state religion of the republic is

character of the constitution had remained unchanged.

Ershad, who was present in the parliament building for the passage of the bill, on 9 June visited Muslim holy man Moulana Hashmatullah at Atroshi, about 80 km southwest of Dhaka, and told a large crowd that the recognition of Islam as the state religion "will enable us to live as a nation with distinct identity." Ershad is an ardent disciple of the holy man.

A diplomatic source said that while government leaders, including Ershad, appeared keen to maintain the secular character of the country, they might soon find it increasingly difficult to withstand mounting pressures from the fundamentalist groups to declare the country an Islamic republic and then to introduce Islamic law to complete the circle.

While the Islamic countries appeared quite happy over the development, New Delhi has quietly expressed its dissatisfaction and concern about the possible impact the bill may have on the Hindu minority. It fears that armed with the new bill, some Muslim elements could take the law into their own hands and create a situation to force the Hindus to migrate to India. Indian diplomatic sources here are saying that they are receiving large numbers of letters from Hindus saying that they were suffering from a sense of insecurity and some complained of regular harassment by the majority community members.

Communal harmony has been maintained in Bangladesh with no major



Protesters denounce moves towards an Islamic state.

communal disturbance in the country since riots in 1964, and the reports of widespread insecurity may be exaggerated. But the rumble of a united opposition movement to unseat the Ershad regime has turned into a whimper of protest as the opposition groups fail to maintain unity, totally demoralising political activists. As a result, the danger of fundamentalist factions reviving communal forces cannot be ruled out.

Meanwhile, the Awami League chief's declaration that any future unity with other political parties has to conform strictly to the party's programme, which includes the demand for a restoration of the original constitution, and not just the ousting of Ershad, is a stumbling block to cooperation with other major political parties. But the seeds of disunity were inherent in the way the movement against Ershad began late last year when a broadly based programme for reforms declined into a crusade against one person — Ershad.

the united opposition movement against the Ershad regime began in late 1983, failed to come out with a common programme for the alliance-proposed 12 June strike, since it has found it difficult to oppose openly the Islamisation bill. The Awami League and other Left-wing parties — especially the pro-Moscow Communist Party of Bangladesh — have openly stepped up their hostilities against the Jamaat. The BNP also will be forced not to cooperate with the Jamaat.

This state of affairs should normally provide an opportunity to the ruling Jatiya Party (JP) and Ershad to consolidate their position. But the JP, because of internal rivalries and organisational weaknesses, has failed to utilise the advantages to the full. Also, the Islamisation move by Ershad — while enabling him to seize the initiative for now — also runs the risk of overtaking him. How soon, though, is difficult to predict.

Islam, but other religions may be practised in peace and harmony in the republic." But it had failed to declare that sovereignty belonged to Allah and not the people and that all the laws to be framed should be based on the Koran and the *sunnah* (teachings of the prophet).

The Tablig Jamaat, an affiliate of the fundamentalist world body based in New Delhi and second in organisation and power only to the Jamaat-e-Islami, does not seem concerned about the constitutional amendment. The fundamental difference between the two groups is that the Tablig Jamaat calls for the purification of the soul and personal reform and the Jamaat-e-Islami believes in capturing political power in order to effect social reform.

The Tablig Jamaat's view is: "If everyone becomes reformed, what is the need for indulging in politics?" The Tablig is, in fact, stronger than the Jamaat-e-Islami in the countryside and in the mosques where its members preach personal reform, and it has proved to be the most effective counter to the Jamaat's social activism. It has been described by other fundamentalists as "pro-establishment" as it does

not work with other groups against the government.

The Islamic Constitution Movement (ICM), which differs from both the Jamaat and Tablig Jamaat, has been formed by four reformist organisations: the Islamic Solidarity Movement led by barrister Korban Ali, the Bangladesh Khelafat Andolan of Moulana Abdur Rahim, the Islamic Jubo Shibir headed by Sheikhul Hadith Moulana Azizul Huq, and the Bangladesh Mujahed Committee led by Abidur Rahman.

The ICM, whose four components may merge formally into one body, has been launched to achieve a four-point demand: that sovereignty belongs to Allah; that the Koran and the *sunnah* should be the basis of all laws; that all existing laws should be changed according to *sharia* within a definite period of the time; and that the country's administration should be run by a representative form of government.

