



सत्यमेव जयते

## राष्ट्रीय अनुसूचित जनजाति आयोग National Commission for Scheduled Tribes

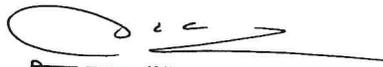
(भारत के संविधान के अनुच्छेद 338क के अंतर्गत एक संवैधानिक निकाय)  
(A constitutional body under Article 338A of the Constitution of India)

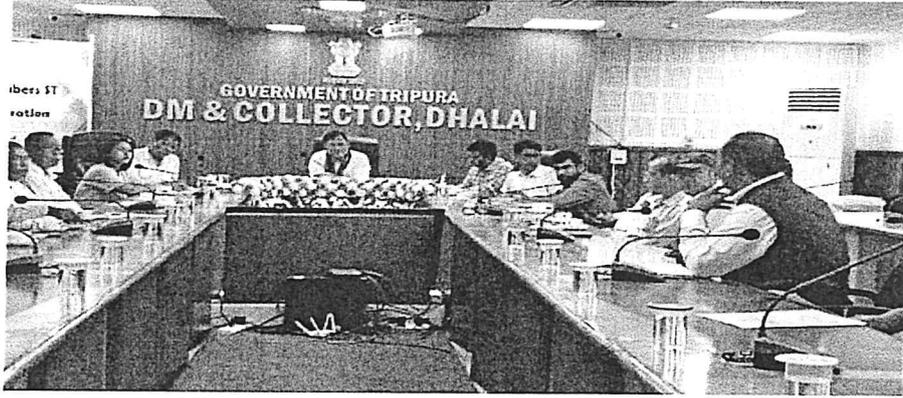
**Visit report of Shri Nirupam Chakma, Hon'ble Member, National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST), New Delhi to the Dhalai District of Tripura State to review the implementation of Constitutional safeguards, welfare and development schemes for Scheduled Tribes on 23.04.2025**

The National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) is a constitutional body set up under Article 338A of the Constitution of India to investigate and monitor all matters relating to protection, welfare and socio-economic development of Scheduled Tribes in the country. As per constitutional provisions, the Union and every State Govt. shall consult the Commission on all major policy decisions affecting Scheduled Tribes. The Commission is required to present to the Hon'ble President of India reports upon working of those safeguards and all such reports are to be laid before each House of Parliament along with Memorandum explaining the Action Taken or proposed to be taken on the recommendations relating to the Union and the reasons for non- acceptance, if any, of any of such recommendations.

In pursuance of the above constitutional mandate, Shri Nirupam Chakma, Hon'ble Member, National Commission for Scheduled Tribes chaired the meeting with the District Magistrate and other district officials of Dhalai district on 23.04.2025 to evaluate the working of constitutional safeguards available to the Scheduled Tribes in the Dhalai district and review implementation of various service safeguards and other developmental schemes/programmes for the welfare and development of Scheduled Tribes.

Before the District-level review meeting, Hon'ble Members Shri Nirupam Chakma, National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) held a preliminary discussion with representatives of ST associations at the District Collectorate Office of Dhalai, Tripura. The session provided an opportunity for direct interaction with ST community leaders, who shared pressing issues faced by the local population and provided insights into the challenges in accessing welfare schemes intended for their upliftment. The meeting highlighted several concerns as under.

  
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**Figure 1: Shri Nirupam Chakma, Hon'ble Member NCST chaired a meeting with Representatives from ST Associations in Dhalai District, Tripura.**

A meeting was held at the Dhalai District Collectorate, Tripura under the Chairmanship of Shri Nirupam Chakma, Hon'ble Member NCST with active participation from key representatives of Scheduled Tribe (ST) associations. The meeting was attended by the Chairman of the Block Advisory Committee, Ambassa; Chairman of the Block Advisory Committee, Salema; NGO representatives of the Chakma Community; President of the Young Chorei Association (YCA), Dhalai; a representative from the Bru Signatory group under the Tripura Rehabilitation Package (2020); and leaders from Reang (Bru) tribal associations. These stakeholders contributed valuable insights on the pressing challenges faced by tribal communities across the district, including issues of identity exclusion, inadequate educational access, health disparities, incomplete rehabilitation of Bru families, and the lack of recognition for customary practices. Their inputs played a critical role in shaping the observations and field-based recommendations captured in this report.

## **District-Level Report on Key Observations and Recommendations for Scheduled Tribe (ST) Communities in Dhalai District, Tripura**

### **I. Introduction**

Dhalai District, located in the eastern region of Tripura, is one of India's most underdeveloped and tribal-dominated districts. As per Census 2011, over 56% of its population comprises Scheduled Tribes (STs). Recognized as an Aspirational District by NITI Aayog, Dhalai has seen increased government intervention through flagship programs in education, health, infrastructure, and skill development. Despite these efforts, ST communities in the district continue to face deep-rooted socio-economic and structural challenges.

