PRESS CONFERENCE
Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti
On
21st Anniversary of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Accord 97
29 November 2018, Thursday, 11:00 am, Hotel Sundarban, Dhaka

Dear Journalist Friends,

Do accept heartiest good wishes of the Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti (PCJSS) on the occasion of the 21st anniversary of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Accord.

It is getting completed of 21 years since signing of the CHT Accord on 2 December 1997, which was aimed at solving the CHT crisis by political and peaceful means. But it has become a matter of grave concern that two-third provisions of the Accord has been left unaddressed even passing through such a prolonged period of time. What causes to arouse further concern is that the Awami League government, which is though being a signatory party of the Accord, undertook no effective initiative to implement the core issues of the Accord despite being in the power during the last decade. As a result, the core issues of the Accord have been left at the bay as before. Even more deepening concern is emanating from the fact that the Sheikh Hasina government has not only left the core issues of the Accord aside but also, at the same time, has been executing one after another anti-accord and anti-Jumma-interest programs. In consequence to such persecution—

- CHT problem has not been solved;
- Preservation of Jumma (tribal)-predominated feature in the region as well as Jumma national entity has not been ensured in the CHT;
- The laws applicable to the CHT have not been amended as to make them consistent with the CHT Accord;
- The Special Administrative System with the CHT Regional Council and three Hill District Councils has not been attained institutional form;
- The CHT Regional Council and the Hill District Councils have not been constituted through right to direct-franchise basis of the permanent residents of both Jumma and Bengali people of CHT;
- The subjects, such as, general administration, law & order, police (local), land & land management, forest & environment, tourism, secondary education, development, etc. have not been devolved to the three Hill District Councils;
- The CHT Regional Council Act has not been made effective and thereby the CHT Regional Council has been left dysfunctional;
- Illegal occupation of lands by the Bengali settlers, non-resident individuals and companies and the government authorities including the army has not yet stopped and hence, the land disputes arising out of illegal land occupation have not been resoluted;
- All the temporary camps including the ‘Operation Uttoron’ have not been withdrawn, as a result, the military rule in CHT has not been put to an end;

- The India-returnee Jumma refugees and internally displaced Jumma families have not been properly rehabilitated having their lands returned to the original owners;

- Appointment of the permanent residents in all jobs available in CHT on the basis of preference to the Jumma people has not been ensured;

- The Bengali settlers have not been rehabilitated outside CHT with due honour and dignity; and

- Military operation, searching houses at odd hours, arbitrary arrest, extra-judicial killing, torture, camp expansion, terrorist activities, threatening, etc. continue to exist.

**Dear media friends,**

After returning to power in 2009, the grand alliance government led by Awami League though has been in the state power for two consecutive terms covering one decade, has stepped up no effective and visible initiative in executing the unimplemented core issues of the Accord. Above all, the government continued to propagate at home and in abroad stating that ‘Altogether 48 sections out of 72 have been completely implemented’, ‘80% of the Accord has already been implemented’, ‘the government is absolutely sincere in implementing the Accord’, ‘the remaining portion of the Accord will be implemented during tenure of this government’, etc. On the other hand, some people sitting in the power while resorting to fraudulent logic say: ‘No Accord in the world has ever ended in 100% implementation and in fact, no Treaty in the world has been so speedily implemented as it has been the case with CHT Accord,’ etc.

In reality, it is only 25 sections out of 72 have been implemented while two-thirds sections including core issues of the Accord has been left unaddressed as yet. Having extolled the realistic state of implementation of the CHT Accord, an 18-page report titled “Statement of the sections of the Accord, which have not been implemented” along with supporting documents containing 16 annex was submitted to the Prime Minister on 1 April 2015, on part of the President of PCJSS. Despite being so, the government has been rendering untrue information on implementation status of the CHT Accord in the manner as Goebbels had done in the past.

On the other hand, in order to thwart down the ongoing PCJSS-led democratic movement in demand for speedy and proper implementation of the Accord, local leadership of ruling party, in league with the army and police forces, continues to file up fabricated and conspiring cases against the PCJSS members in a process involving arbitrary arrest, persecution and meting out atrocities upon them. The main objective of such fascist atrocities and torture on part of the government is to obstruct the implementation process of the Accord and to bring an ultimate ruin to the PCJSS leadership while turning the non-muslim-dominated CHT into a Muslim-dominated region.