Ali said the declaration of Islam as the state religion was not necessary but, in view of Bangladesh's secular constitution "which goes against the Islamic constitution," was a step forward. But Ali said: "We want implementation of Islam as a complete code of life."

— S. Kamaluddin

Voice of the victims

Women and minorities protest the Islamic move

The country's minorities, secularists, and women's organisations have roundly criticised the move to declare Islam as the state religion. While the women's groups think that the recently passed law was unnecessary and could even erode women's rights, the minorities argued that the move would negate the spirit of the Liberation War of 1971, which was fought by all citizens regardless of their religion.

Despite repeated government assurances that the introduction of Islam as the state religion will not affect the minority communities, non-Muslims appeared deeply concerned. Secular-minded Muslims felt that the move was uncalled for in a country where more than 87% of population are Muslims. Hindus account for less than 10%, with Christians and Buddhists making up the rest. Inevitably, the introduction of the enabling legislation last month sparked off protest from all these groups.

However, the mainline opposition alliances, which had been talking about launching a massive protest throughout the country against the government move, failed to translate their threat

into action. In fact, there was widespread frustration in the opposition camp as Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina left for India where her children are studying. Her return home almost coincided with the passage of the bill.

The minority groups tried to spearhead a movement by forming an action council of Hindus, Buddhists and Christians. The council organised several protest meetings and managed to stage a march on the parliament, where the 2,000 demonstrators handed a petition to the speaker of the parliament. The petition said: "Declaration of Islam as the only state religion will result in destroying national unity, curtail equal rights of other communities and even encourage them to take separatist stands." The council also pleaded for separate electorates for minority communities. Similar groups in some districts with substantial minority populations also raised their voices in protest.

The Christian churches — led by the Archbishop of Dhaka, Michael Rozario, and Bishop Barnabas Mondal of the Church of Bangladesh — ran a front page advertisement in an English-

language daily appealing to the president, government leaders and members of parliament to reconsider the move to "preserve the patrimony of independent Bangladesh."

The advertisement said that whenever a religion became a concern of the state, it passed into the hands of those who possessed political power, and added: "It is our belief that religion cannot be legislated... only... under the guidance of authentic religious persons will religion grow and advance properly."

Although the legislation allows other religions to be practised in "peace and harmony," critics have pointed out that it could open the way towards fundamentalism. Some fundamentalists have already mounted pressure for declaring Bangladesh an Islamic state.

Independent MP Nurul Islam, while discussing the bill in parliament, asked: "Will the corrupt give up taking bribes after this bill is passed? Will everyone become religious? Will all become angels?" And he added: "Are you sure you are not creating more problems?"

Among the problems the new law would create is the fear of fundamentalism and the curbing of women's rights. Women's groups have maintained that the new law is totally unnecessary because the country is well

MACAU

Broadcast news

Probe into local TV company turns into political crisis

By Tai Ming Cheung in Macau

Macau's most riveting drama is currently being played out behind, rather than on, the Portuguese enclave's TV screens. A judicial inquiry, initially set up to investigate allegations of financial impropriety and misappropriation of funds at the local TV company, Teledifusao de Macau (TdM), has turned into a political crisis for the government.

Heads in the administration have begun to roll. The director of the Justice Affairs Office, Alberto Costa, and a deputy were sacked in early June by their boss, Undersecretary for Justice and Administration Jose Antonio Barreiros, for allegedly putting pressure on the judge in the TdM case, Jose Manuel Celeiro. This happened despite an internal inquiry which cleared the two. Even as Costa's influential supporters in the administration promised retaliation, Barreiros is reported to have tendered his resignation.

The judicial investigation was begun after a former journalist at TdM, Eduardo Maia Cadete, gave an interview to a local newspaper on 12 March alleging serious malpractices by TdM's

chairman, Antonio Ribeiro. Cadete's allegations, a source said, resulted from a personal feud between his wife and Ribeiro.

The investigation centres on the role of Ribeiro, two other board members, staff from TdM's accounts department and four officials from the Portuguese bank, Banco Nacional Ultramarino, during TdM's changeover earlier in the year from a state-owned concern to a limited public company. The investigation is looking into allegations that payments made by the new company, TdM (SARL), appeared in the accounts of the old company, TdM (EP), and that company funds were used for personal reasons, including a holiday to Thailand by Ribeiro.

