

Can police be deployed in the army-withdrawn camp sites in the CHT?

Here’s what the CHT Accord really says



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DIPANKAR Talukdar, member of parliament (MP) from the Parbatya Rangamati (299) constituency, while taking part in the budget discussion during the 18th session of Jatiya Sangsad on June 16, said, “Nowhere is it mentioned in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Accord that police cannot be deployed at the army-withdrawn camp sites.”

In a sense, Dipankar Talukdar has spoken the truth about the deployment of Armed Police Battalion (APBn) during his speech in the House. But he has not said a single word about the bigger truths already contained in the accord. For instance, he has not mentioned the provisions in the accord that explain what are to be done with the lands abandoned by the army camps or to whom those lands should be handed over; how the police force in the CHT would be organised; under whose jurisdiction would the responsibility to maintain law and order remain, etc.

In his speech, Talukdar has very tactfully veered away from hinting at the provisions under Section 17 (b) of Part “D” of the accord, which highlights that the camp sites abandoned by the military and paramilitary forces would be returned to the actual owners of the land or handed over to the concerned Hill District Councils (HDCs). The provision leaves no room for interpretation by merit of which any force can be stationed as a replacement. Indeed, he has made an effort to send a wrong and confusing message to the people of Bangladesh by tactfully not referring to that provision in the accord.

He also said that the CHT Accord stipulated withdrawal of the “unnecessary camps.” In fact, the accord says that “all the temporary camps of the military, Ansar and Village Defence Party” shall be taken back to permanent cantonments. Talukdar’s explanation shows how the ruling dignitaries distort, fabricate and misinterpret the CHT Accord to their advantage.

On the other hand, as per Section 34 (b) and Section 33 (a) of Part “B” of the accord, the subjects of “Police (Local)” and “Preservation and Development of Law and Order,” respectively, are to be devolved to the three HDCs, and as per Section 24 (a), the sub-inspector of Hill District Police and all the members ranking below are to be appointed by the councils as per its regulations and prescribed procedure.

Following the appointment of Abul Hasnat Abdullah, MP, as the convener of the CHT Accord Implementation Committee in January 2018, decisions made in the first four out of five meetings held so far include: transferring the subjects of “Police (Local)” and “Preservation and Development of Law and Order” to the three HDCs; and withdrawing all the temporary camps and forming the Hill District Police Force as per the three HDC Acts. It should be mentioned that no decision was made in the Accord Implementation Committee meetings to set up armed police camps in places of temporary camps abandoned by the army.

Instead of implementing the decisions

made in the first four meetings of the Accord Implementation Committee and raising an argument to justify the implementation of the decisions made in the fifth meeting, instructions were issued to set up an APBn camp on the site of the withdrawn army camp from the APBn Headquarters on April 13, 2022, in violation of the provisions of

VISUAL:
TEENI AND TUNI



the accord. Even without returning that land to the actual owners or handing them over to the concerned HDCs, signboards have been put up at those sites, terming them “designated place for security forces” and categorically forbidding the “construction of any other structure with stern warning of a punishable offence.” Furthermore, families living at those sites claim that they are being threatened to leave their homesteads.

Despite these ground realities, the MP of Rangamati constituency has delivered a one-sided speech before the House by saying there is no bindings prohibiting the deployment of APBn. It is agonising that he is never as vocal about the rights defined in and the unimplemented issues of the accord as much as he is over those issues not stated.

When it comes to the discussion on issues of implementation of the accord or the CHT situation, the ruling party brings up the issue of terrorism and extortion on the hills, which propels the people of the country to view it through the lens of law and order. In reality, the CHT crisis is neither an economic nor a law-and-order problem. It is a political and national problem, which Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina mentioned during many of her speeches. It is for this reason that the CHT Accord was signed in 1997, to resolve the problem through political and peaceful means and to preserve the tribal-inhabited feature of the region. Indeed, that has been the core spirit of the CHT Accord.

It is based on this spirit, under Part “B” and Part “C” of the accord, that the provisions confer introduction

In regards to solving the political crisis in the CHT, there is no alternative to implementing the CHT Accord. In fact, instead of establishing camps of Armed Police Battalion (APBn) or any other law enforcement force, the government should try to make progress in finding a political solution to the CHT crisis, through full implementation of the accord. That is how lasting peace in the region can be ensured.

