May 2020: Monthly Report on Human Rights Situation in the CHT

In combating the COVID-19 virus, likewise in the country, also in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) where the public life has landed in stagnancy and the economic life and livelihood are passing a reality of hardship due to (undeclared) lockdown; even being so, in place, anti-Accord and anti-Jumma-interest conspiracies followed by tyranny, persecution, restriction and repression do not get stopped at all. While securing the reality created out of battling COVID-19 as a cover, wide-range conspiracy against implementation process of the CHT Accord of 1997 followed by ill-efforts directed to identifying the rights activists who voice their demand for implementation of the Accord, as ‘miscreants’, is being gradually accelerated by the government and the state forces.

The government and the state forces, in one hand, have been executing various programs and blue print, which are conflicting to the CHT Accord and counter to Jumma national entity abusing the state machineries and administrative power, while attempting to flow the situation to different course by making use of their created and sponsored Reformists and so-called UPDF (Democratic) elements, on the other. Likewise, the situation that would prevail during pre-Accord era, all measures have been done well fortified with creation of ignitable war-situation and for ethnic cleansing of the Jumma people. This has resulted in regular human rights violations in the forms of killing, filing fabricated cases, persecution, unwarranted searching, military campaigns elsewhere and attacks being perpetrated by the state forces and their hired armed elements known as Reformists and so-called Democratic UPDF.

It is by merit of the ‘Operation Uttoron’ (Operation Upliftment), likewise the pre-Accord days, the military authority, intelligence agency, law & order forces including other para-military forces, all the time, have been conducting military operations and carrying out persecution, suppressive measures, harassment, religious defilements, searching, seizing houses, holding up, arrest, including extra-judicial killing and forced disappearance, etc. while trampling down the democratic rights, human rights and other rights as recognized in light of the Accord. Indeed, the armed forces deployed in the CHT have been perpetrating irrespective atrocities upon the PCJSS workers and supporters vocal for implementation of the CHT Accord by having them identified and branded as ‘terrorists’ and ‘extortionists’ obviously to nullify the implementation process of the Accord and to frustrate the movement for establishment of the right to self-determination and ultimately, with a mean objective to exterminate the Jumma people racially.

As part of the ‘modus operandi’ in May 2020, the record of army atrocities reveals: 1 person injured, 1 tortured inhumanly under custody, searched at least 60 houses for nothing, rampaged 4 makeshifts at Jum cultivation plots, prevention in building a temple, initiative for establishing a new army camp including series of operations, patrolling, enumerable harassments and threatening. Besides, in Bandarban hill district, 60 families belonging to Mro, Tripura and Marma indigenous groups are in fear of lifting damage, as a result of Alikadam-Kurukpatajhiri-Poamuhri Road being constructed by the army.

It is now all clear under the sky that with a view to destroying the battling for protection of Jumma National entity and the existence of their birth land including for sustenance of military
rule and Islamization in the CHT, the government and state forces have established a reign of terror by way of providing covert and overt support and sponsorship to the Reformist armed group and UPDF (Democratic) armed terrorists. Having these armed elements turned into their hired stooges, the state authority has been carrying out its ill-design by setting them in free-hand involvement in perpetrating missions for killing, kidnapping, holding hostages in exchange of ransom, extortion and threatening alongside ill-attempt of keeping the right activists and people lively engaged in the movement for Accord implementation, as hostages.

Meanwhile, the state forces with providing active support and escorting these terrorist elements to Subalong and various places under Rangamati hill district and in Bandarban hill district, have accelerated the conspiracy of inciting them against the Jumma people. The chronological events of the hired stooges in last May 2020 reveal: altogether 8 persons including 7 persons by Reformists and Democratic UPDF and 1 person by ALP were kidnapped from whom realization of a sound amount of money as ransom; 2 persons beaten up mercilessly, 3 women were threatened, blank shots were fired at 3 places and allegation of collecting fixed amount as extortion from innumerable families and persons of various professions regularly.

In recent communal attack committed by the Muslim settlers in Longadu, 6 Jumma people were wounded while 1 Jumma person was severely beaten up in Amtuli Union under Baghaichhari Upazila. Making use of the COVID-19 situation, illegally procuring and supplying thousands of cubic feet natural stones from Nayapara Union area of Toin Mouza under Alikadam of Bandarban hill district by Jaynal Abedin, former President of Swechchasebak League; illegal extraction of sands by 2 leaders of the ruling Awami League party from the Sangu River bed beneath the Sangu Bridge, in Bandarban district town; and the incidents of poaching timbers of more than 70 years old mother trees from Bomu Kulaikkhyajhiri of Matamuhari Reserve Forest under jurisdiction of Lama Forest Range.

1 person injured, 1 tortured, 28 houses searched, numerous harassments by army-BGB

1. On 01 May, between 2.30 am and 4.00 am, a search was carried out by army from Rowangchhari camp to six houses in Wagai Para, Ward No. 9 of Alekshyong Union in Rowangchhari Upazila under Bandarban Hill District. The owners of the houses are Bishwanath Thanchangya (48), Chairman, Alekshyong Union; Bimal Thanchangya (Karbari) (80), Swapna Sen Thanchangya (38), Rabindra Sen Thanchangya (41), Debashish Thanchangya (Teacher) (40), Gyana Ranjan Thanchangya (Former Headmaster) (70) and Rigan Barua (35).

2. On 01 May, at around 10.30 pm to 12:00 pm, another contingent of the Army from the Roawngchhari camp patrolled the Taimrongchhara Para of Ward No. 1 of the Rowangchhari Sadar Union. At that time, Ratri Kumar Thanchangya (Karbari) (52), Lakshi Kumar Thanchangya (48), Rango Lal Thanchangya (48), Kalo Sen Thanchangya (40), Milon Thanchangya (50) and Sunda Lal Thanchangya (Majhi) (55) interrogated and harassed 7 villagers. At the same time, the army also searched at least 6 houses in the village.

3. On 2 May from 1.00 pm to 3.00 pm a group of army personnel from Rowangchhari camp searched the houses of 10 persons in Natingjhiri Para of Ward No. 9 of Alekshyong Union in the upazila. The houses are Sanu Thanchangya (48), Likka Thanchangya (50), Koli Thanchangya (27), Mohan Lal Thanchangya (65), Wasin Thanchangya (27), Aurobindu Thanchangya (75), Khokon Thanchangya (35), Parikya Thanchangya (50), Shasan Mani Thanchangya (Karbari) (70) and Dili Kumar Thanchangya (50).
4. On 4 May Suichapru Marma, an elected member of Ward No. 8 of Raikhali Union in Kaptai Upazila, who was arrested by the Kaptai Army Zone in Rangamati district, was taken to the Kaptai Zone and released in critical condition after being illegally beaten for 7 days. It may be mentioned that on 26 April, Suichapru Marma was arrested by the Kaptai Zone.

5. On 5 May a new army camp has been started to set up at Merangchhara Marma Para in Ward No. 5 of Kengrachhari Union under Bilaichhori upazila of Rangamati district.

6. On 5 May at around 10:00 pm, a group of army personnel led by Md. Shahadat, the warrant officer of the new army camp at Sijokmukh in Baghaichhari, surrounded the house of Kirti Ranjan Chakma alias Bhutto Lal of Sijok Galachiba village. When Kirti Ranjan Chakma was not found at home, his wife was interrogated in a humiliating manner and gave various threats. The army then surrounded the house of Priti Chakma in the same village.

7. On 12 May at around 3:30 pm, an army of 20 personnel led by a major of Shichak sub-zone under Matiranga army zone in Matiranga upazila of Khagrachhari district demolished the Jum houses of 4 Jumma Jum farmers and destroyed many banana seedlings planted in Jumma. The affected Jum farmers are Upendra Tripura (Karbari) (63) of Rupshi Para, Apan Kumar Tripura (38) of Jal Kumar Para, Purna Kumar Tripura (65) and Paila Kumar Tripura (53) of Tantung Para.

8. On 15 May, BGB members of Ramgarh Lacharipara BGB camp in Ramgarh upazila bordering Matiranga upazila obstructed the construction of a Buddhist temple while local Jumma villagers in Matiranga upazila under Khagrachhari hill district were constructing a temple. The villagers were forced to stop construction work of Bihara due to threats from BGB members.

9. On 22 May, from about 1.00 pm to 2.30 pm, a group of 20-25 army personnel from the Rowangchhari army camp conducted a search at Tanchangya village called Natingjhiri in Rowangchhari upazila of Bandarban district. At this time, the sleeping villagers were woken up, gathered in one place and interrogated and harassed.

10. On 25 May, at around 8:00 pm, a group of soldiers from the new Sijokmukh army camp surrounded the house of Tushar Kanti Chakma, an assistant teacher at Sijokmukh High School, and searched his house.

11. On 26 May, even during the misery caused by the COVID-19 epidemic, the army of the Rowangchhari army camp came to different villages to collect various information and took pictures of the villagers. Even information and photographs were also taken from former headmaster of Bandarban Government High School Gyana Ranjan Chakma and his family members. Another group of the army started taking pictures at 10 am that day in Bangchhari shop area of Rowangchhari.

12. On 26 May at around 3.30 pm Ripon Chakma, a 9th class student of Banjogichhara High School in Jurachhari sub-district, was shot during a target shooting by army of a camp named 1810 Camp under Banjogichhara zone of Rangamati district. When the condition of the injured Ripon Chakma deteriorated, the army authorities took him to the Chittagong Combined Military Hospital.

13. At least 60 families in 13 villages of Mro, Tripura and Marma communities of Kurukpara union of Alikadam upazila have been affected by Alikadam-Kurukpata-Poyamuhuri road in Alikadam upazila of Bandarban hill district under construction by 18 construction engineering battalion (16 ECB) of Bangladesh army.
14. On 31 May, a group of army numbering 18/19 personnel led by Warrant Officer Abul Momin patrolled the Sapchhari area of Ward No. 6 of Jurachhari Union from Jakshabazar Army Camp under Banjogichhara Zone under Jurachhari Upazila.

15. On May 31 at around 5:00 pm, the army provided security protection (escort) to a Reformist armed group to reach them at Chairman Para of Jibitali Union under Rangamati Sadar Upazila.

16. On May 31 at around 10 am, a group of 30/35 soldiers from the Rajmoni Para army camp in Jurachhari Upazila Zone (6 Bir) of Rangamati District conducted patrolling at a teak garden area between Badalchhari and Kaindya in Rangamati sadar upazila.

17. On 31 May, the army escorted Reformist and UPDF (Democratic) groups to reach at Baghmara in Rowangchhari upazila of Bandarban district from Khagrachhari district.

6 abducted, 2 beaten, 3 women threatened, blank shot at 3 places by army-backed Reformist, UPDF (Democratic) and Mog party

1. On 6 May at the afternoon, Rijuk Karbari named Prusanu Marma (38) of Ruma Upazila in Bandarban district, was abducted by an army and local AL-backed armed group so-called Mog Party. While searching for the missing persons, the terrorists shot at the villagers. On the morning of May 7, the kidnappers demanded a ransom from Karbari's wife over cellphone.

2. On 8 May Friday evening, a Jumma villager named Sudhir Tripura alias Kabli (45) son of Purnajoy Tripura was abducted from Matiranga Bazar in Khagrachhari Hill District by army-backed Reformist terrorists. The kidnappers demanded Tk. 5 lakh as ransom for Sudhir Tripura.

3. On 11 May Monday a Tripura motorcyclist named Nukul Tripura (42) was abducted and inhumanely beaten by army-backed UPDF (Democratic) armed terrorists at Matiranga Bazar in Matiranga upazila of Khagrachhari district. The kidnappers later released him in exchange of ransom.

4. On 12 May at around 3.00 pm, an innocent villager named Jewel Chakma (28) of Billachhara village of Barkal Union was subjected to inhuman beating when he went to Subalong Bazar of Subalong Union of Barkal Upazila under Rangamati Hill District by the army-backed Reformist terrorists.

5. On 13 May, the army-backed Reformist armed group fired blank shots in at least two places in Kuhalang of Bandarban district and at least one place in Baghaichhari of Rangamati district, in a bid to create panic in the area, divert the situation into other direction and widen their dominance.

6. On May 14 at noon, a group of Reformist terrorists abducted a Jumma male nurse of Barkal Upazila Government Hospital named Tapan Chakma (35) at gunpoint from the Paharika bus counter in Ranirhat of Rangunia under Chittagong district. Later, the terrorists released Tapan Chakma in exchange for a large ransom.