Local lawyers and observers say irregular business practices, such as the backdating of accounts, is standard in Macau and are surprised at the way in which the affair has ballooned. "Other larger financial scandals go unreported, so what makes the TdM case so important?" said one Portuguese journalist.

The case's significance is more politi-

cal than legal, though the two strands are interwoven. On trial are not only TdM officials, but also Macau's legal and political system, a Macanese politician said. "Justice needs to be seen to be done, otherwise confidence in Macau's institutions will be seriously undermined," said Alexandre Ho, a deputy of Macau's Legislative Assembly.

The case shows up serious deficiencies in the legal system, including the lack of measures to deal with corruption. This is not surprising, say some observers, noting that corruption is a fact of life in Macau.

Attempts to reform the system have met with little success. Legislation was recently passed making it illegal for government officials to accept gifts of more than Patacas 500 (US\$62.11) on public holidays (other periods were not included), though a proposal to establish an agency to enforce it, along the lines of Hongkong's Independent Commission Against Corruption, was defeated.

A polarisation of views between those Portuguese and Chinese closely following the affair seems to have taken place, a Chinese politician said. "It is a case of their [the Portuguese] views, and ours [the Macanese Chinese]. The Chinese demand justice, while the Portuguese want damage limitation."

Such a division of views reflects the wider gulf between the indigenous Chinese and Portuguese in the government, and Macanese society in general.

served by the 1937 legislation on Muslim personal law incorporating aspects of the religious *sharia* (Islamic law).

The women's rights groups are also deeply frustrated at the half-hearted protests mounted by the mainline opposition parties. They say that the opposition leaders have chickened out because of the fear that any concerted protest against the Islamic bill could be used by the government to claim that the opposition was agitating against Islam itself.

Various women's organisations — including such umbrella bodies as the United Women's Forum, National Women Lawyers Association, Mahila Samity, Mahila Parishad and Naripakhya — are now expected to put pressure on the government so that any attempts at introducing fundamentalist laws, especially those discriminating against women, are frustrated.

Sigma Huda, general secretary of the Women Lawyers Association, who is also prominent in human-rights activities, said emphasis on Islam had been building up since late president Ziaur Rahman's days in 1979. All the same, she had never believed that Bangladesh would become officially an Islamic country. But that process had just started, she told the REVIEW.

The United Women's Forum organised a number of rallies and processions led by well-known poets and writers, including Sufia Kamal and Nilima Ibrahim, but it failed to budge the administration from its chosen path. This strategy of confrontation by feminists was, however, not to the liking of some women, who felt that indirect pressure through the wives of top government leaders could have borne better results.

Huda pointed out that soon after the government announced its intention to

introduce the recently passed law, the Iranian Embassy in Dhaka circulated a publication entitled *Status of Women in Iran*, which she described as "obscene." The publication sought to focus on the theme that the responsibility of women in an Islamic country was merely to produce and raise children. Like Huda, other women leaders felt that if and when secular parties returned to power they would find it extremely difficult to reverse the policy of Islamisation.

— S. Kamaluddin



Women in rally to oppose new law on Islam.

The government, especially its upper echelons, is regarded as a Portuguese preserve because Portuguese is the only official language, and the Chinese do not speak it. Therefore, scandals such as the TdM affair provide ready ammunition for those in the Chinese community, who feel left out of the territory's affairs, to criticise the Masonic-like nature of the government.

Because senior members of Macau's Portuguese elite are under investigation, with the likelihood of more being implicated if the case continues, there is growing concern that a cover-up is on the cards. "Pressure has been building in the last few days for a cover-up," a local observer said, "including increasing criticism by local pro-government newspapers of the judge and his motives for continuing the inquiry."

The governor, Carlos Melancia, may yet be called on by the judge to explain his knowledge, if any, of the affair. It is alleged that Melancia attended a meeting in February when letters of credit belonging to TdM were discussed,



Melancia: indiscretions.

though those who attended the meeting gave contradictory accounts as to whether the letters were discussed.

Although few doubt the governor's innocence in the scandal, the way the TdM changeover was allowed to be handled may bring a more serious charge of incompetent or negligent management upon the government.

There have been calls for Melancia's resignation in the local press because of this affair and other indiscretions. A Portuguese lawyer, Carmona e Silva, writing in the newspaper *Comercio de Macau*, criticised the appointment of

"unqualified" civil servants in the administration and the granting of land concessions without proper tenders — including the backdating of some since the Sino-Portuguese Joint Declaration on Macau's future signed last year. Observers believe it unlikely that Melancia will go.

