



SOUTH ASIA QUARTERLY

The Forgotten Corner

**Insurgencies and Opportunities
in North-East India**

Report on a Roundtable Discussion

Ottawa, Canada
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ROUNDTABLE OBJECTIVES:

South Asia Partnership Canada (SAP Canada) in collaboration with CERAS-Alternatives, Peacefund Canada, Rights and Democracy (formerly the International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development) and Inter Pares took the initiative to hold a Roundtable discussion on the current situation in North-East India. It took place at the International Development Research Centre on May 4, 2000. The purpose of the Roundtable was:

- to understand better the state of human rights and governance in North-East India;
- to explore various initiatives towards conflict resolution and peacebuilding in the region;
- to present a Canadian perspective and experience in conflict resolution.

The keynote address for the roundtable was made by Tapan Bose, general secretary of the South Asia Forum for Human Rights, which is based in Kathmandu, Nepal. The participants also heard from Shaukat Hassan, researcher at the International Development Research Centre, Ottawa; and from Professor Aditya Dewan of Dawson College and Concordia University. In addition to their presentations, Mr Bose and Mr Hassan also provided useful background papers, the former dealing with political movements and events in each of the seven states, the latter with problems in the relations between India and neighbouring countries deriving from the situation in North-East India. Facts and salient points from these papers have been included in this report, for a fuller understanding of the issues.

As well, Jim Junke, director, South Asia Division, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Eileen Stewart, of the India, Nepal and Sri Lanka program of the Canadian International Development Agency, and Craig Benjamin of Amnesty International made short presentations. The roundtable was chaired by Richard Harmston, Executive Director of SAP Canada, and the organization of the roundtable was managed by Renée Giroux, Program Manager, Sri Lanka Canada Development Fund and Isabelle Valois, Pakistan Program Manager for SAP Canada.

INITIAL INFORMATION:

The letter of invitation to participants in the Roundtable pointed out how little is known, both internationally and also within India itself, about North-East India and its present seven states. The media, said the letter, gives the impression that the region is full of “social unrest including armed militancy, inter-community violence, ‘encounters’ with security personnel... or conversely, [full of] pretty girls and boys dancing in national costume”. The northeastern region of India has always been a collage of the most contradictory images. The historical alienation of the people of these seven states - Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura – and their present-day sufferings demonstrate the lack of political will over generations, before and since the independence of India, to address the root causes of their discontent. There has been tacit approval, among outsiders of the region, for the extreme measures adopted. These measures have led to excessive militarisation of the region and widespread implementation of laws such as the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, at the cost of many lives as well as of opportunities for social and economic development.

CHAIR’S REMARKS:

Richard Harmston welcomed all participants to the roundtable. He observed that North-East India is a region that rarely comes to the attention of the outside world, in spite of the turmoil, including human rights abuses, experienced there for many decades. He said the roundtable was an opportunity to gather information and generate understanding on the current issues of the region and to see what, if anything, Canadians can do to provide some modest support to the people in the area. He mentioned that the main speakers and other participants were speaking for themselves, and that the opinions they expressed (and which would be contained in the report) were not necessarily shared by SAP Canada or the other sponsors of the event.

Presentation by Tapan Bose, South Asia Forum for Human Rights (SAFHR)

Tapan Bose began with an historical overview of the North-East India region, which used to be referred to as the Frontier, as it formed an eastern buffer for India between Burma and China. When the British went to war against the Burmese invasions of 1819-26, they established claims over Assam and Manipur by the 1826 Treaty of Yandabo. The centuries-old rule of the Ahom kings in Assam was broken during the Burmese invasions, and Assam became part of Britain’s Indian Empire. Similarly, while allowing the king of Manipur to annex large areas inhabited by the Naga peoples, the British extracted trade concessions which virtually destroyed the economy of the kingdom, and a weakened Manipur was finally annexed by the British in 1891.

Physically, the region is very hilly, except for the plains of Assam in the centre of the region (see map), and is inhabited by approximately 31 million people of considerable ethnic, religious and linguistic diversity. The 1991 census recorded the following figures of population in the seven states: Assam 22.4 million; Manipur 1.8 million; Tripura 2.1 million; Meghalaya 1.77 million; Nagaland 1.2 million; Arunachal Pradesh 864,000 and Mizoram 669,000. A particular grievance in Assam is the fact that New Delhi has three

times excised large parts of that state to appease ethnic groups campaigning for a state of their own: thus, Mizoram and Meghalaya were created in 1972 and Arunachal Pradesh in 1987. Equally, the Nagas have been dismayed at the subdivision of their traditional homeland: the British included some 40 percent of it in Burma, while after independence the Indian government subdivided the remainder among the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur and Nagaland.

Since, he said, the region's history has been studied by very few outsiders, the general impression has been that the inhabitants are backward and illiterate. Such a misperception has been reinforced by the Indian government's policy of closing off the region to most visitors. In fact, there is a vast variety of cultures, traditions and institutional systems, and the region boasts a literacy rate higher than the average in the rest of the Indian population.

Politically, the seven states in North-East India each have their own legislature and enjoy a certain level of autonomy. This then, he said, raises the questions: Where is the problem? Why is the North-East an area where human rights violations have been committed for the last fifty years and insurgencies have continued for a half-century?

Part of the answer is that it is an area whose people have never been fully accepted in the mainstream of Indian society. Ethnically distinct, and isolated by geography and religion (largely Christian, particularly in Nagaland and Tripura), the people of the region began to develop an identity and nationality of their own. Shortly before India's independence in 1947, the people of Nagaland negotiated a "Nine-Point Agreement" with the British to guarantee, for a 10-year period, substantial rights to self-governance and land, with external involvement limited to defence, currency and foreign policy. After 10 years this arrangement was to be reviewed by the government of India and the government of the Nagas, and a new agreement would be drawn up to determine their final political status. However, after independence, the Indian Constitutional Assembly decided, in the interests of national integration, to abrogate these rights and rescinded the recognition of the unique identity of the Nagas.

Nor did the fairly large degree of autonomy derived from statehood within the Indian political system satisfy the people of the North-East, who sought full autonomy and the freedom to practice their traditional governance systems. The resulting unrest included a boycott of India's first general election in 1952 and a plebiscite, in which reportedly 99 percent of Nagas voted for independence. These actions, said Mr Bose, forced India to evoke the sweeping Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act in 1953 and send in the military, with all the negative aspects of martial law. Soldiers were giving wide-ranging powers, including the power to shoot on sight, and powers to confiscate or burn property. Thus began, he said, fifty years of grievous human rights violations in the region.

The Indian government's interest in the region largely revolved around the fear of further subdivision, after the 1947 Partition of the subcontinent between India and Pakistan, and of the stirring of additional independence movements in the country. The government therefore chose to force the country to stay together, even if this meant the suppression of

minority rights. The years that followed were witness to extreme forms of censorship in Nagaland. The government of India controlled the media and suppressed reports of incidents in the region. Meanwhile, said Mr Bose, men, women and children have been killed in their hundreds, women raped, and villages bombed.

The Indian government also tried to assert their control by creating the seven states in 1972 and later, and by supporting an artificial leadership system to endorse the constitution and participate in the process of legitimization. The government was, in its fashion, starting to recognize the realities of ethnicity and to empower it. This also led to attempts at peace negotiations. However, forums such as the Naga Peoples Convention did not arise from indigenous political processes, but rather were inspired by New Delhi; and there has been no real popular support for such an approach. The political situation has been further complicated by divisions that have occurred among the indigenous communities, partly due to internal differences and partly through government intervention.

In addition, the settlement of people from the plains (especially Hindu Bengalis escaping poverty from their original homes) has caused unrest, particularly in Tripura. There the land-hungry Bengali settlers have taken over much of the best cultivable land, and also control senior jobs in the local bureaucracy and in trade. The tribal peoples have become a minority in their own state. In 1980 there were large-scale race riots in the state, with heavy loss of life and the burning of indigenous villages. Legislation entitled “Restoration of Alienated Lands Act”, aimed at recovering the lands of tribal people in Tripura, has been on the statute book since 1976, but the issue remains unresolved.

The presence of valuable resources - particularly tea, oil and gas – could have been of immense benefit to the region, said Mr Bose. Instead, given India’s practice of sharing resources among the states, the people of the North-East have seen their resources flowing into central government hands and very little being returned to them.

In sum, then, three key grievances led to the push for autonomy. First, a refusal to recognize the distinctive ethnic and cultural traditions of the region. Second, the exploitation of its resources without due compensation or development. Third, the dismantling of local land rights. As a consequence, in all seven states there is some type of militant movement; and unrest – and repression – is widespread. However, concluded the speaker, there is some possibility of finding common ground between the Indian government and these local militant factions, as long as there is transparency and good faith. In 1998 peace talks with the Nagas brought about a cease-fire, but already the process was faltering. The key difficulty is that the Indian constitution allows territory to be added to the state (as happened with Goa), but not for it to be excised – and peace discussions with the peoples of North-East India cannot be viable if there is no possibility of negotiating secession.

During a question period, the speaker was asked to comment on the current situation in Assam. In reply, he said that most militant groups engaged in some activities that cannot be condoned. But to say this about violent incidents did not mean making a moral

judgment on, for example, the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA). The ULFA sees itself as a socialist organization; its definition of Assamese is anyone who lives in Assam, and includes large numbers of Muslims and other ethnic groups.

Asked how people were managing to feed themselves, he said the region has traditionally been fairly self-sufficient. However, there is increasing pressure on land resources; the cycle for the rotation of crops has been reduced. The topsoil is not good enough to sustain agriculture over the long term, and people are being forced to resort to slash-and-burn techniques. As for the matter of maintaining high literacy rates in spite of the insurgencies and the repressive situation of the last fifty years, he said that the culture and tradition of education has always been very strong in the region.

Finally, a participant suggested that the present government may have changed its mind in a positive way about negotiating peace, and asked whether there are mechanisms that could lead to peaceful resolution of the conflict. But Mr Bose said: “The government’s position really hasn’t changed.”

Presentation by Shaukat Hassan, International Development Research Centre.

Mr Hassan focused in his talk on the significance of the North-East India conflicts at the interstate and sub-regional levels. The region, he said, is close to the centre of disparate regimes: straddled by two regional giants (China and India); bordered by a communist government (China) in the north, a military dictatorship to the west (Pakistan) and the east (Burma), a monarchy in the northwest (Bhutan) and an on-and-off-again dictatorship to the south (Bangladesh). Also, it has vast deposits of natural wealth – oil and gas, timber, fertile land and hydroelectric power – which adds to its strategic importance. It is, moreover, an area where the government of India has only a tenuous hold. Strong secessionist movements are exacerbated by the “chicken-neck”, choke-point between Nepal and Bangladesh. This point, only 16 kilometres in length, was briefly occupied by the Chinese army in the 1962 war – thereby cutting the North-East off from the rest of India – and has therefore been of great concern to the Indian military ever since.

The region is, in a negative sense, also of strategic importance to *Pakistan*, as it allows them scope to assist separatist movements in the North-East to counter-balance the dispute with India over Kashmir.

Proxy insurgencies have also affected India’s relations with *Bangladesh* for many years. When the first Bangladesh Prime Minister, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, refused to recognize tribal cultural and political autonomy, the Chittagong Hill tribes rebelled. However, his Awami League was pro-Indian and cross-border peace was maintained. But, after Mujib’s assassination, the *shanti bahini* rebels found sanctuary, and received arms and training, in India, because Delhi saw the new Dhaka administration as hostile and quarrelsome over the politics of water-sharing from common rivers. Bangladesh retaliated by providing sanctuary to Mizo rebels (whose insurgency originated in reaction to government apathy over a famine in Mizoram in 1959). The exodus of many Chakmas from Bangladesh into Tripura, as well as the flight of many Hindu-Bengalis, have created

tensions in that smallest of India's states, a state moreover that shares four-fifths of its borders with Bangladesh.

There is, the speaker suggested, something of a dilemma for any government in Bangladesh. Strategically, any future unravelling in the neighbouring states of North-East India could affect the territorial integrity of Bangladesh, if insurgencies spilled over into the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT). On the other hand, overt co-operation with India to suppress insurgencies in the North-East is also fraught with danger. In January 1998 Anup Chetia, leader of the United Liberation Front was arrested in Bangladesh. When India demanded that he should be handed over to New Delhi, his followers threatened the Bangladesh with country-wide violence, especially in the industrial port of Chittagong.

Unforeseen repercussions may follow the signing of a peace agreement with the tribal people in Bangladesh. For the withdrawal of Bangladeshi troops from the CHT opens up the border for free movement of Indian militant groups, for gun-running and the illicit drug trade, as well as trading in prostitutes and the spread of AIDS.

While India tries to remain aloof from internal affairs in *Bhutan*, despite being the kingdom's paramount sponsor and patron, the relationship is greatly complicated by political and security developments in Assam. When the Awami League regained power in Bangladesh in 1996, bringing an improvement in India-Bangla relations, the main militant groups in Assam – the United Liberation Front of Assam and the separatist Bodo Security Force – shifted their bases of guerilla operations from Bangladesh to Bhutanese territory. While Bhutan is not militarily strong enough to contain the Bodo activities, the rebel attacks on Indian targets make it difficult for Delhi to ignore; yet if India attacked the rebels within Bhutan, and even stationed its troops permanently there, it could undermine the monarchy as well as relations with the kingdom.

Finally, the speaker said, the relations between India and the military regime in *Myanmar* (Burma) have been tense since the student uprising and the regime's crackdown in August 1988. Pro-democracy activists were given sanctuary and allowed to broadcast over All-India Radio. Tensions escalated when the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) gave support to Indian insurgents such as the National Socialist Council of Nagaland and the Manipur Liberation Army, and allowed them to operate along the border with India, which stretches for more than 1,600 kilometres. In retaliation, India has trained Kachin Independence Army fighters, and the KIA in return has trained Chin and Kuki tribesmen in the jungles near Manipur to counter Naga and other rebels opposed to New Delhi. Mr Hassan likened these proxy conflicts and clandestine hostilities to "the Great Game" (described by Rudyard Kipling in his novel *Kim*) played out between British India and Czarist Russia in the Afghan hills. He added that, since Burma is no longer the buffer state it used to be, because of growing warmth in relations between China and Myanmar, the North-East India states have gained in strategic importance to India.

Peace and stability in these states, concluded Mr Hassan, is an indispensable condition for the realization of many economic benefits to the region, including:

- Gains from sub-regional trading arrangements among these states and Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Burma.
- Exploitation of the huge oil and gas reserves in these states, in eastern Bangladesh and also in the Bay of Bengal.
- Development of the port of Chittagong for the shipment of goods from Nepal, Bhutan and the seven states. Chittagong is only 70 kilometres from the Tripura border, whereas Calcutta is 1,700 kilometres away and has lost much of its potential.
- Transit rights by road and rail for India through Bangladesh to link up with the seven states. Bangladesh has been demanding what it terms an equitable share of the Ganges water.
- Foreign investment, to develop the economic potential of the entire region.

Presentation by Professor Aditya Dewan, Dawson College

Professor Dewan focused even more sharply on the situation around Chittagong. He explained it was a region dominated by non-Muslims, which was made part of East Pakistan at Partition in compensation for a Muslim-dominated region in the Punjab being given to India. The ethnic and religious dissimilarities had, he said, resulted in considerable unrest in the region, and an estimated 60,000 to 65,000 refugees fled to North-East India.

In 1991, the Jana Sanghati Sangstha (JSS) signed a peace accord with the Bangladesh government, which resulted in the resettlement of refugees from India. It also established a tribal council, and allowed for land settlement to be decided by committee, as well as the formal withdrawal of a military port. However, the main issues – the recovery of land by returned refugees and the removal of government-settled Bengalis – have still not been dealt with; so that the terms of the accord have not been fully implemented.

Mr. Dewan was asked whether the different insurgent groups in the region had made informal links to each other, and whether the region of North-East India had become more of an international issue because of the discovery of natural gas. A subsidiary question was whether the matter at stake was one of resources, or of security. He said he was not aware of any formal alliance, but India has used the divide-and-rule technique - pitting one insurgent group against another. On the second issue, there had been constant talk of developing Chittagong Hill Tracts and Chittagong Port, but it could be done because of a lack of stability and peace. Resources were certainly at stake. He observed that European companies seemed to be more successful than American firms in signing contracts with Bangladesh.

Brief Presentations by Guest Speakers:

Jim Junke, Director, South Asia Division, DFAIT, noted that the few development projects CIDA has in the region seem to have been well received. The pressure of population growth was, he added, a huge issue. The growth of regional trade was an important trend, and DFAIT had been able to provide technical assistance (through introducing Canadian expertise) in oil and gas exploration and development, as well as advising on environmental matters.

Eileen Stewart, Development Officer, India, Nepal, Sri Lanka Program of CIDA, said that CIDA's presence in North-East India is limited to support of a couple of projects through their Gender and Canada (High Commission) funds. However, "development" in terms of poverty alleviation and sustainable development is, she said, difficult in the current context. This is partly because issues of human rights and governance need to take priority. This led to limitations for working in the region because CIDA's bilateral program has to operate in partnership with the government of India, and this constrains opportunities for addressing issues of human rights. However, CIDA support can be provided to programming in the North-East through the crosscutting themes of environment and gender. As well, CIDA has a regional South Asia program, which can be the home to address issues such as human rights, peace and security.

Craig Benjamin, Amnesty International, pointed out that the concept of self-determination could be a cause of great apprehension, as it is in Canada given our situation with First Nations peoples. He emphasized the importance of understanding the context in which work might be carried out. There needs, he said, to be a holistic approach to the issue of self-determination, and Canadian human rights and other organizations should work together to find ways to respond to the whole context.

Plenary Discussion: What Can Be done?

Out of the discussion in which all participants joined, four areas were outlined in which to locate the problem:

1. The mindset of the government of India:

Speakers concluded that the government of India is not serious about negotiations, as it has allowed North-East leaders to be arrested on their way to talks. As well, the North-East militant leaders tended to see any kind of political demand of the government as a criminal demand.

2. The Human Rights Situation:

There is obviously a history of very serious violations, and the government has engaged in manipulative tactics to divide groups. One speaker suggested that the situation of human rights is likely to worsen in India.

3. Alienation of land and other resources:

It was agreed that local communities need some control over land and resources.

4. Role of Women:

There is a need to recognize in a formal way the special role of women in confidence building and peace-making. If ways can be found to strengthen the democratic and peace movements, women could play an important role as peacemakers, engaging government in dialogue. It was recognized that women in the North-East have enjoyed a more equal status than in most South Asian communities, but this is being eroded as mainstream communities move into the region.

Question Period

In the question period that followed, the earlier speakers answered points in their areas of competence. For clarity, this summary has grouped questions and answers by theme and subject. As a consequence, the order of questions has not been followed and the identity of questioner and respondent is omitted.

Human rights:

Several questions were asked on this topic. Was there any organization covering all of North-East India that monitors the human rights situation in a credible way? How do human rights groups in the North-East get support? What is the role of the international community? Has any country or international body brought the concerns about human rights abuses to the attention of the Indian Government? Could there be a coalition of human rights groups, operating within and outside India, which would be looked upon without hostility by the government? What overall approach might Canadians take to be “part of the solution”? Would it be worthwhile to establish some kind of information centre?

In answer, it was said that, while there was no organization covering all of the North-East, a coalition – called Solidarity of Peoples of the North-East – periodically produced reports. Two major human rights groups in Assam were politically aligned, and in consequence the information they presented was limited. Some national human rights groups were well organized, and their information was verified. Human rights groups in India did not accept funds from outside, as it could undermine their credibility; however, they accepted support for external travel to international conferences, and they supported their operations by sales of their reports.

On the international level, the European Union had sent a delegation to Chittagong and issued a report. There was a clear need for more information about the situation, so that an information centre or anything that helps in that regard would be beneficial. For an overall approach, it was suggested that “people-to-people solidarity” was most useful. As an example, it could help in refining policy dialogues. Canadian parliamentarians could play a key role by engaging with counterparts in the region. However (it was added, from a Foreign Affairs Department viewpoint), India is still under certain sanctions because of its nuclear explosions, and relations between India and Canada are “still fairly cool”.

Canadian aid:

Since many issues have a regional context going beyond North-East India, should not CIDA (it was asked) have policies that deal with the region as a whole? In reply, an explanation was made of CIDA’s regional South Asia program. Because the North-East states were isolated and their people had difficulty getting information to the outside world, there was a need for on-the-ground monitors to gather and relay information.

Role of women:

Participants wanted further information on the roles that different women’s groups were presently playing in peacebuilding or resolving conflicts. They did not receive a direct reply, as the respondent focused on the difficulty of raising gender issues with people in conflict. However, gender is seen as a factor in the democratization of society. Women were, in general, more able than men to bridge gaps and initiate dialogue in conflict situations.

Traditional local government:

The question was posed of whether “Panchayat Raj” was an option for greater autonomy in the North-East. The response was that, while it had made “a tremendous difference” in other parts of India, it probably would not serve to give the communities of the North-East a greater measure of autonomy

Ideas for Follow-Up:

Again, these ideas have been grouped by subjects:

Human rights:

- Create a North-East India Human Rights Forum to support local groups, to work for some degree of international recognition of the issues, provide documentation and engage in advocacy.
- At the bilateral level, engage the government of India on discussions of “human security” as an entry point. Taking a political approach will not be effective.
- The transition to democracy is a problematic issue. Even if the government of India is forced to hand over control to the local communities of the North-East, these societies have been at war a long time and hierarchies have become entrenched. The transition to peace and democracy will not be an easy one.
- Many indigenous communities are very divided. One task would be to help them find ways to reconcile. For example, bring members of communities to human rights conferences, training workshops, or other gatherings outside the region. “People to people solidarity is important.”
- CIDA should continue to develop programs on women, environment, development, and gender and, through those programs, informally develop a dialogue on other issues relating to human rights. “A non-threatening approach, through the back-door.”
- On the other hand, there is need for international pressure on the criminalisation of human rights abuses, particularly abuses of women.

Environment:

- Environmental effects could be an entry point. Conflict leads to migration, which in turn leads to environmental problems; we can talk about this and trace it back to root causes.
- The Biodiversity Convention could be another starting point.

Military factors:

- Legal approaches could be promising; one could hope that the Supreme Court of India will demand some investigation and make some progressive rulings to curtail the powers of the armed forces.
- There is a need for concerted international pressure on the militarisation of the North-East.
- Canadian military should have greater contact with militaries of the South

Women:

- Ways need to be found to strengthen the women’s movement. Women are effective agents of change and their impact at the community level has longer-term sustainability. “Women are more resilient, resourceful, and adaptable at all stages of conflict.

Other points:

- Canada might help, since it has had lengthy experience in this matter, in the settlement of land claims for indigenous peoples, especially in Bangladesh.
- We need to take a regional focus or approach to peacebuilding.
- We need to work with the diaspora in Canada and the United States to counter the hate propaganda campaigns in India.

Wrap-up session:

In a final session, a panel led by Ms. Nancy Drozd and Mr. Peter Gillespie steered discussion on pulling together the main conclusions. There seemed, they said, to be a sense of the need to create a forum, a space in which to continue talking about these issues and looking for entry-points for action. Such a forum could be:

- A clearing-house of information; and a space to continue our own education and discussion, perhaps holding a forum of this nature once a year.
- A place to begin relationship building. As well, it could be the locus of some policy work. It would also be a place from which to inform our own public.