### **II. Key Observations and Issues**

#### **1. Persistent Cross-Border Challenges in Border Blocks**

The administrative blocks of Raishyabari and Ganganagar, located along the Indo-Bangladesh international border, are highly vulnerable to cross-border migration, smuggling routes, and legacy extremist activities. The tribal population in these frontier zones frequently face suspicion from authorities, resulting in instances where genuine residents have been denied ration cards, MGNREGA job cards, and Aadhaar-based benefits.

  
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The lack of a streamlined verification mechanism has led to inadvertent exclusions, disproportionately impacting Scheduled Tribe (ST) households who already live in remote, underserved environments. This systemic identity-linked denial has contributed to deep social distress, economic disempowerment, and weakened community trust in governance structures.

## **2. Severe Educational Deficit in ADC-Administered Areas**

The Autonomous District Council (ADC) blocks of Chawmanu and Dumburnagar are marked by chronic infrastructural and human resource gaps in public education delivery. According to block education records, over 34 government schools in these areas are operating with only one teacher each, rendering them non-functional in practice. For instance, Rangamura Junior Basic School (JBS) has recorded months of complete academic inactivity. The existing school infrastructure is largely dilapidated and has not been upgraded to meet modern learning standards. Digital inclusion is virtually non-existent in most tribal habitations. Additionally, long distances between villages and schools, combined with lack of transport facilities, have led to escalating dropout rates among tribal children, particularly girls. These challenges collectively reflect a structural breakdown of educational access in remote tribal zones.

## **3. Endemic Malaria and Public Health Risks in Forested Blocks**

According to the National Vector Borne Disease Control Programme (NVBDCP)-Tripura (2022–23), the forest-intensive blocks of Gandacherra and Longtarai Valley have recorded over 1,300 confirmed malaria cases and 112 deaths in the reporting period, highlighting an endemic public health crisis. Seasonal inaccessibility due to heavy rains and terrain complexity delays the outreach of ASHA workers, auxiliary nurse midwives (ANMs), and mobile medical units. Villages such as Balaram continue to face preventable fatalities owing to delayed diagnosis, lack of insecticide-treated nets (ITNs), and insufficient distribution of anti-malarial drugs. Despite repeated inclusion in health vulnerability surveys, these villages remain underserved. The high disease burden in tribal areas points to the urgent need for climate-resilient, community-driven health delivery models.

## **4. Disparity Between Reported and Actual Implementation of Jal Jeevan Mission**

As per the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) Dashboard, Dhalai district reports an 82.6% Functional Household Tap Connection (FHTC) coverage. However, field verification reveals a stark disparity between official data and ground realities. Villages such as Bashukandi and Ramdurlavpur continue to lack functional piped water supply, owing to broken pipelines, irregular maintenance, and topographical challenges in hilly terrains. In the absence of reliable water sources, tribal women and adolescent girls walk several kilometers daily to fetch water from unsafe sources, affecting both their health and educational participation. This undermines not only the gender-sensitive goals of JJM, but also its core promise of "Har Ghar Jal" in vulnerable and marginalized regions.

## **5. Poor Road Connectivity to Remote Tribal Hamlets**

Data from the PMGSY-III MIS Portal indicates that 153 tribal habitations in Dhalai remain unconnected by all-weather roads. Villages such as Betbagan in Dumburnagar block are practically cut off from ambulance services, emergency evacuation, and school transport during the monsoon season.

  
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Frequent landslides and seasonal flooding, coupled with poor construction quality and lack of post-construction maintenance, result in severe isolation of these communities. This disconnect severely hampers tribal access to basic services including education, health, nutrition, markets, and public administration. The poor connectivity further exacerbates supply chain inefficiencies in tribal welfare scheme implementation, and hinders response during disaster situations.

## 6. Forest Rights Implementation Gaps and Weak Participatory Governance

While Dhalai has issued 11,224 individual and community land titles under the Forest Rights Act (FRA), multiple implementation gaps persist. In several cases, the land titles are misaligned with the actual customary landholdings of ST beneficiaries. For instance, in Ganganagar, 38 tribal families submitted formal petitions to the Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) for correction of land boundaries, citing lack of Gram Sabha consultation during FRA allotment—a legal requirement under the Act. Additionally, Joint Forest Management Committees (JFMCs) established under afforestation and conservation schemes often lack representation from local tribal communities, particularly tribal women. The absence of participatory governance has not only weakened forest rights enforcement but also diluted community stewardship over natural resources, affecting livelihoods, traditional practices, and ecological sustainability.

