



Land Dispute Settlement: A Key Issue to Ensure Long-lasting Peace in Chattogram Hill Tracts

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ABSTRACT

Chattogram Hill Tracts (CHT), comprising nearly 10% of Bangladesh's total landmass, is a region of immense natural beauty that endured almost 27 years of insurgency, which formally ended with the signing of the historic Peace Agreement between the Government of Bangladesh and the Parbattya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samiti (PCJSS) on December 2, 1997. Despite the implementation of most clauses, land disputes remain a major obstacle. This study aims to identify the challenges faced by the Land Commission in resolving these disputes and to suggest a comprehensive modality to address the crisis. Using a mixed-method approach, the research highlights issues such as the Commission's credibility, an inefficient land management system, communal disharmony, the absence of a cadastral survey, an unstable security situation, and conflicts arising from the 2016 amendment to the Land Commission Act as primary challenges. The study recommends a consensual approach between the Government and relevant stakeholders to address these issues, emphasizing that resolving land disputes is crucial for the full implementation of the CHT Agreement and the stability of the region's security environment.

Key words: Chattogram Hill Tracts, Land Disputes, Land Commission Act 2016, Land Management in CHT, Security Situation

INTRODUCTION

The Chattogram Hill Tracts (CHT) constitutes nearly 10% of the total landmass of Bangladesh. Despite its breathtaking beauty, this region was ravaged by nearly 27 years of insurgency, which formally ended with the signing of the historic Peace Agreement between the Government of Bangladesh and the Parbattya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samiti (PCJSS) on December 2, 1997 (Ara & Khan, 2023). The Agreement brought a sense of relief to the beleaguered people of the region, although some remained skeptical about its future (Myers, 2019). Nevertheless, the implementation of the Agreement began promptly, despite some clauses contravening the country's Constitution. To date, 48 out of the 72 clauses have been implemented, with the remainder in progress.

A major issue hindering the progress of the Peace Agreement is the sensitive and complex issue of land. Land disputes are the core issue in CHT, often leading to communal clashes and unrest (Siddiqui, 2018). Several Land Commissions have been established, but their efforts have seen little progress on the ground. Recently, the Government amended the Land Commission Act 2001 into the Land Commission Amended Act 2016. This amendment has been viewed as discriminatory by the Bengali community, who fear losing their land rights in CHT. Currently, land disputes are the most significant and complicated issue, causing communal disharmony and delaying the implementation of the CHT Agreement. If not managed well, these disputes could destabilize the hard-earned status quo in CHT, leading to serious geopolitical consequences. Therefore, this issue requires deeper understanding and study.

The objective of this research is to understand the genesis of land disputes, identify barriers to their settlement, assess the impact of land issues on the peace and stability of CHT, and suggest probable ways towards a lasting solution. This research is novel in its comprehensive approach, combining both primary and secondary data sources, and it offers fresh insights into the complex dynamics of land

disputes in CHT. The research is descriptive and follows an analytical methodology based on primary and secondary sources of information. A mixed-method approach was used, including numerous interviews and surveys as primary data sources (McKim, 2017). Eminent persons, tribal leaders, current and former members of the Land Commission, senior government officials (both civil and military), and political figures were interviewed. Surveys were conducted among both tribal and Bengali communities in the Khagrachari area to gauge their understanding of the issue. Secondary data was sourced from various books, journals, publications, and Internet resources related to CHT land issues. However, the study faced limitations. Accessing various tribal leaders and obtaining their views was challenging. Extracting accurate information from the local tribal population was also daunting, as many were hesitant to divulge information due to security concerns. Despite these challenges, this research provides a valuable contribution to understanding and resolving land disputes in CHT, highlighting the need for a consensual approach between the government and relevant stakeholders to ensure peace and stability in the region.

Literature Review

A good number of books have been published on the CHT issue over a period of time. Besides, many scholars and researchers including the course members from National Defence Course and Armed Forces War Course have carried out in-depth research on the land and other pertinent issues in CHT. In this regard, studies of Bhattacharyya (2018); Mohsin (2022); Bala (2022); Abedin (2003) and Tripura (2008) are widely acknowledged and relevant. For example, Mohsin (2022) argues that peace in the CHT is largely dependent upon the resolution of the land issue. Where Bhattacharyya (2018) mentioned at the grassroots level, the main source of disharmony between the Tribal and Bengali settlers is mainly based on the control of the land. Eva & Khan (2018) and Islam (2019) similarly argued that the post-conflict CHT is a 'hybrid land context' apparently where land tenure is insecure, the ownership is contested between Tribal and settler households and where large-scale acquisition and indiscriminate land grabbing is occurring in absence of effective tenure governance.

