



Australian Forum for Minorities in Bangladesh Inc.

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PRESS RELEASE

Australian Forum for Minorities in Bangladesh (AFMB) in collaboration with Bangladesh-Australia Buddhist Council and Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Jumma Community organised a meeting to protest the recent atrocities against the indigenous people in CHT of Bangladesh at Parramatta Town Hall on Sunday 22 March 2010. A large number of the community members attended this meeting. The meeting was addressed by Mr Uday Shankar Barua General Secretary Bangladesh- Australia Buddhist Association, Dr Ashit Maitra Member AFMB, Dr Atish Barua President Bangladesh-Australia Buddhist Association, noted columnist Mr Ajoy Dasgupta, distinguished community member Mr Nazrul Islam, Ms Kabita Chakma of CHT Jumma Peoples Network of the Asia Pacific and councillor Prabir Maitra. Forum's Assistant General Secretary Mr Nitish Barua and member Mr Chandan Sen also spoke on this occasion. Harmony Day was also observed to celebrate the cohesive and inclusive nature of our nation and to promote the benefits of cultural diversity

All the speakers strongly condemned the atrocities against the indigenous people in the CHT and urged the Bangladesh Government and International community to take appropriate measures for protecting the rights, lives and the property of the indigenous people.

In his address Mr Uday Shankar Barua described the situation in the light of historical perspective and land ownership.

Dr Ashit Maitra mentioned that the severe socio-political manipulation violated the very fundamental rights and it is the responsibility of the international community to protect the right of the minorities.

Dr Atish Barua said that what has happened in CHT is a crime against the humanity and everyone should protest such crime. He expressed his solidarity with the oppressed people.

Referring to a documentary 'Tears of Karnaphuli' Mr Ajoy Dasgupta said how the indigenous people were characterised as people of Thailand. He said that indigenous people are parts and parcel of Bangladesh and the recent atrocities in the CHT is a deep-rooted conspiracy, it is also a conspiracy against the current government.

Mr Nazrul Islam said what happened in CHT is disgraceful. He said that Bangladesh was created on democratic principle and we all belong to a single entity. He emphasised on the

retention of the indigenous culture and protection of the land ownership rights of the indigenous people. He suggested taking appropriate measures to prevent recurrence of such atrocities

Ms Kabita Chakma highlighted the importance of the Harmony Day and gave a historical background of the CHT problems and discussed the root cause of the repeated failures in establishing peace in that region. She also discussed the problem in the light of environmental aspect and biodiversity. She said that the conflict lies in the institutional level not at the personal level.

Councillor Prabir Maitra described the contrast in the rights of indigenous people in Australia and in Bangladesh. He highlighted the importance of prevention of indigenous culture. He read out the message from Hon Laurie Fergusson MP who could not attend this meeting due to his other commitment.

All the speakers emphasised on more proactive stands for the protection of rights of the minorities in Bangladesh, and expressed their solidarity with the meeting towards eradicating the scourge of repression and atrocities against the minorities in Bangladesh. Dr Samir Sarkar, President of the Forum, presided over the event and General Secretary Mr Sanjib Mohajon conducted the function. The meeting paid respect to the victims of the atrocities in the CHT. The meeting unanimously adopted the following resolutions:

- Write to the Government of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh urging to take appropriate measures to protect the rights, lives and properties of the indigenous people in CHT, and to prevent recurrence of such atrocities
- Proper implementation of CHT Peace Treaty
- Withdrawal of Army Camp from the CHT
- Initiate a truly independent judicial inquiry commission into this matter and bring the perpetrators to justice
- Not to provide any immunity to law enforcing authority if they are found to be involved in violation of human rights
- Provide compensation to the victims
- To put an immediate stop on Bengali settlement
- Establish Minority Rights Commission