

Ensure ethnic children learn mother tongues

CHTC urges govt

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Chittagong Hill Tracts Commission (CHTC) yesterday urged the government to take prompt steps to ensure that all the ethnic minority children have the opportunity to learn their mother languages.

"Although the education policy of 2010 stated that indigenous children should learn their mother tongue, the opportunity still eludes them in 2016," says a statement issued by CHTC on the occasion of the International Day of the World's Indigenous People yesterday.

It, however, appreciated that the Chakma, Marma, Tripura, Garo and Orao children would be able to learn their mother languages from the next year.

"The 15th amendment of the constitution in 2011 termed the non-Bangali people small ethnic groups and tribal, rather than recognising them as indigenous people," the CHTC statement further says, adding, "Moreover, their right to self-identification has been taken away by imposing Bangali identity on them."

"Article 23 Ka of the constitution talks about preserving their cultures and traditions, but the issues of basic rights like political, economic, social and land are overlooked," it adds.

The Commission also slammed last year's home ministry directive to impose restrictions on foreigners' visit to the hill tracts and to make sure that local administration or security forces oversee any meeting between the minority people and foreign, local individuals or bodies.

It expressed concern about the "continuous" eviction of people from their ancestral homes in CHT and plain lands.