Some observers believe that the TdM scandal would not have reached its current proportions were it not for political point-scoring in Portugal. "Melancia

was appointed by Portugal's Socialist President Mario Soares, and the embarrassment to the Macau administration indirectly reflects on Soares himself," a journalist here said. "The Portuguese media, controlled by more conservative interest aligned to Soares' main opponents, the Social Democrats, have picked up and highlighted the scandal with glee. Now the common Portuguese, who before the TdM affair broke, had hardly heard of Macau, associate the place with scandals," he said.

The TdM affair comes at a particularly sensitive time politically and commercially. Macau's transition to Chinese rule in 1999 is already under way and there are plans for several major projects — including an airport — aimed at turning Macau into an international business centre.

Peking has stayed out of the affair, refusing to comment publicly or privately. But Chinese officials are likely to be concerned that the scandal does not affect stability by undermining confidence in the Macau Government. Melancia visited Peking at the end of May and was given a high-level welcome, including a meeting with Chinese Premier Li Peng. One commentator said this reflected Peking's wish to show support for the government. "However," he added, "the Chinese don't care about the TdM affair or who is governor, as long as it does not damage stability in the run-up to 1999."

Repeal law: Bangla Hindus

DHAKA, August 18 (PTI).

THE Bangladesh Hindu League, a minority organisation, has appealed to President Ershad to repeal the act making Islam the country's state religion, saying this has triggered "systematic and motivated persecution of the Hindu community endangering their life and security badly".

"After the enactment of the law in June last a reign of terror has been let loose by fundamentalist forces with the connivance of the authorities which resulted in a huge exodus of the persecuted minorities into neighbouring India, the Minority League said in a statement.

Copies of the appeal along with detailed accounts of atrocities, loot, killing and rape of women were submitted to the high commissioners of India and the U.K. and the ambassadors of the U.S.A., U.S.S.R., Nepal, and Japan, Major A.C. Dev, convener of the organisation, had announced.

The Minority League also urged all humanists, the United Nations, the human rights organisations, and the democratic and Socialist countries of the world to send delegations for an on-the-spot study of the actual condition

of about two crore minority people of Bangladesh.

Similar statements have also been issued by other minority organisations.

According to these organisations, the minorities have been the target of a two pronged attack — one by the hooligans of the fundamentalist forces and the other by the government security forces in many areas of Bangladesh.

PLANNED CAMPAIGN

The areas included, Jessore, Khulna, Faridpur, Barisal, Magura, Narail, Satkhira, Bagerhat, Jhalakati, Perojpur, Madaripur, Gopalganj and Netrokona, they said.

They said "the fundamentalists, taking full advantage of the recent Islamisation, crush and oust the minority community from the soil of Bangladesh in a planned and motivated manner".

They added "the fundamentalist hooligans under the grab of the extremist Sarbahara (Proletariat) party are attacking the minority making them victims of torture and looting to intimidate and coerce them out of the areas".

"The police, on the other hand, dubbing the minorities as the extremists and agents of India are making indiscriminate arrests of youths and old alike and resorting to third degree

methods on them," they said.

The minority organisations alleged that the arrested were being forced to sign confessions under the dictates of the authorities that they were members of extremist group and so far none have been released on bail.

They also alleged that police are extorting money ranging from taka 10,000 to 50,000 for the release of arrested persons or coercing innocent people with threats of possible arrest.

They said the victims were from all walks of life from daily labourers and tillers to students and professionals who had appealed to higher authorities for remedial actions but to no avail.

r):
of
ed
iqi

ed
ng
ad
th

ed
60
ish
er-

18
the
ied
ng
in
an,
of
the

ed
he
vr

(K)
par
ind
war
Sov
firs
troo
the
me
Ka
exil
bre

TIMES OF INDIA
BOMBAY, MONDAY,
AUG. 8, 1988, PAGE 9.

Bangla bar opposes statutory Islam

The Times of India News Service

DHAKA, August 7: The co-ordination council of the Bangladesh supreme court bar association has bitterly criticised the eighth amendment to the country's constitution that made Islam the state religion.

The council at its meeting here on Friday said declaring Islam as the state religion was an "unnecessary step."