Uddin (2019) stated that the land problem is the main problem of the CHT. He also stated that the Kaptai Dam and Bengali Settlement as two of the main reasons for the land problem. Chakma Circle Chief Roy argued that the success or failure of the 1997 Agreement in bringing forth lasting peace and in paving the way for socio-economic progress in this hilly region is largely dependent upon how the land-related problems are addressed in the coming years (Chakma,2023). Another important aspect of the CHT land settlement process is the function of the Land Commission and conducting the land survey. Jhuma & Biswas (2021) emphasized necessary amendments to the Land Commission Act. He also opined in favour of conducting an immediate land survey to establish a property right with mapping and plotting. The study of this literature indicates that land dispute has become a very complex issue of the CHT over the years and is considered one of the major impediments to peace in the CHT. However, although in the above mentioned literature, land has been identified as one of the core issues of CHT problem and major impediment in the process of implementation of the CHT Agreement, but no comprehensive suggestion was made how this problem can be overcome. This has been identified as the research gap of this study.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Genesis of The Land Disputes in CHT From a Historical Perspective

Introduction to CHT

CHT is the most diversified region of Bangladesh in terms of terrain configuration, people and culture, ethnicity, and history. It covers a total area of 5089 square miles, primarily hilly wooded territory covering about 10% of the total area of Bangladesh. The topography of CHT is featured by hills; rivers and cliffs covered with thick forests, bush, and creeper jungles. The area is divided into three administrative districts namely Rangamati, Khagrachari, and Bandarban Hill Districts (Figure 1).

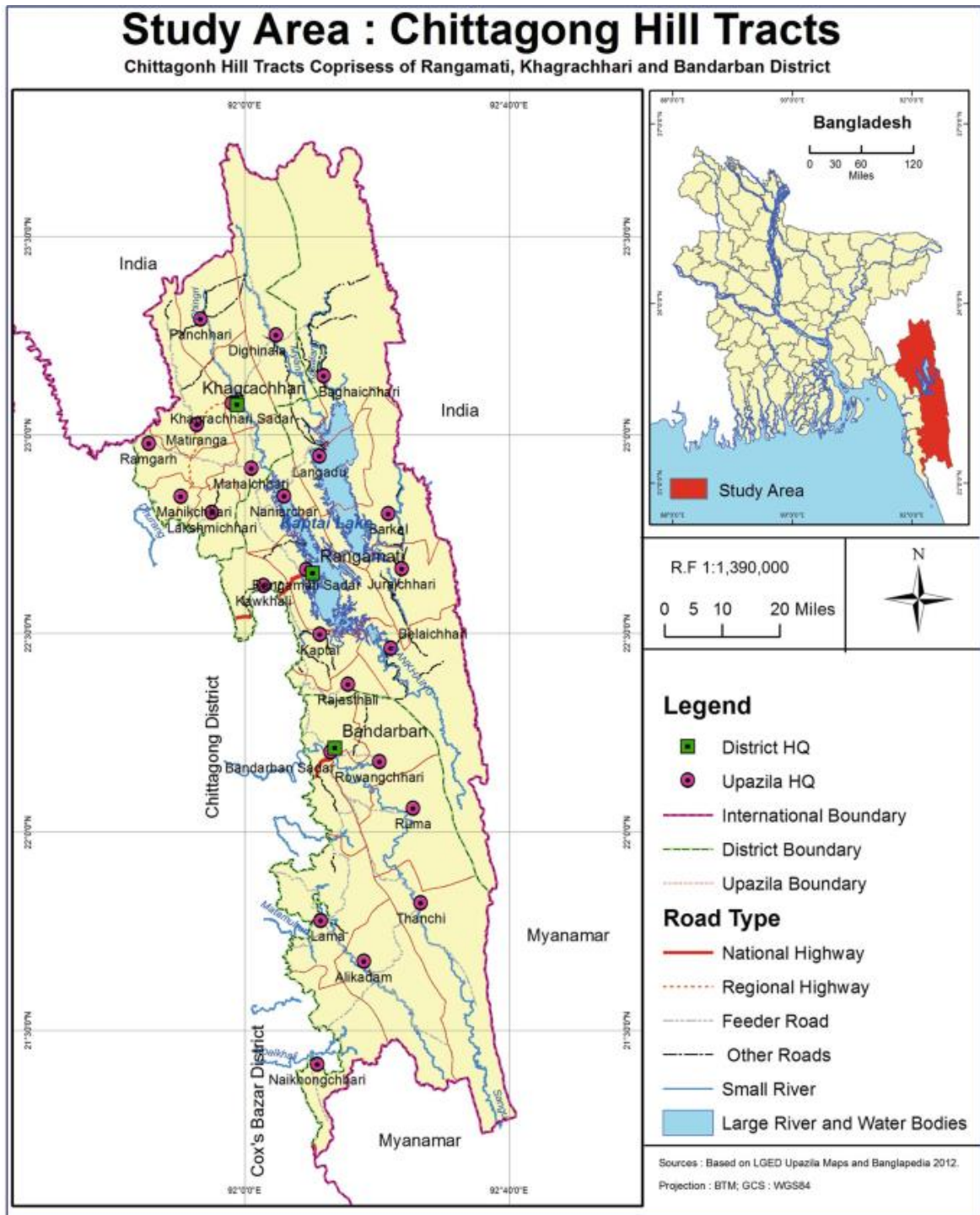


Figure 1. Map of Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT)