Particular emphasis, the group added, should be put on picking up the appeal to look at the regional context in order to address the issues affecting North-East India. In this matter of integrating the North-East *problematique* into a regional context; SAARC People's Forum could expand its constituency.

There was also a sense that there is a need to build a common agenda:

- There is a desperate need for humanitarian assistance for refugees and Internally Displaced People, who have been for too long ignored.
- There are "bags of money" (i.e., in CIDA) that could be utilized.

This summary was followed up with a focused look at what non-governmental organizations can do, and certain points that had been raised earlier were reinforced. In particular, the notion that NGOs can approach issues in this region in alternative ways. One example cited was using existing programs - environmental, agricultural, and gender oriented programming - to open up a dialogue on human rights. Other ideas raised included encouraging Canadian parliamentarians to look for opportunities to engage with their counterparts in India, and possible exchanges between militaries (though this may have to be more closely examined!). As well, it was thought Canadian NGOs could try to find ways to bridge the gaps between communities in the North-East; and help efforts at public education in India to present an accurate picture of the situation and correct the effects of the government's more partisan propaganda campaign. The continuation of some kind of informal forum was also emphasized.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES:

Mr. Tapan Bose:

Tapan Bose – Secretary-General, South Asia Forum for Human Rights (SAFHR), Kathmandu, Nepal. Mr. Bose is a long-time activist on the issues concerning the North-East, especially in the province of Nagaland. He is a founder member of the National Campaign Committee Against Militarisation and Repeal of Armed Forces (Special powers) Act. He has also been working closely with the Naga Peoples Movement for Human Rights since its inception in 1978. Mr. Bose is also the General Secretary of the Indian Chapter of the Pakistan India Peoples Forum for Peace and Democracy. Apart from being a writer and a human rights and peace activist, Mr. Bose is also a documentary film maker. He has received international and national award winning films include "An Indian Story", "Beyond Genocide: Bhopal Gas Tragedy", "Behind the Barricades - Punjab" and "Jharkhand". Among his publications are "State, Citizens and Outsiders: The Uprooted Peoples of South Asia" and "Scenario of the 7 Percent, volume 1 & volume 2".

PROFESSOR ADITYA KUMAR DEWAN:

Aditya Kumar Dewan is currently Professor of Humanities at Dawson College, and of Anthropology at Concordia University (Montreal). He holds a Ph.D. in Anthropology from McGill University as well as one M.A., in Anthropology from the University of Manitoba (Winnipeg) and a second in Sociology from the University of Dacca (Dhaka, Bangladesh). His areas of specialization are teaching and research on South Asia; indigenous peoples, Third World development, and human rights. In January 2000 he co-authored with Dr. Willem Van Schendel and Dr. Wolfgang Mey a book entitled: "*The Chittagong Hill Tracts: Living in a Borderland*" published by White Lotus Press Inc. (Bangkok, Thailand). Among his other recent publications is "*The Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord: What Does This Accord Hold For the Indigenous Peoples in Bangladesh?*" published in Bangla Journal, August 1999.

MR. SHAUKAT HASSAN:

Mr. Shaukat Hassan is currently Senior Program Officer for the Peace building and Reconstruction Program Initiative at the International Development and Research Centre (IDRC). He holds a Ph.D. in International Relations from the Australian National University (Canberra) as well as one M.A. in Political Science from the University of Colorado (Boulder). Among his recent publications are *Sustainable Development, Environmental Security and Disarmament Interface in South Asia: An Overview* in D.D. Khanna ed. Sustainable Development, Chapter 1 (Delhi: Macmillan India Ltd, 1997), pp. 1-34; and *Sustainable Development, Environmental Security and Disarmament Interface in South Asia: A Concept Paper* in D.D. Khanna ed, Sustainable Development, Appendix (Delhi: Macmillan India Ltd, 1997), pp. 457-474.

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