

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT OF POST INSURGENCY SITUATION IN THE CHITTAGONG HILL TRACTS

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INTRODUCTION

Local conflicts of various dimension and intensity can be seen in many parts of the world at this time. The problem is more acute in third world countries because of the low level of socio-economic development which brings up the question of sharing much smaller pie. However, economic reasons alone are not responsible for ethnic conflicts. Social and psychological grievances are also responsible for creating dissension amongst the populace.

One has to look at the problems of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) from both a global and a local perspective. The post insurgency situation in CHT is neither an isolated occurrence nor something peculiar. Ethnic conflicts similar to this are taking place in nearby countries (e.g. India, Burma, Srilanka), as well as distant ones (e.g. Cambodia, Philippines, Turkey, Ireland, Somalia, Rwanda etc.). Since insurgencies are often the result of distinctive situations, it will be wrong to look for a standard solution to them.

The strategic management approach to the post insurgency situation in CHT has been designed to focus on the elimination of the psychological fear of the tribals by granting them genuine autonomy in matters affecting their day to day life as well as providing constitutional safeguards for them. A careful study of the politico-historical picture is essential to see the problem in perspective before evolving a recipe for its strategic management. This paper will analyze the steps taken so far by different governments since the beginning of post insurgency situation in CHT. It will then attempt to provide a comprehensive recipe to address the issue strategically.

GOVERNMENTAL POLICIES AND THEIR IMPACT

Government Policy Between 1976-1985

Deployment of Army. The government of Bangladesh first felt constrained to call in the armed forces as security forces in 'Aid of civil power' on 06 Oct 1976. The assistance of security force was deemed necessary as the police is not trained to deal with insurgencies. It entrusted the responsibility to the Bangladesh Army to conduct counter insurgency operations. All other para-military forces were placed under the operational command of Bangladesh Army. However, the government failed to make a careful estimate of the situation. Realistic long-term plans and timely commitment of sufficient resources were missing. Administration was confined to the district town only till it was upgraded through administrative reforms in 1984.

Bengali Settlement. In 1978, the then Government felt that the tribal population should be integrated or assimilated into larger Bangladeshi society so that they could be induced to thinking (politically) within the framework or parameter of a bigger community rather than live in isolation. Further, as development work gained momentum, the necessity of having large number of manual labourers was felt. This led to the decision to allow non-tribal settlement. In CHT, planned settlements were encouraged between 1979 and 1983. During this period, about hundred thousand Bengalees moved in. As a result, the average ratio of Bengalee settlers to tribals rose to 48.46 percent.¹ However, such settlement of plainsman in tribal areas was never viewed positively by the tribals of CHT. They viewed the move as a serious threat to their traditions, cultural and tribal entity.

Special Development Project. It was widely held that retrieving the region from years of neglect and under-development would be the best way to blunt the post insurgency situation. Before embarking on massive socio-economic development, the government took expert opinions and sought the assistance of international development agencies. The Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Board (CHTDB) was set up based on their studies and recommendations. Since its inception and up to June 1990, the Board implemented hundreds of Projects worth Taka 456 crore. The Projects being implemented under direct supervision of CHTDB are as follows:

1. Normal Board Projects.
2. Integrated social uplift projects aided by UNICEF.
3. Multipurpose CHT development project aided by ADB.
4. Special 5 year plan in which govt spent Taka 263 crore.

Government Policy Between 1986-1991

Restriction on Media. Since April 1986, insurgents started mass killing of Bengalis, blowing bridges, kidnapping foreign experts and other government officials working in the CHT. They started campaigning outside the country and making biased presentations in international forums. The Bangladeshi government was not able to counter their propaganda and many human right organizations accused Bangladesh government of human right violation in CHT. As a counter measure, news medias were then given maximum freedom to go into the details of CHT problems. As a result, CHT became an issue for substantial write-up in national media. Since 1988, visits and tours by professionals and people of various walks of life to CHT have increased. This facilitated diplomatic moves

1. Ibrahim, *Op cit*, p.38

to establish Bangladesh government's credibility and image on the human right aspect of the CHT problem.

