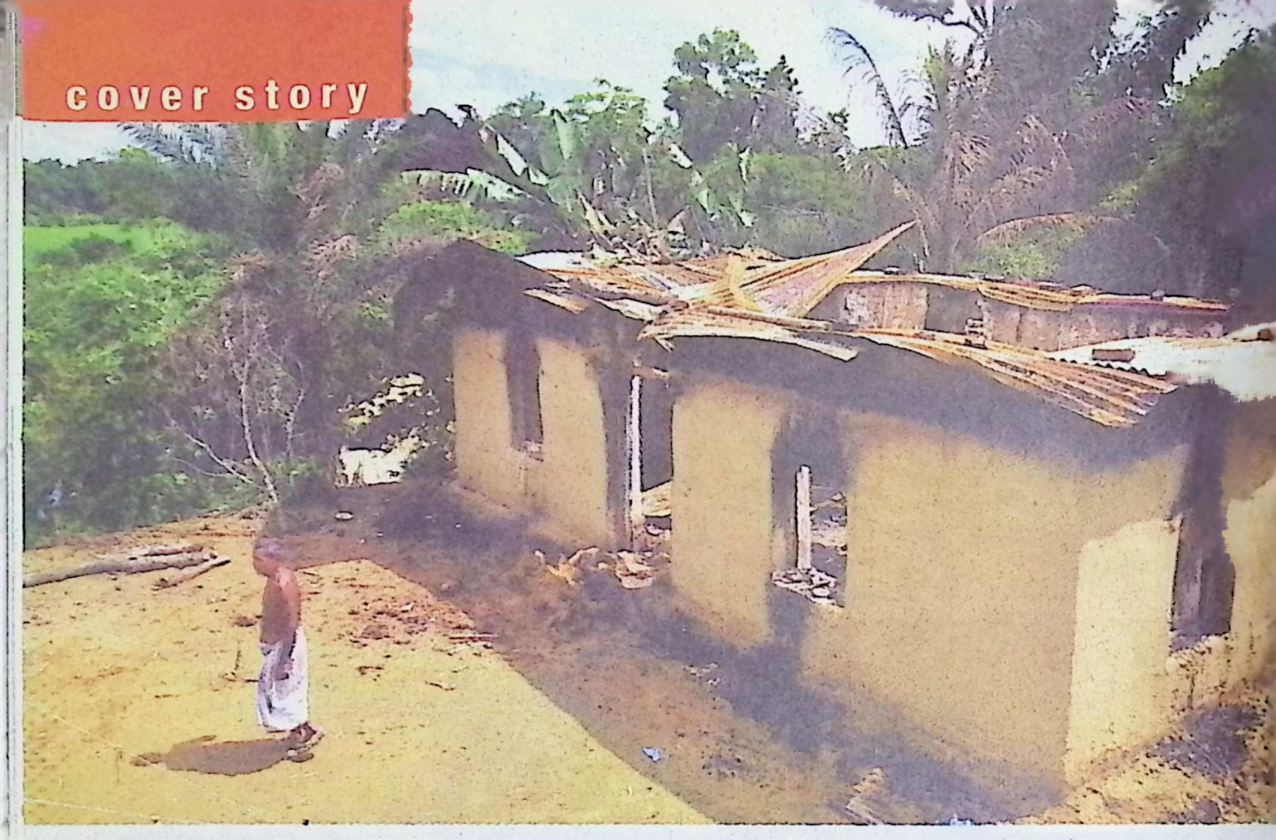


The Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Peace Accord 1997 was supposed to bring peace among the hilly people.

political most of the accused Awami League backed leaders have been omitted from the police case. While filing the case some of names have been ignored such as MD Rubel. Local Bengalis claimed he has a good relations with the union parishad chairman Md Tazul Islam and that is why he gets this privilege. Humayun Kabir, who lead the mob in torching the indigenous villages and was one of the prime perpetrators, has also not been included in the case.

Awami League backed chairman of the union parishad, Md Tazul Islam believes that the scale of the attack indicates that it was pre-planned. However, he brushed aside all the allegations and said, "Awami League leaders work for the ethnic people, they do not harm any of them."

The Drama Continue

The Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Peace Accord 1997 was supposed to bring peace among the hilly people. Sadly, the story of land grabbing and subsequent violence has been prevalent in the area since the signing of the accord. The conflict between Bengali and Hilly people is mostly rooted around land, its ownership and possession.

The huge resource in the hilly area attracted the then British government around 1870. They declared the area as reserved and consequently jum cultivation was prohibited around 800,000 acres of land. Thus, people were forced to move deeper into the hilly areas. Later, the 1900 Chittagong Regulation granted the ethnic people right over their land, however, keeping the 800,000 acres still reserved.

Since ages, a feudal system has prevailed in the ethnic community pertaining to the management of lands, forests, grasslands, grazing lands, jum lands and water bodies. The British government carried out a brief research to build a dam on the up stream of Karnaphuli in Rangamati dictrict in 1906. But the whole construction was completed by the Pakistan government in 1962.

The giant dam covered 220 km of cultivable land and consequently displaced 18,000 families. It was the beginning of the continuous human rights violations against the ethnic communities, since most of the displaced people did not get any government support.

Protim Roy Pampu, a lawyer and an independent researcher shows it has been the policy of the Pakistani government to turn a non-Muslim majority populated areas into Muslim-majority populated areas, which was supported by the different governments after independence. The recent violence is a continuous part of this pushing Bengalis into the hilly area. At least four lakh Bengalis were pushed into the CHT during the reign of President Ziaur Rahman. In 1991, the census revealed, Bengalis comprised half of the population in CHT and adjoining areas such as Teknaf.

The ethnic people enjoyed their rights over land from ancient times, but from British period till Bangladesh was born, they have been deprived