

CHITTAGONG HILL TRACTS COMMISSION

Press Statement

The International CHT Commission lauds the government's decision to withdraw a brigade of troops from CHT areas by September of this year. This is the biggest army withdrawal from the area after the Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord was signed. This is in line with the Awami League's 2008 Election Manifesto which stated: "The 1997 Chittagong Hill Tract Peace Accord will be fully implemented. More efforts will be directed toward the development of underdeveloped tribal areas, and special programmes on priority basis will be taken to secure their rights and to preserve their language, literature, culture, and unique lifestyles."

The CHT Commission supports efforts on the part of the Government of Bangladesh to bring about cessation of hostilities in the region of the CHT through the holding of dialogues, negotiations and the signing of the CHT Accord in 1997. One of the clauses in the Accord was that "all temporary camps of Army, Ansar and Village Defence Forces in the Chittagong Hill Tracts excepting Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and permanent cantonments (three in three district headquarters and in Alikadam, Ruma and Dighinala) will be gradually brought back to the permanent places and a deadline for this will be fixed."

The CHT Commission hopes that this proves to be a start in the phase removal of the rest of the 300 camps, which will be in line with keeping the election pledge of the Awami League government.

It may be mentioned that the CHT Commission was set up in 1990 jointly by the Organising Committee CHT Campaign (OCCHTC), an Amsterdam based organisation and International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA), based in Copenhagen.

The CHT Commission remained largely inactive since 2000. However, the limited implementation of the CHT Peace Accord of 1997 especially with regards to resolving land disputes, as well as worrying reports of continued violations of human rights in the region, continuous influx of Bengali settlers and continued presence of the military compelled it to re-establish the CHT Commission on May 31 and June 1, 2008.

The CHT Commission is co-chaired by Lord Eric Aveybury, Advocate Sultana Kamal and Dr. Ida Nicolaisen.

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