Rehabilitation of Surrendered Shanti Bahini (SB). Since 1980, there has been ideological conflict between SBs. SBs were divided into the Priti group and the Larma group. In 1984, the Priti group surrendered to government law enforcing agencies. It was a circumstantial gain and not an achievement on the part of the government. The move was a strong blow to PCJSS ambitions and the Government could have achieved much more from these circumstances, but it failed to do so due to lack of coordinated planning. As per government commitment, though some financial help was offered to motivate the SBs, the rehabilitation and security aspects were not achieved.

Refugee Problems. The insurgents in CHT planned to push over 50,000 tribal refugees across the border to internationalize the issue. Therefore, they deliberately started killing and arsons until many tribals were forced to cross over to India. About 30,000 tribals fled to India in 1986. Before the Zilla parishad election of 1989 the insurgents once again forced another 15,000 tribals to cross the border".² The government made a number of attempts for the return and rehabilitation of refugees in 1987 but these failed as the refugees were threatened and held back in camps at gun point.

Cluster Village Programme in CHT. The Bangladesh government undertook cluster village programmes mainly to make civic facilities available to the tribals on one hand and provide security to both tribals and non tribal Bangalis on the other.³ Non-tribals, who had embraced Bangladesh, requested the administration to provide them security as they were always in fear of insurgents. These villages were named as Bonogram/Shantigram. Thousands of uprooted non-tribals who had lost their all belongings started flocking in and around the security forces camps hoping to survive. The administration arranged cluster villages for these people and named such villages Guchchagram.

Local Government and Limited Autonomy. In February 1989, the Rangamati, Khagrachari and Bandarban Hill Tracts Local Government Council Bill 1989 were passed in parliament. The local government council act of 1989 was a unique step taken by the government, which was appreciated both at home and abroad. PCJSS instantaneously opposed and rejected government initiative and intensified armed activities.⁴

2. Seminar Paper, Insurgency Situation in Chittagong Hill Tract, SI&T, Sylhet, 11 January 1993.

3. *Ibid*, p.122

4. Interview of Major General Syed Muhammad Ibrahim, BP (Retd), October 2006.

Government Policy Between 1991-1995

Increased Political Negotiation Keeping Military Activities at Low Profile. After 1991, military activities in CHT were reduced to a great extent and the government tried to solve the issue by political means.⁵ The second meeting of the Council Committee for CHT was held on June 9, 1991. The meeting decided to transfer departments other than agriculture, education, health and family planning to the Local Government Parishad. The then government took the following steps to solve the CHT issue politically:

1. Formation of Cabinet Committee on CHT.
2. Extension of age limit and relaxation of academic qualifications to facilitate employment of tribals in government posts.
3. In addition to 5% quota of services reserved for tribals, by special arrangement, 1877 posts were created for the tribals of CHT.
4. To ensure development in the fields of education, seats were reserved for tribal students in higher educational institutions and selection procedures for admission were relaxed or made easy.

Cease Fire in CHTs. After 1990, a very critical situation prevailed among the insurgents. Discontentment grew among their ranks and files. Financial hardship had an adverse effect on them and shattered their morale. India reduced its assistance substantially. The insurgents needed time to settle these problems. Consequently, they unilaterally declared 'Cease Fire' from 10 Aug 92.

Formation of a Parliamentary Committee for a Political Solution. The discussion between the Prime Ministers of Bangladesh and India led to an agreement for speedy repatriation of Bangladeshi tribal refugees from Indian refugee camps, in full safety and security. The Bangladesh side agreed to set up a political committee that would encourage refugees to return. The government of Bangladesh appointed a 9 member (all members being Members of Parliament belonging to different political parties) committee to look into the CHT issue, which was asked to submit recommendations in this regard.⁶

AN APPRAISAL OF THE PEACE ACCORD AND IMPEDIMENTS TO ITS IMPLEMENTATION

Salient Aspects of the Accord

An accord named "Accord between the National Committee on Chittagong Hill Tracts formed by the Government and The Parbattya Chattagram Jana

5. *Ibid.*

6. A Report on the Problems of the Chittagong Hill Tracts and Bangladesh Responses for their Solutions, special Affairs Division, The Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Dhaka, 1993, p.III.