The area is inhabited by 12 ethnic groups including the mainstream Bengali who makes up more than 50 percent of the total population of CHT. According to the population census report of 2022, the total population of Khagrachhari, Rangamati and Bandarban districts has reached 1,842,815. Of these, 922,598 (50.06%) are Bengali, and 920,217 (49.94%) are Tribal people or Tribal. Compare to the 2011 census report, the proportion of Bengali has increased by 2.88%, while the proportion of Tribal in CHT has decreased by 2.88% (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2022).

Historical Perspective of Land Dispute

CHT was an integral and undivided part of Chittagong since ancient times. Until CHT came under British colonial rule in 1787, the area was contested by the Tripura dynasty, Kings of Arakan, Sultans, and Nawabs of the Mughal Empire (Shelly, 1992). The Tribal people are mostly the Sino-Tibetan descent belonging to Mongolian groups who migrated to this region from Myanmar (former Burma) during the period from 15th century to mid–nineteen centuries due to war and political reasons (Shelly, 1992, p. 26). The Kuki tribe was the earliest to settle and the Chakma came much later (Abedin, 2003). The natural migration of the Bengali continued since the 17th century through trade and on invitation by the Chakma Chiefs. The Tribal living in the CHT region was always rebellious by nature (Shelly 1992, p.26). To subdue the revolt and deal with the Tribal unrest, the British promulgated a set of rules under CHT Regulations 1 of 1900. This restricted the entry of non-ethnic minorities unless permitted by the Deputy Commissioners-the supreme authority over the structured Tribal administration.

Besides, through the CHT Act 1900, the Government started to bring the land under state ownership, and by the second half of the 19th century, most of the CHT lands were brought under state ownership and designated as either Reserve Forests (RF) under the Forest Department, or Unclassified State Forest (USF) under the office of the DC (Sarkar & Mukul, 2024). The USF contained all the common lands that the Hill people had been traditionally using. This is also known as Khas land. The CHT regulations provided limited rights to the Tribal people regarding the use of USF (also termed as common land) and those could be taken back at any time (Shazzad,2015).

In 1962, due to the construction of the Kaptai Hydro-electric Project, a good number of Tribal people lost their cultivable lands and homesteads. This had bred a sense of deprivation amongst the Tribal people and was the major triggering event for insurgency in CHT. From 1976 to 1980; the Government undertook the settlement of landless Bengali people from the plains to this region and provided them with 05 acres of land for making their livelihood (Abedin, 2003). This was another major issue, which had a deep impact on the land dispute and became one of the sources of age-old contention between the Ethnic minorities and the Bengali community.

Again, under the provision of the CHT Land Acquisition Act 1958, many lands were acquired by the state for setting up industries, rubber garden, and formation of reserve forest and to create district forest, which is presently known as Unclassified State Forest (USF). The net consequence of this land acquisition, nearly a quarter of the CHT was converted into state-owned reserve forest while the bulk of the remainder also became state-owned USF lands (Siddique, 2021). At the beginning of 1979, a good amount of land was given in lease for private commercial plantations, which were mostly taken from the common lands categorized as USF. Apart from land acquisition by Government and non-Government agencies, many Tribal elites also gathered huge amounts of land as their personal property (Jhuma & Biswas, 2021). Besides, following the emergence of insurgency in 1976, a good number of cantonments and Security Forces' camps were established in CHT, which also had a detrimental effect on the land of CHT. The ultimate result of such acquisition created a sense of deprivation from the land which was traditionally considered common land for the use of Tribal communities (Sazzad, 2016).

An Overview of CHT Land Commission Acts

A Glimpse on Land Commission Act-2001

To resolve the land-related disputes in CHT, a Land Commission was formed in 1999 following the CHT Agreement of 1997. However, the Land Commission Act-2001 came into being in June 2001 through a gazette notification by the Government. According to the Land Commission Act-2001, the Commission shall be constituted headed by a retired justice of the High Court as Chairperson where the Circle Chief (concerned), Chairman/representative of the Regional Council, Chairman of the District Council (concerned) will be the member of the Commission and Divisional Commissioner/Additional Commissioner will act as member secretary. The tenure of office of the Commission shall be three years, but its tenure shall be extendable in consultation with the Regional Council (Land Commission Act-2001).