**Dear Media Friends,**

Though the CHT Accord provides the provision by merit of which CHT has to be introduced with a special administrative system comprising of the CHT Regional Council and three Hill District Councils, it is due to not devolving the administrative power & functions including the general administration, law & order, police, land & land management, forest & environment and development of communication, the special administrative system could not take institutional form till date. The Awami League-led present government, even being in the state power for the last decade, did not undertake initiative to hold elections in these
Councils. On the contrary, as a result of having the non-elected partisan members seated in the Councils, all the three Hill District Councils have been turned into dens of corruption, irregularities and anti-people practices and instead of contributing towards implementation of the CHT Accord, the three Hill District Councils have been serving as ruling party puppets and playing anti-accord role in the narrow interest.

On the other side, the district and upazila (sub-district) administrative authorities including the law & order authorities have been playing anti-accord role under indulgence of the government. While ignoring the CHT Regional Council and the Hill District Councils, these authorities have been operating general administration, law & order, land & land management, forest & environment, relief & disaster management, development programs, etc. at their own. As a result of having no participation and role of the local people in the three districts and upazila authorities, administration of the genre has become an undue burden of the people. In practice, these authorities, instead of being pro-people, are engaged in executing anti-accord and anti-Jumma interest programs as to bring an ultimate ruin to the very existence of Jumma national entity for ever. Consequently, the Jumma people are being pushed towards an insecure and uncertain future.

As a result of introducing de facto military rule by promulgation of ‘Operation Uttoron’ ignoring terms of the CHT Accord in 2001, the army authority in the CHT has been interfering in all domains, such as, general administration, law & order, judiciary, land & land management, development programs, etc. in colonial manner. By merit of the ‘Operation Uttoron,’ the activities that the army have been conducting include: carrying out military operation in nook and corner of the CHT, unwarranted searching of the houses, filing up fabricated cases, taking in arrest without warrant, detention in the camps and meting out inhuman physical torture and extra-judicial killing, rape of women and girls, undue interfere in judiciary and public gatherings, extending direct support to the Bengali settlers in forcible occupation of lands, communal attacks and conspiracy directing to abolish the Jumma national entity. With an aim to fulfill their vested interest through maintaining unrest situation in the CHT, they have been sheltering vested armed elements in the CHT for continuous armed conflict, extortion, murder, kidnapping, etc., freely.

It is to be mentioned that on top of all, wide-scale propaganda associated with information terrorism has been being carried out often portraying the democratic movement for implementation of CHT Accord to be ‘terrorism, extortion and armed activity’. The scenario depicts that in one hand, propaganda against the members engaged in the movement is being spread out through print, electronic and online media run by some hired-upstart journalists while declaring strong-worded threatening and prohibition upon the journalists refraining them from publicising the news of the fascist suppressive measures and anti-human oppression and atrocities of the local administration and government forces. Consequently, the helpless hill residents including Jumma people in the CHT, for having landed in the circle of ill-propagation and information terrorism being perpetrated by the local administration and government forces, are under compulsion to lead a suffocating life.

**Dear Journalist Friends,**

Land dispute is one of the core issue of the CHT crisis. The land dispute gradually came to be acute and complexier when in 1980s, more than 400 thousand of outsider Bengali people were settled in the CHT and lands of the local Jumma people were forcibly occupied followed by illegal land acquisition and grabbing on part of various government authorities, lands illegally giving in lease to the civil and military bureaucrats and influential personalities. Though the CHT Accord contains a provision for resolving land dispute by constituting a Land Commission to solve out the dispute in accordance with the existing law,
custims and practices in the CHT, not even a single land dispute has been solved during the last 21 years. After prolonged movement and struggle for 15 years, the contradictory sections of the CHT Land Dispute Resolution Commission Act 2001 were amended in 2016. But afterwards, the government has kept the Rules of the Land Commission hanging for more than two years. It is due to non-finalization of the Rules, to start with hearing of land disputes or judicial procedure of the Land Commission could not be made possible. On the other side, though the CHT Land Commission was formed but the Commission has not been equipped with necessary manpower and fund. Though the Head Office of the Commission has been established in Khagrachari district, no branch offices have been established in Rangamati and Bandarban hill districts. Thus how the government has been obstructing the work of CHT Land Dispute Resolution Commission.