Sanghati Samity” was signed in Dhaka on 02 December 1997 in presence of the Prime Minister, Cabinet/State Ministers and high civil and military officials. The Accord describes the government’s strategy for future governance and development in CHT. It covers conflict resolution steps, such as surrender of arms, return of refugees, steps for letting the ‘Shanti Bahini’ men return to society, creation of Regional Council (RC) etc. It outlines the role and functions of the RC and the Hill District Councils (HDC) and land allotment and development policies.⁷ The agreement was executed within the framework of the constitution of the republic and affirmed the allegiance of the signatories to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country.⁸

Importance of the Accord

The accord was renamed as “the noblest of jewels” among those bedecking the governments’ coronet of achievements.⁹ It has been appreciated at home and abroad for ending a bloody ethnic conflict, which seemed unresolvable for decades. Thus it has immense strategic importance for a number of reasons:

1. It has consolidated our national integrity, strengthened our sovereignty and enhanced our national interests. We have to understand and believe that we finally achieved what appeared to be unachievable.¹⁰
2. It facilitated the establishment of potentially strong and effective local government institutions in the region and growth of tribal leadership.
3. As listed by the Ministry, 65000 refugees returned from India to their homesteads following the signing of the accord.¹¹
4. It has added credit to the country’s history of attempting and achieving conflict resolution through negotiations without international intervention.
5. To reach the accord, JSS stepped aside from its demand for full regional autonomy, complete withdrawal of the Army and Bengali settlers.¹²

7. *Joint Government/Donor Risk Assessment Mission on the CHT* by the Government of Bangladesh and United Nations Development Programme, Dhaka, August 2002, p.10

8. Presentation by Mr. Syed A. Samad, Principal Secretary, Prime Ministers Office, in International Conference Center, on *Evolution of the Peace Process and the CHT Peace Accord* in Dhaka, 20-24 June, 1998 p.7

9. Editorial, *What Price Complacence*, the *Daily Star*, Dhaka, 10 December 1997.

10. Dr. Khandakar Qudrat-I-Elahi, “CHT Treaty, National Integrity and Sovereignty,” the *Daily Star*, 27 December 1997.

11. Nurul Kabir, *CHT Peace Process Under Strain*, the *Daily Observer*, 08 December 2000.

12. Interview with Major General Moeen U Ahmed, psc, General Officer Commanding, 24 Infantry Division Chittagong, 17 June 2004.

Present Demands of PCJSS

Shantu Larma, the PCJSS leader, has consistently been accusing the government of betraying the hill people. In implementing the accord, he has threatened the government with renewal of the post insurgency situation all over the Chittagong Hill Tracts, if necessary.¹³ The PCJSS is claiming that, beyond the accord, there were some 'unwritten issues' or 'unofficial contracts', claims that the government has flatly denied. The main demands of the JSS are as follows: ¹⁴

1. Withdrawal of Bengali Settlers and their rehabilitation outside CHT.
2. Transfer of all the subjects to the HDC, prioritizing vital ones like land and land management, police (local), law and order, forestry & environment, primary and secondary education etc.
3. Proper rehabilitation of the India-returned refugees and the internally displaced Jumma people.
4. Shutting down the civil affairs office located at Chittagong cantonment and terminating 'Operation Uttoran'.
5. Land commission formed by the government should start working immediately with relevant amendment to the CHT Land Dispute Disposal Commission Act, 2001.
6. Holding of elections of the RC and the HDCs as per the relevant acts.
7. Withdrawal of all security forces camps except Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and cease acquisition of lands for the Army in CHT.