According to the Land Commission Act-2001, the primary focus of the commission would be the early disposal of land-related disputes of the rehabilitated refugees but have full authority to annul the rights of ownership of those hills and lands that have been illegally settled and in respect of which illegal dispossession has taken place. The commission shall resolve the disputes in consonance with the law,

custom, and practice in vogue in CHT. No appeal shall be sustainable against the judgment of this commission and the decision of this commission shall be deemed final. However, Government acquisition lands, Reserve Forest, Kaptai Hydro Electric Project, and Betunia Land Satellite Station were kept out of the jurisdiction of the Land Commission (Land Commission Act- 2001).

Critical Analysis of the Land Commission Amendment Act-2016

The 'Chattogram Hill Land Asset Management Commission (Amendment) Ordinance – 2016,' commonly referred to as the Land Commission Amendment Act-2016, was enacted on August 8, 2016, to address the persistent land disputes in the Chattogram Hill Tracts (CHT) region. One of the most significant changes brought by this amendment is the modification of Article 6 (1) (b), which provides tribal people with a legal basis to assert their longstanding claims to "Traditional Rights on Land." This provision has raised concerns among the Bengali community in CHT, who fear that their land rights may be severely impacted. The amendment stipulates that all lands, including government lands and fringe lands allocated to Bengalis, will be rendered invalid. Additionally, the state will lose rights to lands acquired for reserved forests, state-owned industries, and government or local authority offices under existing national laws. Moreover, Article 4(2) extends the jurisdiction of the Commission beyond the CHT, further complicating the already sensitive land issue.

The procedural dynamics of the Commission are also affected by the amendments. Article 7 (3) introduces a potential procedural delay in decision-making, as fulfilling a quorum—requiring four out of five members to be present—may be challenging for various reasons. This requirement could hinder the timely resolution of disputes, prolonging the uncertainty and tension in the region. Furthermore, the amendment to Section 7 (5) stipulates that if a unanimous decision is not reached, the decision taken by the majority of members will be considered the Commission's decision. This majority rule could lead to decisions that do not reflect the consensus of all stakeholders, potentially exacerbating existing tensions.

One of the most contentious aspects of the amendment is Article 3(2), which specifies that there will be no Bengali representative in the Commission. This provision has been criticized for creating an imbalance in the decision-making process, as it ensures that tribal members will dominate the Commission. Many view this as a unilateral and biased approach that undermines the principles of fair judicial process and equitable dispute resolution. The absence of Bengali representation is seen as a major flaw, as it disregards the interests and perspectives of a significant portion of the CHT population. This perceived bias could further entrench communal divisions and undermine the legitimacy of the Commission's decisions, potentially destabilizing the hard-earned peace in the region.

The amendments introduced by the Land Commission Amendment Act-2016 highlight the complex and sensitive nature of land disputes in CHT. While the intention behind the amendments may be to provide a fair resolution to longstanding claims, the potential consequences for the Bengali community, procedural delays, and perceived biases in the decision-making process pose significant challenges. To ensure a lasting and equitable solution, it is crucial for the Government and all stakeholders to engage in a consensual and inclusive approach that respects the rights and concerns of all communities involved.

Reaction from Different Ethnic Communities

There was a mix of reactions given by the people from different communities and works of life. According to the Bengali people, there is no Bengali representation in the Commission, whereas they make up almost half of the total population (Mujib, 2023). The chairman and member secretary being the government official could be a Bengali or Tribal person. There is a possibility the Land Commission becoming a Tribal committee. Therefore, they are skeptical about fair judgment from the Commission. Besides, some sections and articles of the Land Commission Amendment Act diminish the Government's authority in CHT (Khademul, 2018). A survey was conducted to know the opinion of Bengali and Tribal people about the impact of the latest land commission amendment. The majority of the Bengali and a good number of Tribal responded that this will create more troubles instead of resolving the issue (Figure-2).

