

(pm) May 23rd 2006, Item 4 #196



BANGLADESH

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Statement by Ms. Ishrat Jahan Ahmed, First Secretary, Permanent Mission of Bangladesh to the United Nations at the Fifth Session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues on agenda item 4 (b): Human Rights, 23 May 2006, New York

Madam Chair,

Allow me to begin by expressing my delegation's satisfaction in seeing you chair the current session of the Forum with such competence.

Bangladesh attaches particular importance to the proceedings of this Forum. We believe it is an important platform for exchanging views on issues related to indigenous peoples. Such exercise would contribute to the promotion of their well-being. However, my delegation does not like to see the stature of the Forum to be diminished by turning it into 'talk show'. We have confidence that your stewardship would protect the Forum from being abused.

Madam Chair,

As you are aware, in Bangladesh we have some tribal peoples. These tribes are the descendants of the settlers who had come from the region east of Bangladesh a few centuries back. They now live in different districts of the country.

Since her independence, Bangladesh is committed to maintain a society free from exploitation and discrimination. Bangladesh Constitution guarantees equal rights for all, but some special provisions are kept for particular section of citizens, including the tribal peoples. All citizens including the ethnic minorities in Bangladesh enjoy fundamental freedoms of religion, expression, association, occupation, movement, trade and so on.

The tribal communities are accorded various special privileges in order to enable themselves to attain sustainable development. These include fiscal, educational and social privileges and benefits. Three modern hospitals have been set up in the headquarters of the three hill districts. In the higher seats of the education institutions, including, universities, medical colleges and engineering universities, the tribal communities enjoy special quotas as well as scholarships. As a result of these affirmative actions, the literacy rate among the Chakmas, the largest of the tribes, has surpassed the national average.

income generating activities. Various UN agencies including UNDP, UNICEF are also implementing development projects in the region. Many national and international NGOs are also active in the region.

Madam Chair,

Bangladesh's election to the newly formed Human Rights Council and the Peace Building Commission is an expression of the confidence of the international community in this country's commitment to uphold human rights and advance peace. We are grateful to the UN memberships who have bestowed us with these new honour and responsibilities.

Madam Chair,

We have noted the contents of some statements as well as publications made available in the Forum. It is a matter of regret that most of those are concocted. Many are motivated by a desire to grab the sympathy of the international community. Tribal representatives often present wrongdoing against them as attempts of victimization. But they have often been found, upon investigation, as regular criminal activities, which are no different from other peoples'. It would be our hope that the distinguished members of the Forum and the fellow delegates would appreciate the sincere efforts by the Government and reject the propaganda. My delegation deplores the actions of those individuals who take it as a mission to tarnish the positive image of their own country for short term gains, which are often personal in nature.

Madam Chair,

My Government remains in close consultations with the tribal communities and their representatives. We take pride in having versatile cultures and pluralist values coupled with our democratic ideals. Our efforts towards the socio-economic emancipation of tribal peoples as well as the commitments to preserve their inalienable rights are unflinching.

I thank you.