7. On 14 May in the early hours, two Marma villagers, Shumeu Mong Marma (52) and Shisu Marma (50) were abducted by Mog Party miscreants from the Poiture Para area of Gaindya Union in Rajaasthanl upazila of Rangamati district.

8. On 18 May in the morning, an innocent person named Jidong Chakma alias Dari (45) was abducted by army-backed Reformists and UPDF (Democratic) terrorists from Karengatli Bazar in Baghaichhari upazila of Rangamati district.
9. On 20 May at around 8.30 pm, army-backed Reformist group searched the house of Sadhan Purna Chakma alias Boli Bap in Nalbania village of Khedarmara union in Baghaichhari upazila of Rangamati district.

10. On 23 May at around 12:00 noon, the Reformist and UPDF (Democratic) terrorists in collaboration with the army abducted Jnankirti Chakma, founder of Jumma Film Association (Jupa), from Udalbagan in Babuchara of Dighinala upazila of Khagrachari.

11. On 31 May, the Reformist and UPDF (Democratic) terrorists were demanding money from employees of Barkal Upazila and villagers of each village and family in Jurachhari and Baghaichhari areas over the phone.

12. On 31 May, the Reformist and UPDF (Democratic) members surrounded the entire area of Chairman Para of Jibtalı Union soon after reached there and tortured several people, including Jagdish Chakma. They snatched the mobile phones of some people.

13. On 31 May, the Reformist miscreants surrounded Samiran Chakma's house at Chairman Para of Jibtalı Union. However, as Samiran Chakma was not at home, then miscreants threatened his wife Refa Chakma. At this time, the two daughters of Samiran Chakma, namely, Rupavati Chakma and Mishu Chakma were also threatened by the miscreants.

6 people injured and 1 beaten in the communal attack of Muslim settlers

1. On 9 May at around 8:30 am, a group of Bengali settlers attacked two trawler boats carrying Jumma farmers with fruit products in the lake area adjacent to Harikaba in Longadu upazila of Rangamati Hill District, leaving at least eight people injured. The incident took place when a group of Jumma villagers from Dhudhukchhari village in Longadu Sadar Union were on their way to Rangamati in two trawler boats with various seasonal fruits. The injured Jummas have been identified as Dayal Chandra Chakma (52), Prasit Chakma alias Dhanaban (45), Dhanamani Chakma (30), Sumati Chakma alias Naga (48), Bhagirath Chakma (35) and Dhanaban Chakma. During the attack, Muslim settlers snatched mobile phones and money from the Jummas and threw the fruit into the lake.

2. On 22 May Friday afternoon, a group of settlers led by Rusel Chowdhury, Chairman of Amtuli Union, beat up a Jumma litchi seller named Promod Chakma (38) in Amtuli Union of Baghaichhari Upazila in Rangamati District.

Land Grabbing and environment-destructive activities

1. A former president of Swechchasebak League in Alikadam upazila of Bandarban district named Joynal Abedin continues illegally extract and smuggle thousands of cubic feet of stone every day from the Nayapara union area of Tan mauza of Alikadam upazila, using the coronavirus situation. Every day, they have loaded stones in one to two trucks and stored lakhs of cubic feet of stones in different places. Locals claimed that if the stone extraction is not stopped, the environment in Alikadam will be disrupted.

2. Two businessmen, including the leader of the ruling Awami League, have been illegally extracting sand from the Sangu River near the Sangu Bridge in Thanchi of Bandarban district for a long time in the name of road development and under the name of security forces. Sand is being lifted with heavy machinery (excavator). On May 15, a mobile court raided and fined them BDT 20,000.
3. On 15 May, Friday at 2.30 pm, the Forest Department and the Army arrested a vehicle worker with two jeeps loaded with mother trees Garjan and Telsur wood while he was stealing trees from Kulaikshajhiri of Bumu Reserve under Lama Forest Department of Bandarban District. Some of the syndicates of Bumu Bilchhari Union and some members of the ruling party of Bumu Bilchhari Union are trafficking these rare mother trees by road and Matamuhuri river by deceiving the eyes of the administration.

This report has been published and circulated by Information and Publicity Department of Parbatya Chattagram Jana Smahati Samiti (PCJSS) from its Central Office, Kalyanpur, Rangamati, Chittagong Hill Tracts.