The meeting of the council, chaired by Mr Shamsul Haq Choudhury, president of the association, said the decision had unnecessarily created a "serious national disunity."

The eight-party opposition alliance at a meeting said the amendment to the Constitution making Islam as the state religion would encourage the fundamentalists.

TIMES OF INDIA, BOMBAY,
FRIDAY, JULY 8, 1988,
PAGE 7.

Bangla law on — Islam challenged

The Times of India News Service

DHAKA, July 7: The two writs challenging the eighth constitutional amendment declaring Islam the state religion of Bangladesh and providing for the establishment of six permanent benches of the high court outside Dhaka have aroused considerable interest in the country.

A division bench of the supreme court comprising Mr Justice A. M. Khan Chowdhury and Mr Justice S. Ali heard the writs. It was supposed to give its verdict yesterday. It deferred its orders as counsel for the petitioners prayed for further arguments. They will be heard on July 18 and 19.

The writs had challenged the jurisdiction of Parliament in bringing about the amendment to set up benches of the high court in six different places. Opposition parties have demanded that the amendment be scrapped.

The writs questioned Parliament's right to amend the constitution on important issues. Counsel for the petitioners had earlier submitted a verdict of the Indian supreme court to show that Parliament does not enjoy the right to amend any part of the constitution involving the basic structure.

hile
ates
ing
vic-

J.S.
and
bat
nge

lent
ting
e"
raqi
that
his
and
re-
uan

on-
ion
ted
and
no:

TIMES OF INDIA,
BOMBAY, TUESDAY,
AUGUST 16, 1988, PAGE 7

Bangla religion law challenged

The Times of India News Service

DHAKA, August 15: A group of leading intellectuals has filed a writ petition in the high court division of the Bangladesh supreme court challenging the validity of the eighth amendment to the constitution declaring Islam as the state religion and establishing permanent benches of the high court division outside the capital.

Two writs relating to the subject are already awaiting disposal, but the latest one, filed yesterday, has evoked considerable interest since all the peti-

A
A
A
A

Statement on behalf of the Anti-Slavery Society

For about a decade and a half the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh have been administered under either de jure or de facto martial law. In the tracts at the moment there are just under 10,000 armed troops and police as well as the ordinary police force, members of which are to be found, particularly, in every area of Bengali settlement.

The tribal population of 600,000 has been augmented by 300,000 Bengali plains-dwellers 'encouraged' to settle by Dhaka. This influx has been accompanied by landgrabbing, torture, rape, desecration of holy places, and the displacement of tribal peoples currently living in unofficial refugee camps in the Indian state of Tripura and who now number over 40,000. The Bangladeshi army has even attacked an orphanage in Dighinala run by Buddhist monks.

The Anti-Slavery Society has in its possession over 100 cases of violent human rights abuses perpetrated in the six month period up to April this year. It now takes the opportunity in this forum to invite the Bangladeshi authorities to investigate just one of these cases, that of the headmaster of Babu Chara High School. On or about 6 April this year 40-year-old Mr Ranjan Kumar Chakma was reportedly subjected to severe physical beatings and torture by a Major Mahfuz of the 20 East Bengal Regiment. As far as is known, the headmaster is still being held in custody in the army camp at Babu Chara. It is hoped, Mr Chairman, that the investigation will begin as soon as possible and that the outcome will be forwarded to the Centre for Human Rights as well as to the Anti-Slavery Society.

The recent decision to declare Islam the state religion of Bangladesh has caused consternation among the non-Muslim population and particularly among the hill tracts people, most of whom are Buddhist. Their fear that the move will be followed by a policy of Islamicisation has already led, according to the political party the Jana Samati Samiti, (JSS) to increased oppression in the tracts.

Meetings, the first since December 1985, between representatives of the government and the JSS broke off in February this year without any agreement being reached.

In order for a start to be made to ending the unrest and bloodshed in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, and bearing in mind the ethnic and religious differences between the hill people and the majority Bengali population, and noting the widespread fear that their existence as 13 separate hill tribes is put at risk by the policies of Dhaka, the Anti-Slavery Society recommends:

1. The end of Bengali settlement in the Chittagong Hill Tracts;
2. The removal of the Bengali settlers except those comparatively few families who pre-date the Bangladeshi state;
3. The withdrawal of all Bangladeshi armed forces including non-tribal policemen;
4. Financial and other help for the rehabilitation of tribal refugees.