## 7. Incomplete Rehabilitation and Exclusion of Bru (Reang) Families

(i) Despite the signing of the historic Quadripartite Agreement on 16 January 2020, which provided for the permanent resettlement of over 35,000 displaced Bru (Reang) individuals in 13 locations across Tripura, the community continues to face systemic neglect in critical areas of rehabilitation. Several pressing concerns have emerged in the post-resettlement phase:

(ii) Education deprivation is severe: Bru students face high dropout rates due to poverty, language barriers, and lack of scholarship access. There is no structured remedial framework to reintegrate Bru youth into formal education.

(iii) Livelihood opportunities are minimal: There is inadequate access to credit, entrepreneurship support, or inclusion in Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) schemes. Most families still rely on subsistence support, with limited paths toward economic self-reliance.

(iv) Infrastructure deficits persist: Many settlement areas lack safe roads, drinking water facilities, and healthcare. Water supplied is often contaminated or inaccessible, while roads become impassable during the monsoon, cutting off essential services.

(v) Documentation gaps remain unresolved: Large numbers of families still do not have Aadhaar, ration cards, or voter IDs, which directly affects their access to public services and financial inclusion.

  
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(vi) Social protection and welfare schemes, such as old-age pensions, disability benefits, and inclusion under PM-JANMAN or PVTG, are either unavailable or inconsistently delivered. Left-out split families—more than 320—have not been included in the official rehabilitation framework and remain without housing, rations, or entitlements. Moreover, Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) and State Review Meetings, mandated to oversee progress and grievances, have not been held in the past two years. This has resulted in a disconnect between community needs and policy response.

The Bru memorandum underscores that unless these issues are addressed with urgency, the settlement effort risks being a demographic exercise without delivering actual empowerment or integration.

#### 8. Lack of Legal and Cultural Recognition for Chakma Traditions

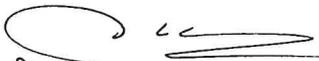
(i) The Chakma community, which is officially recognized as a Scheduled Tribe in Tripura and several other northeastern states, continues to face marginalization in matters of culture, language, and customary governance. The key demands raised by the Chakma community, through their representative organization Tripura Rejyo Chakma Samajik Parishod, focus on safeguarding their cultural identity through legal and institutional mechanisms.

(ii) The Chakma Customary Law Bill, passed by the TTAADC on 28 December 2022, remains unimplemented because it has not been converted into a statutory Act by the Government of Tripura. This legislative delay threatens the survival of Chakma indigenous legal systems governing marriage, inheritance, and community dispute resolution.

(ii) The Chakma language, with its unique script and grammatical structure, has been introduced in 86 primary schools. However, it lacks state language recognition, thereby limiting its institutional growth and mainstream integration. Despite being listed by UNESCO, and granted Unicode on global digital platforms, the language remains at risk without formal support from the state government.

(iv) The Bizu Festival, celebrated annually by Chakmas as a three-day cultural and religious event, has not yet been recognized in either the North East Zone Cultural Centre (NEZCC) calendar or as a State Festival of Tripura, despite its popularity and symbolic significance for communal harmony.

(v) The community has strongly advocated for the establishment of a Chakma Socio-Cultural Academy in Agartala. Such an institution is essential to document, preserve, and promote the community's oral traditions, folk music, literature, and cultural practices, which are fast eroding due to lack of institutional support. Overall, the Chakma community's demands reflect the broader concern that legal neglect and cultural invisibility are contributing to the erosion of indigenous knowledge and identity, despite constitutional recognition.

  
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## 9. Denial of Scheduled Tribe Status to the Chorei Community

(i) The Chorei community, one of the oldest documented indigenous tribes of Tripura, remains excluded from the official Scheduled Tribe (ST) list of the state and the country. This exclusion has left them in a state of legal invisibility and systemic marginalization, despite strong ethnographic and historical evidence supporting their distinct identity.

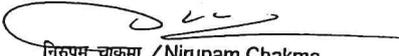
(ii) Historical documentation, such as Tripura Krishnamala (compiled between 1748 and 1800 AD), explicitly references "Chorei Para" (Chorei village) as a recognized habitation. Scholars have also traced their presence in regions like Choreibari, now corrupted as Churaibari, located near the Tripura-Assam border.

(iii) The Chorei have been erroneously grouped under the Halam community, without any formal recognition, despite not being included within Halam's sub-tribe list under the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order. This has caused an identity crisis and administrative neglect.

(iv) Linguistically and culturally, the Chorei speak a distinct dialect within the Kuki-Chin language family and maintain their own rituals, music, clan structures, and traditional governance. Their language and traditions have been the subject of multiple peer-reviewed studies and field research, which recommend urgent documentation and protection.

(v) The Chorei community is spread across numerous villages in North Tripura and Unakoti Districts, such as Chorei Bung, Nilbosonpara, Roitinthoi Para, and Sunaimuri, and are also present in border regions of Assam and Mizoram.