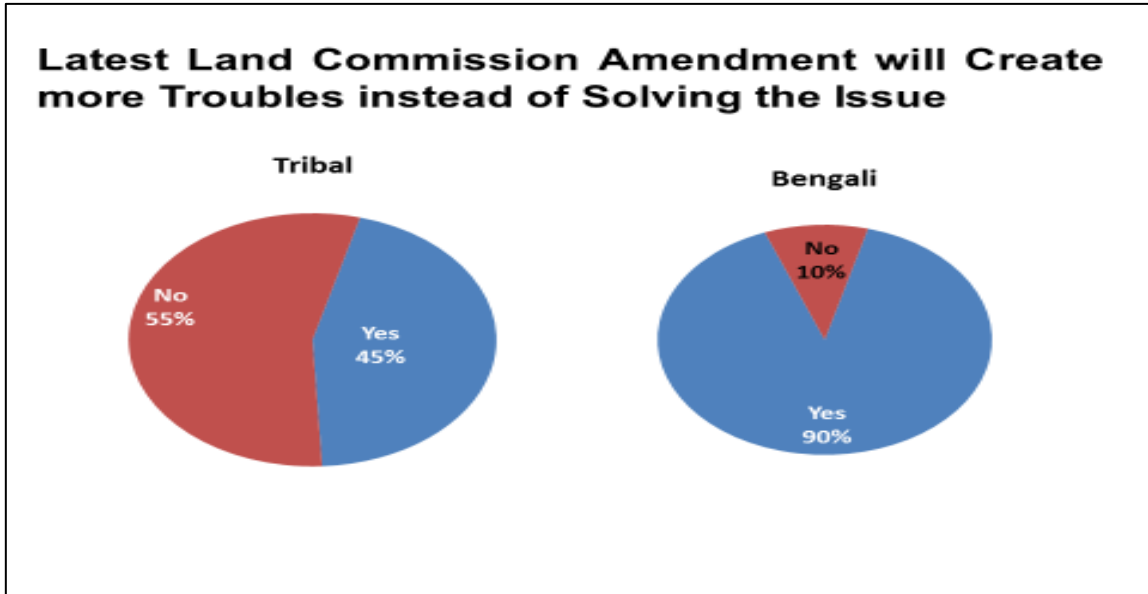


Figure 2. Survey on the Effect of Amended Land Commission in Resolving the Issue

On the other hand, Tribal leaders are contended with the amendment as it meets most of their demands. According to JSS (M), the chairman of the Commission was given unfair and autocratic authority in the Land Commission Act of 2001. The clause which bestows the unitary and dictatorial power to the Chairman of the Land Commission has been amended and the decision-making process has been made more democratic through the amendment (Chakma, 2023). Besides, by amending the articles related to quorum and authority of the chairman, the functions of the Commission have been made more democratic, accountable and transparent (Marcacci, 2022).

Challenges For The New Commission

The Credibility of the Commission

For any given district the commission will be composed of 05 members of which 03 persons are from the Tribal community and rest two are the chairmen and divisional commissioner or his representative respectively. The last two members do not represent the Bengali community, which makes up 50 percent of the total population and is the main counterpart of the dispute. Therefore, the commission has to prove its credibility by rendering fair justice irrespective of the ethnic identity of the applicants. Besides, through the amendment, the chairman has been made powerless, which will help the other members who are all tribal to influence the judgment. Thus, it will create more problems instead of resolving the issue (Mujib, 2023).

Earning Confidence of the People

Land Commission was made effective in 2001. Since then, the Commission could not resolve a single case, which gives no hope to the people about its effectiveness in the near future. Although after the amendment of the Commission in 2016, around 22090 applications were received by the Commission until December 2017. Out of which, approximately 500 applications were from Bengali. That gives a clear indication that the Bengali community is skeptical about fair judgment. Therefore, Commission has to do a lot to earn the confidence of the people from all communities.

Land Management System of CHT

Land management in CHT is the most complicated issue compared to any other part of the country. There are numerous controlling authorities working side by side on the issue of land in CHT. Besides, many laws including traditional laws, customs and practices, which have been recognized in the Land Commission Amendment Act-2016, drive land management in CHT. Moreover, the status of the land is yet to be ascertained, as there was no land survey made in this part of the country. Currently, there are two types of systems namely holding by power and leasing by the Government being followed

for land ownership in CHT. In the holding-by-power system, Tribal people do not maintain any paper or document for their land ownership. The Tribal communities believe that land, forest, and hills are collective property. The existing Government system of land registration is at variance with the ancestral land management system (Marcacci, 2022). The existence and applications of so many systems have made the land management system complicated in CHT.

Effect of Land Dispute on Security Situation

The land is considered to be one of the key issues and most sensitive issues in the CHT affairs thus should be handled very carefully. Most of the communal unrest and clashes that occur in CHT are because of land-related issues (Hla, 2023). A survey result shows the majority of the respondents from Bengali and Tribal communities identified ‘dispute over ownership of land’ as the main cause of communal disharmony in CHT (Figure-3).

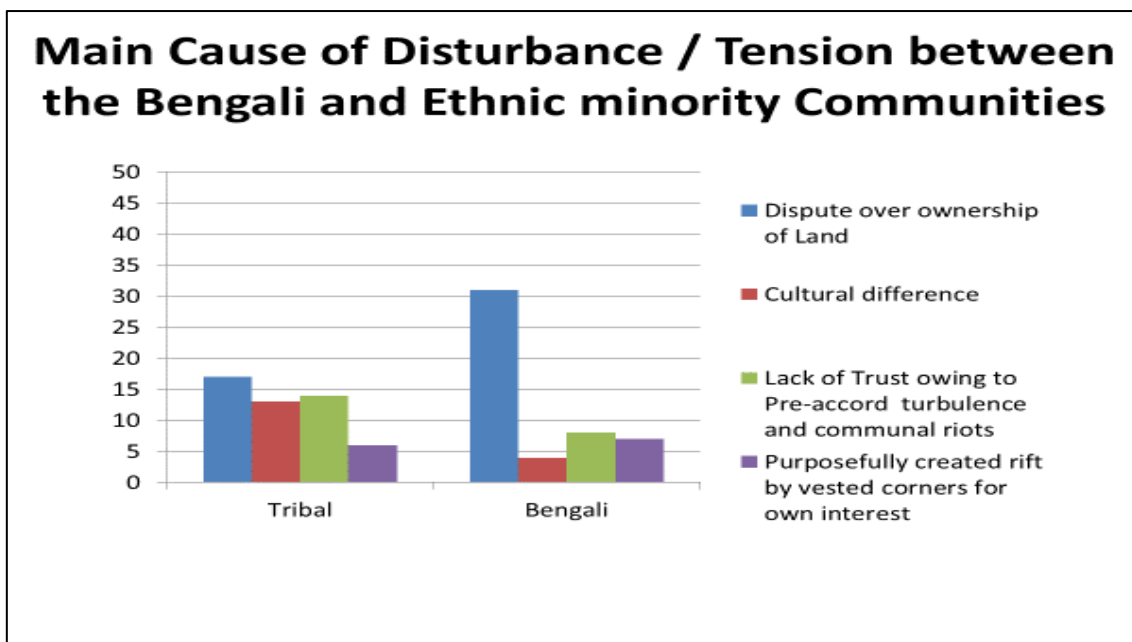


Figure 3. Main Causes of Disturbance//Tension between Bengali and Tribal Community

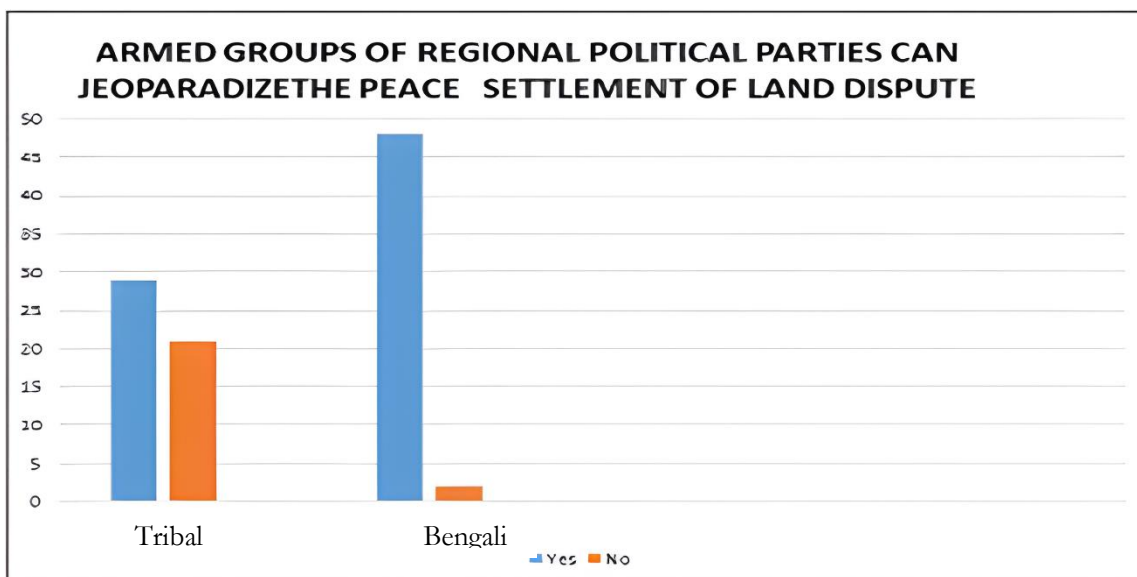


Figure 4. Influence of Armed Groups of Regional Political Parties over Settlement of Land Dispute

In the last 25 years, at least 17 communal riots were reported in CHT where the root cause was in most cases land disputes (Mahiuddin, 2023). It is assumed that such incident is likely to increase ahead of the land commission's verdict on land disputes, particularly if justice is not served to the beleaguered persons (Mujib, 2023). This may have a serious effect on the overall security situation in CHT.

Besides, all the regional parties are maintaining armed miscreant groups defying the CHT Peace Agreement. The armed groups of the regional parties could seriously impede the effort of the Land Commission if the outcome of the resolution goes against the Tribal interest (Zia, 2023). In 2021, a good number of incidents of land grabbing of Bengali-owned land were reported in the Matiranga area of Khagrachari district patronized by UPDF (Mahiuddin, 2023). Such incidents are likely to increase in the coming days, complicating the land dispute further. A survey result shows armed groups of the regional parties can substantially jeopardize the land dispute settlement process (Figure-4).