It is relevant to be mentioned that instead of land dispute resolution in CHT, the government is ahead with unabated land confiscation; giving the lands in settlements and leases to the outsiders; fresh infiltration of outsiders into CHT as to further marginalize the Jumma people to minority; conducting communal attacks and setting fire in the villages one after another in order to evict and drive them from their lands, etc. programs. Thousand acres of lands are being grabbed, illegally occupied and brought under acquisition in the name of expansion of reserve forest area and expansion of cluster village of the Bengali settlers, establishment of army camps and training centers and their expansion; and establishment of military tourist centers. Instead of rehabilitating the Bengali settlers outside CHT with due honor and dignity, migration of outsiders from the plain districts is continuing under patronization of the administration. At least 20 communal attacks including 11 communal attacks during tenure of the present government took place during the post-accord period the very objective of which is to evict the Jumma people from their own lands and thereby to extinct them racially.

Dear Friends from Media,

Amidst suppression & atrocities upon the Jumma peoples, under fascist rule and delicate situation in the CHT, the 11th Parliamentary Election is also all set to be held in the CHT together with the whole country. Under the situation as such is not at all conducive to holding fair, free, impartial, acceptable and participatory election in the CHT. Immediately after declaration of 11th Parliamentary Election Schedule, the on-going joint-force operation in the CHT has been strengthened further in the name of recovery of illegal arms. As to this day, every operation conducted in the name of recovering arms, indeed, were led to suppress and oppress the leaders, workers and individuals engaged in the democratic movement in demand for speedy and proper implementation of the CHT Accord. Just ahead of the ensuing National Election, this gesture of present government makes it clear that the joint-force drive against the PCJSS, indeed, is to achieve a mean objective of providing favourable assistance to the ruling party candidates. In the meanwhile, several new check-points have been erected along the roads and bazaars and the innocent people are being harassed at these check-points. The people of the CHT particularly in Bandarban and other areas have been ordered to keep the National Identity Card all the time to produce them in the check-posts when asked for any time and during checking up. It is a state of urgency to stop such anti-people activities of the army and law & order forces in the interest of holding free, fair, participatory and acceptable election in the CHT.

Dear Media Friends,

The CHT situation, as a whole, has become extremely critical. Especially, in recent days, violence against the Jumma women has got accelerated to an alarming state. In June 2018, a tender-aged Tripura girl was gang-raped in the Khagrachari Hill District Council Park; in July 2018, one 10-year old Tripura girl was brutally killed after rape; allegation of rape of
two Tripura girls by BGB personnel in Lama in August; killing of a Tanchangya woman with disable after rape in Alikadam in November etc. are latest horrifying incidents of worthmentioning. In October 2018, the Buddhist temple and Buddha image were broken at Guimara of Khagrachari hill district. In November 2018, one innocent school going Marma student was shot death by the army in Rowangchari of Bandarban district. No judicial measure has yet been taken against the culprits responsible for arson and communal attack in Longadu village under Rangamati Hill district in June 2017. More than 500 Jumma villagers from Alikadam, Thanchi, Lama and Naikhyongchari upazilas of Bandarban hill district had to migrate to Myanmar due to lack of security to life and livelihood.

Today, it is only exploitation, oppression, injustice, despair, hoplessness and scream in the CHT region. The Jumma peoples are losing their lands everyday; they are getting deceived everyday; everyday they are getting subjected to indignity and atrocities. The women are dishonoured and violated by some way or the other. The government of Bangladesh including that of others in the ruling class whatever claims their governance system to be democratic, non-communal, development-oriented and progressive but if one looks at the CHT, one can see that such claim is not true. In fact, the government including the ruling class want to see the 14 indigenous ethnic groups get abolished and the non-Muslim dominated CHT turns into a Muslim-dominated region. It is not exaggeration to say that the military rule in CHT has been existent ever since the very birth of Bangladesh; suppression, oppression, exploitation, deprivation, tyranny and injustice in CHT continue to exist in colonial manner. The ruling class of today’s Bangladesh, as the heir to the conspiracy of turning the non-Muslim-dominated CHT of 1947 into a Muslim-dominated region, are always active to destroy the national entity of 14 indigenous peoples.

Today, as a result of misuse of state power, extreme corruption, extortion-cum-tender trade, making party lineage, insincerity and reluctantness of the ruling class in implementing Accord; atrocities of the government-sponsored armed elements; illegal infiltration and land occupation; arbitrary arrest, searching operations, filing fabricated cases; suppression and oppression and military atrocities, the Jumma peoples are deeply panic-striken and infuriated upon the ruling class. Consequently, the Jumma peoples, while standing in the edge with an insecured and uncertain future, are being compelled to give a deep thought over their ‘Dos’ in the days to come.

Heartfelt thanks to all of you present here.

(Jyotirindra Bodhipriya Larma)
President
Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti