THE WRATH OF THE MAJORITY

On August 3, life in Taindong, a remote hamlet in Khagrachhari, became a nightmare that would not end. Thirty-five houses were burnt to the crowd, leaving the residents homeless and terrified by this unprovoked act of hatred and racism. According to the victims several members of their community were brutally beaten up by the arsonists - all of them from neighbouring areas, all of them Bangali. Was it just because they were of different communities or was it the land that needed to be grabbed at all cost? *the Star* talks to the locals of this far away place snuggled deep in the forests of Khagrachhari to unravel the age-old conflict between Bengali settlers who are an overwhelming majority and the small communities of indigenous people.

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PHOTOS: ANANTA YUSUF



Taindong and its neighboring three affected unions, which are 70 kilometers away from Khagrachori Sadar can be described in many ways. It is a border area where three unions, home to 38,000 Bengali and a meagre eight thousand indigenous people. It is a border area where indigenous villages are surrounded by the Bangalis. Majoritarian dominance is therefore quite blatant leaving little choice to the ethnic communities except to suffer in silence.

The August 3 incident, however, has some antecedents. On July 29, trouble started to brew when a local Bengali Md Osman of Saheb Sardar para of South Asalang in Taindong was attacked by 5 to 6 miscreants in the middle of the night. The miscreants beat him up before leaving the place.