Formulation of a Comprehensive Plausible Action Plan to Resolve the Land Dispute *Ensuring a Conducive Security Situation*

The first and foremost requirement is to maintain a conducive security situation that would allow Land Commission to work freely. Although the security situation in CHT is fairly stable, it is jolted very frequently due to various contentious issues like communal unrest, extortion and land disputes between Tribal and Bengali people (Mujib, 2023). More so, vested groups are always busy making trivial issues into sensitive ones to deteriorate the security situation for personal gains. Besides, armed groups of the regional parties are still a threat to a conducive law and order situation, which is sometimes difficult for the district police and civil administration to manage (Polash, 2023). Therefore, focus to be given to maintaining a conducive security situation for land dispute settlement.

Streamlining Land Management System

As mentioned before, the land management system in CHT is the most complicated issue compared to any other part of the country. According to rule 34 of CHT Manual 1/1900, any sort of lease, sale, transfer, or acquisition of the land was at the DC's discretion; as such the DC remained the unwritten owner of the land (CHT Manual 1/1900). According to the Charter of Duties of DC defined by the Cabinet Division; selection, allocation of sites, requisition and acquisition of land, buildings, etc. for public purposes, payment of compensation money for land acquired by the Government and settlement of khas land and other Government properties are within the jurisdiction of District Commissioner (Cabinet Division, 1983). The authority is equally applicable for DC in any of the districts in Bangladesh irrespective of the geographical location. However, through Clause 26 a and b of Part B of the CHT Peace Agreement, Hill District Councils (HDC) have been given the power and authority to look after the land-related issues in CHT defying the authority of DC like any other district of Bangladesh. Therefore, necessary efforts may be taken to streamline the land management system in CHT irrespective of geographical location.

Conduct Cadastral Survey

The first land survey in this part of the sub-continent known as the cadastral survey (CS) was conducted during the British regime. This survey started from Ramu of Cox's Bazar Upazilla in 1888 and ended in 1940 while CHT remained out of CS as the area was administrated under separate regulation known as 'CHT Manual 1/1900'. The land management of hill tracts is following the rules set by the CHT Manual 1/1900. The local Tribal used to follow the age-old traditional land management system where documentation is immaterial. The problem started when many of the refugees returned home after the CHT agreement and started claiming the land given to the Bengali people by the Government (Polash, 2023). Therefore, there is a need to conduct a Land Survey to determine the status of the land. However, according to Clause 2 of Part D of the CHT Agreement, a land survey in CHT is not feasible at this moment. In light of the CHT Agreement, there is an obligation of resolving the land disputes before conducting a land survey (Tripura, 2023). Therefore, any unitary initiative by the Government to conduct the land survey may volatile the security situation. This should rather be a consensual approach of all the stakeholders appreciating the ground reality.

Support of the Regional Parties in dispute settlement

The support of regional parties is of paramount importance in resolving the land issue amicably. As discussed before, most of the land-related disputes including the grabbing of Government land are reportedly the result of instigation caused by the regional parties. Reportedly, regional parties are also using religion as a tool to encroach on Government land. Such controversial activities of the regional parties may be considered a threat to the peaceful settlement of the land issues (Mahiuddin, 2023). Hence, the support of regional parties is very important in this regard.

Ensuring the Effective Functioning of the Commission

The Land Commission was formed in 2001 in light of the CHT Peace Agreement. Till date, the commission could not be resolved a single case. However, the amendment has made the land issue more complicated according to the evaluation by different experts (Wahyu & Aeni, 2023). Particularly, the power and authority of the Chairman have been scraped through the amendment. For speedy execution of the cases, the chairman should be empowered in light of the Land Commission Act -2001 (Khademul, 2018). At the same time, the effort may be taken to co-opt a Bengali person as a member of the commission. This would certainly help them to earn the confidence of the Bengali community and ensure fair judgment to some extent. A survey result shows Bengali community is quite skeptical about the success of the amended commission (Figure -5).