(vi) The community faces acute developmental disadvantages, including high poverty levels, low educational attainment, and negligible representation in public service. Without ST recognition, they are deprived of reservations, scholarships, and welfare programs extended to other tribes. The Chorei community, through the Young Chorei Association (YCA), has made a strong appeal for inclusion in the ST list. Recognition would enable them to secure constitutional rights, access development schemes, and preserve their unique cultural identity from extinction.

  
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**Figure 2: Shri Nirupam Chakma, Hon'ble Member NCST in the District Review meeting of Dhalai District, Tripura**

### **III. Recommendations for Inclusive and Sustainable Development in Dhalai District, Tripura**

#### **1. Border Area Development and Community Engagement**

Dhalai district may create Border Area Development Committees (BADCs) with tribal and women representation. Assign coordination roles to these committees under Border Area Development Programme (BADP). Use the CIAT School at Bagmara to train ex-insurgents in DDU-GKY trades. Scale up TSR and CAPF Civic Action Programmes to build rapport through health camps, sports, and awareness campaigns.

#### **2. Strengthen Education in ADC Areas**

Launch an ST Para-Teacher Scheme to fill vacancies with local youth in ADC schools. Prioritize digital learning content in Kokborok, Halam, and Riang dialects under the Vidya Samiksha Kendra initiative. SSA funds should be earmarked for deploying solar-based learning kits and reactivating closed JBS institutions.

#### **3. Eliminate Malaria in Tribal Zones**

Declare malaria-prone blocks like Gandacherra as Malaria Elimination Zones under NVBDCP. Provide mobile malaria units and diagnostic teams to each block. Ensure LLINs are replaced every 3 years and involve teachers in training sessions to raise awareness about early symptoms and testing.

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#### **4. Improve JJM Implementation**

Constitute Gram Jal Samitis in every tribal habitation. Use MGNREGA convergence to build rainwater harvesting structures. Introduce JJM-Arunodaya's solar-based rural schemes for hilly belts. Deploy mobile maintenance teams with real-time reporting on water supply gaps.

  
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### **5. Enhance Rural Connectivity**

Prioritize road projects for Betbagan, Palkupara, and other cut-off tribal habitations under ADB-supported PMGSY-III. Adopt geo-textile and pre-fab road technologies in erosion-prone slopes. Train local SHGs and youth under e-MARG to report quality and progress.

### **6. Strengthen Forest Rights Implementation**

Use drones and digital tools for FRA patta verification. Mandate Gram Sabha consent for new titles. Update JFMCs with 50% ST and 33% women membership. Integrate forest-based micro-enterprises like broom grass, banana fibre, and bamboo under TRLM.

### **7. Include Bru Families in Welfare Frameworks**

Deploy special Bru Education Facilitators for remedial and bridge learning in local dialects. Fast-track Bru inclusion under PM-JANMAN, PM-POSHAN, and Ayushman Bharat through dedicated data officers. Promote SHG formation for Bru women via DIC and TRLM to support tailoring, horticulture, and food processing enterprises.

### **8. Recognize Customary Law and Tribal Languages**

Collaborate with TSLSA and Tripura University to record Chakma customary codes. Pilot legal recognition of community mediation in civil disputes. Establish Halam Language Teaching Fellowships and fast-track teacher recruitment via SCERT. Create bilingual textbooks and oral history clubs using DIKSHA and Bhasha Sangam platforms.

### **9. Transition from jhum to settled farming**

Increase efforts and interventions to help farmers transition from jhum to settled, sustainable farming practices.

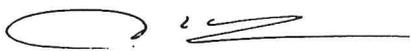
### **10. Jan Aushadhi stores in all blocks**

Jan Aushadhi stores may be established in each block of the district. Currently, there is only one store located at the district headquarters.

## **IV. Conclusion**

Ganganagar Block of Dhalai district was recognized as an Aspirational Block and received the Prime Minister's Award for Excellence in Public Administration in April 2025 under the Aspirational Blocks Programme. The award was accepted by District Magistrate and Collector Shri Saju Wahid on behalf of the people of Ganganagar. This recognition reflects the administration's efforts to deliver essential services to a district with a predominantly tribal population.

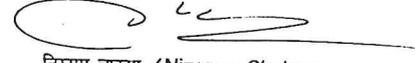
As an aspirational district, Dhalai faces multiple challenges including geographical remoteness, administrative gaps, socio-cultural exclusion, and demographic diversity. The district is also home to a significant number of resettled and repatriated Bru families, who face distinct and complex challenges of their own.



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The specific recommendations outlined in this report are based on the Commission's observations during the review process, available data, and inputs gathered from tribal representatives and NGOs active in the district. It is hoped that the administration will give due consideration to the issues flagged in this report and that the implementation of the recommendations will support the district's sustained progress and inclusive development.



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