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CHT Peace Accord

Concern over proposed revision

Staff Correspondent

A group of prominent citizens in a statement yesterday expressed grave concern over the proposed revision of Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Peace Accord.

They said full and faithful implementation of the accord is crucial for ensuring the rights and interests of all CHT residents and for greater interest of the country.

The signatories to the statement said non-implementation of crucial elements of the accord, which are recognised both nationally and internationally, remains a vital obstacle to long-term peace and stability in the region.

It also said the agreement, which was signed following a bilateral negotiation, should not be revised or amended unilaterally.

The signatories are Justice Muhammad Golam Rabbani of the Appellate Division of Bangladesh Supreme Court, former adviser to a caretaker government Advocate Sultana Kamal, former chief of the army staff Lt Gen (ret'd) Harun-ar-Rashid, President of Bangladesh Economic Association Dr Qazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad, General Secretary of Bangladesh Economic Association Dr Abul Barkat, Human Rights Activist Dr Hameeda Hossain, Chakma Circle Chief Raja Devasish Roy, Coordinator of Nijera Kori Khushi Kabir, Executive Director of Bangladesh Legal Aid Trust Taslimur Rahman, Playwright Mamunur Rashid, Executive Director of the Association for Land Reform and Development Shamsul Huda, and Director of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association Syeda Rizwana Hasan.

The signatories believe that the 1997 accord provides a firm basis for re-establishing the legitimate rights of the indigenous people of CHT as well as of the Bangalee settlers there.

The current accord also provides a basis for stopping the longstanding unrest prevailing there, for re-establishing a just and sustained peace, for promoting human rights, and for long-term stability in the region as well as in the country as a whole, the statement said.

The signatories urged all to recognise the 1997 accord for what it is, an agreement that seeks to provide a valid basis for re-establishing peace and justice in CHT. They called upon the government and people of all walks of life to support the process of full implementation of the accord.

It is a longstanding globally accepted norm that a political agreement signed by a government is necessarily binding upon successive governments, as has been seen in neighbouring Northeast India, Mindanao, the Philippines, and Guatemala, to name a few examples, the statement noted.

The signatories also said the current caretaker government revived the practice of holding meetings of the advisory committee to the Ministry of CHT Affairs, which met twice recently, with implementation of CHT Peace Accord topping the agenda.