It is true that the CHTRC and HDCs have been constituted, but the said jurisdiction of administrative and economic powers and functions have not yet been transferred to these councils. Even elections have not been held in these councils after having prepared the electoral roll, enumerating only with the permanent residents of the three hill districts. In addition, the definition of “non-tribal (Bangalee) permanent residents” has been determined in the accord, and to that end, a provision has also been made by merit of which the issuing authority for Permanent Resident Certificate has been entrusted to the Circle Chiefs. But in reality, the deputy commissioners of the hill districts have been entrusted with this jurisdiction and function, violating the terms of the accord.

Besides, the provisions under Part “D” of the accord include: to return the dispossessed lands of the Jumma people after resolution of land disputes through Land Commission and cancel all the leases given to outsiders; to rehabilitate the India-returnee and internally displaced Jumma families in their land after returning it to them; to withdraw all the temporary camps of security forces, including the “Operation Utoron”; and to appoint the permanent residents in all the jobs available in the CHT prioritising the Jumma people, etc. On the other hand, in the unofficial agreement, decisions to relocate the Bangalee settlers outside the CHT were also taken. But all the aforesaid issues have either been left stranded after partial implementation, or are being trampled at completely unimplemented

of prioritising the implementation of the accord, threats of stern actions are pronounced against the organisations and right-seeking Jumma people who are engaged in the movement, fictitiously alleging them of being involved in terrorist activities.

The same was the case in the high-level law and order meeting on May 25, and inauguration of the Regional Office of the APBn on May 26, held in Rangamati. In the meeting, an influential military bureaucrat said that out of the 72 sections of the Accord, there were only two sections for the PCJSS to implement at its level. But the PCJSS members did not deposit all of their arms and ammunitions and all members did not surrender, he alleged – whereas, the progress report on the implementation of the accord published by the CHT affairs ministry clearly mentioned that these two sections had been “completely implemented.”

Indeed, if malaria is treated with drugs meant to treat tuberculosis, it is very likely that there will be an outbreak of the disease – or at least cases of the disease will not decline. Similarly, a political problem cannot be solved by deploying APBn or any other forces.

In regards to solving the political crisis in the CHT, there is no alternative to implementing the CHT Accord. In fact, instead of establishing camps of APBn or any other law enforcement force, the government should try to make progress in finding a political solution to the crisis, through full implementation of the accord. That is how lasting peace in the region can be ensured.

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CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

1 Rum cakes

6 Ham's device

11 Texas mission

12 Unbearable pain

13 Inflation feature

15 Holiday lead-in

16 Pub pints

17 Ready to go

18 Drugged

20 Fury

21 Sought a seat

22 Estate recipient

23 Survives

26 Injures

27 Wee

28 For each

29 Relaxing place

30 Navigating aid

34 Wallet bill

35 Stew sphere

36 "The Simpsons" bartender

37 Quarrels

40 Mermaid's home

41 Start

42 Oboe parts

43 High-maintenance

DOWN

1 Uncovers

2 Full of energy

3 Founded

4 French friend

5 Orchestra pieces

6 Sprinted

7 In the past

8 Secret file

9 Meantime

10 Raw bar selection

14 Secluded valley

19 Pretentious

22 Hind's mate

23 Cost

24 Content

25 Co-creator of Spider-Man

26 Honey-comb shape

28 Hammer end

30 Quick drives

31 Entertain

32 Famous

33 Irritable

38 Young fellow

39 Wallet bill

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WEDNESDAY'S ANSWERS

S	A	B	E	R		P	A	N	E	S
C	R	A	V	E		O	V	E	N	S
R	U	L	E	S		S	E	P	T	A
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BEETLE BAILEY BY MORT WALKER

WHAT WAS LT. FUZZ BEATING HIS CHEST ABOUT THIS TIME? I DON'T KNOW ...BUT HE SPRAINED HIS WRIST DOING IT

BABY BLUES BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT

MOM, I'M NOT SURE WHAT I WANT TO BE WHEN I GROW UP. ALL YOU NEED TO DO IS FOLLOW YOUR HEART. WHAT IF MY HEART'S AN IDIOT? SIGH: IT WOULDN'T BE THE FIRST.