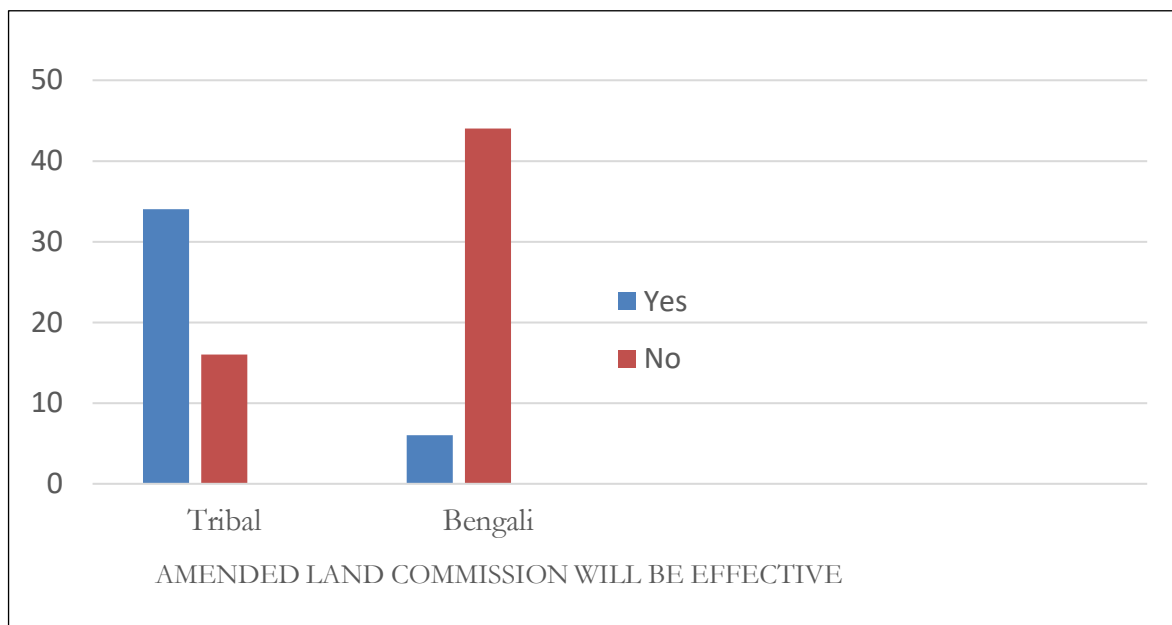


Figure 5. Impression on the Amended Land Commission Act on Resolving the Land Disputes. Source: Field Survey conducted by the Author.

Therefore, to make the commission more effective, representation from all communities is a must. A balance commission would definitely help to earn the confidence of all the stakeholders and resolve the land issue amicably. Besides, all required support like immediate formulation of rules, regulations, and parameters for the Land Commission, the establishment of permanent offices in three hill districts, and employment of full staff facilities for the Commission are to be provided immediately so that the commission can start functioning without further delay.

Roadmap to Land Dispute Settlement

Initially, the commission should focus on less disputed land as a pilot scheme. This approach would allow the commission to test its processes and procedures in a controlled manner, building experience and refining methods before tackling more contentious cases. Moreover, the commission should have an alternative plan to rehabilitate individuals on government-owned land if the verdict goes against them (Polash, 2023). Such efforts would help in building the confidence of the common people and resolving issues cordially, thus promoting a sense of justice and fairness in the process. According

to Siddiqui (2018), confidence-building measures are crucial for the successful implementation of any peace agreement, as they help in gaining the trust of the affected communities.

As of December 2017, the commission has received nearly 22,090 applications. Resolving this vast number of cases with limited manpower is a daunting task. Hypothetically, if the commission resolves 500 cases per year, it would take approximately 44 years to address all the applications. This significant delay would likely exacerbate the situation rather than resolving it. According to Ali (2011), prolonged delays in conflict resolution can lead to increased tensions and potentially reignite violence. Therefore, it is crucial for the government to consider alternative solutions to expedite the process. One viable option is to establish special tribunals under the Land Commission in every Upazilla, which would decentralize the workload and speed up the resolution process.

In addition to special tribunals, empowering local authorities could also expedite the settlement of land disputes. According to the Charter of Duties of DC (1983), Deputy Commissioners (DCs) may be empowered to resolve land-related disputes based on the powers and authority vested in them by the government (Mujib, 2023). By leveraging the existing administrative structure and legal frameworks, the government can significantly reduce the backlog of cases and ensure timely justice for the affected individuals. As noted by Mohsin (2022), utilizing existing local governance structures can enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of dispute resolution processes. These steps are essential to prevent further delays and maintain peace and stability in the region.

CONCLUSION

CHT is the most diversified and beautiful region of Bangladesh consisting of one-tenth of the whole land mass. Due to the construction of the Kaptai Hydro-electric Project in 1962, a good number of Tribal people lost their cultivable lands and homesteads. During the insurgency period, thousands of landless Bengali people from the plains were rehabilitated in CHT. Besides, many lands were acquired by the state for setting up industries, establishing rubber garden, and the formation of reserve forests. Such events had a detrimental effect on the overall security situation in CHT. After the Peace Agreement in 1997, the Government formed a Land Commission in 2001, which was amended in 2016 in light of the proposal and demand of the Tribal leaders.

Land Commission Amendment Act -2016 was adopted to resolve the age-old land disputes effectively. The amendment has made the land issue more complicated according to the evaluation by different experts. Therefore, Land Commission may be revamped to ensure representation from all communities. Besides, the land management system in CHT may be revised in light of the existing laws, applicable to any other district of the country. Besides, a cadastral survey is a prerequisite to know the status of the land before working on the dispute settlement. However, that has to be a consensual approach. Considering the volume of work, District Commissioners of the hill districts may be empowered to resolve land-related disputes like the plain land districts. It is presumed that a balance Commission would help to earn the confidence of all the stakeholders and resolve the land issue amicably.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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