

*Statement by the observer delegation of Bangladesh under agenda item 5
[13th Session of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations]*

27.7.95
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Madam Chair,

My delegation would like to emphasise that Agenda item 5 does not have direct relevance for Bangladesh. Our approach to this item has been in the spirit of listening to reports on developments presented by Governments for whom the issue is applicable and relevant.

Bangladesh, allow me to reiterate, is a nation of indigenous people, indigenous to the land for thousands of years. We do not have an indigenous-exogenous dichotomy and therefore no 'indigenous' people in the special sense applicable to societies characterised by indigenous-settler dichotomy. Bangladesh has ethnic groups, specifically tribal groups who are distinct from the ethnic majority. These tribal groups constitute ethnic minorities and not indigenous people vis-à-vis the rest of the population.

Madam Chair,

The clear mandate of W.G.I.P. relates to indigenous people and not to tribal communities. If tribals were to come under its scope, clearly the mandate would have mentioned this in the manner that the ILO Convention has. We are encouraged that this is a position you also share. It is, therefore, surprising that persons speaking on behalf of tribal groups of Bangladesh should bring up their issues here at the WGIP.

Be that as it may, allow me to inform that the dialogue between the Parliamentary Committee on CHT and the PCJSS continues. The last round was held on 12 July. An extended cease-fire has been in place, which has now been renewed till the end of September, 1995. The continuation of the dialogue and the mutual agreement to cessation of hostilities are reflective of the mutual confidence of both parties and their intent and sincerity, as well as the endeavour for a peaceful solution.

On the question of military presence in CHT, the Government has time and again made it clear that the security forces are back in barracks and law enforcement in the hands of the civil administration. As for access to outsiders, we would like to inform the WGIP that 9 heads of Dhaka-based Missions visited the Hill districts during 2-3 June, 1995 and expressed their satisfaction with Government efforts regarding the rehabilitation of the repatriated tribal refugees.

On alleged "massacres", I can only reiterate that the judicial Enquiry Report on the Logang incident is a public document, which was also forwarded

to the Centre for Human Rights. On the Naniarchar incident, I would like to inform the WGIP that the Government has sent in a detailed reply for consideration of the Sub-Commission. We would like to briefly touch upon the issue.

Following the incident, the Government set up a judicial Enquiry Commission which submitted its report on 26 May, 1994. The Government has accepted the recommendations of the Commission and has initiated the following measures :

- a. The Deputy Inspector-General of Police of the Chittagong Range has been asked to complete the investigation of the instituted cases on a priority basis.
- b. The Inspector-General of Police has been asked to take Departmental action against the police personnel responsible for negligence of duty during this incident.
- c. The Ministry of Establishment and the Cabinet Division have been requested to take appropriate action against the responsible district and thana level officers.
- d. The Deputy Commissioner and the Superintendent of Police of Rangamati have been asked to take necessary measures to stop recurrence of such incidents in future.
- e. The concerned Ministry has been requested to start the cadastral survey of land of the CHT.

Accordingly, departmental proceedings have been instituted against concerned security personnel, results of which are still awaited. Departmental action against civil officers responsible are also underway. 4 (four) specific cases have been lodged by members of the public and the police in connection with the incident. Results of all the four cases are also awaited.

Madam Chair,

Owing to time limitation, I shall enclose a written summary update on the Chittagong Hill Tracts to the Secretariat along with the text of my statement. The update addresses issues that have been touched upon in interventions on CHT this morning.

I thank you, Madam Chair.