Impediments/Flaws Related to Legal Aspects

Constitutional Protection. The accord is not protected by constitutional safeguards and is open to amendment or revocation at any time.¹⁵ Under the accord, a CHT Regional Council (CHTRC) has been set up and given enormous powers. It has almost been made an autonomous body. Full implementation of the accord would give the CHT the status of an autonomous region.¹⁶ A bill was passed in the parliament to this effect. But full implementation of the peace accord will require a constitutional amendment.

Mandate for Signing the Accord. J B Larma (Santu Larma) signed the accord on behalf of the inhabitants of CHT.¹⁷ In CHT, the non-tribal population

13. Nurul Kabir, *Op cit*, p.1

14. A presentation on *Present State of the CHT Accord and the CHT Situation*, by the CHT Regional Council at Rangamati on 26 April 2004.

15. Thomas Feny, "The Fragility of Peace in the CHT, Bangladesh," The Daily Observer, 31 December 2001.

16. Brigadier General M Sakhawat Hussain (Retd), *Op cit*, p.33

17. Md Sadat Ali, *Op cit*, p.14

constitute 48% of the population followed by Chakmas (31.8%) and other tribes (20.0%). Bengalis do not support PCJSS or Santu Larma in CHT. Moreover, he has failed to secure support of the larger section of his students' group and women fronts. The dissidents, demanding 'full autonomy' of the CHT, have organized themselves under the banner of the United Peoples Democratic Front (UPDF). A violent power struggle ensued with each of the groups accusing the other of attacks, kidnappings and killings. Internal terrorism will surely act as an impediment to the execution of the accord.

Surrender of Arms. 30 years of insurgency situation have attracted a significant amount of small arms into the CHT, mainly from bases inside the Indian border.¹⁸ As per the accord, insurgents have deposited their arms. Since the government does not have a list of either all the arms or all the insurgents, therefore, it has had to rely completely on the PCJSS for this. Critics of the accord continue to say that PCJSS has not deposited its full stock of arms.

Impediments Related to Land and Bengali Settlers

Land Dispute. The biggest difficulty appears to be the question of land ownership.¹⁹ The underlying cause for the inability to decide on land ownership originates from the absence of proper documents of the hill people. The PCJSS wants the land commission to resolve this issue; the Rajas want the land management to be given to the HDCs. Understandably, if a resolution is not found it will affect the scope for development in the region and hamper the peace process.

Bengali Settlement. There is no provision in the accord either to stop Bengali infiltration into the hills or to oust Bengali settlers who are living in hill areas. But the PCJSS claims that during negotiations, it was agreed verbally that the Bengalis who have settled after the late 1970s would be resettled outside CHT.²⁰ This issue is bound to prove a great barrier to the implementation of the accord.

Deprivation of Land Rights. As per the accord (Article Kha 26), no land and premises, including lease-able khas lands within the territorial limits of the hill districts shall be transferable by Ijara, settlement, purchase or sale except with the prior permission of the council.²¹ This article put a bar on all citizens to directly purchase or become a landowner in CHT but any tribal can become a landowner in any part of the country without any hindrance.

18. Thomas Feeny, *Op cit*, p.3

19. Muhammad Zamir, "The Simmering CHT," the *Dhaka Courier*, 19 December 2003, p.27

20. *Life is Not Ours, Land and Human Rights in CHT*, Bangladesh, Update 4, The CHT Commission, Denmark, International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, 2000, p.27

21. Translated English Version of The Agreement between the National Committee on CHT constituted by the Government and the PCJSS, 02 December 1997, p.4

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT OF POST INSURGENCY SITUATION IN CHT - A SUGGESTIVE APPROACH

To be realistic, strategies for dealing with any post insurgency situation need to be based on rigorous diagnosis of its causes. This entails dealing with sensitive issues that are usually ignored or underplayed in all the initiating so far undertaken to solve the post insurgency situation problem in CHT. A number of such 'integrated' policies, impacting simultaneously on several issues are presented below.

Implementing the Peace Accord

Due Recognition of the Peace Accord. At the moment, the Peace Accord remains a mere agreement between the government and the PCJSS. Its implementation has been viewed as a matter of discretion by the governments in power since December, 1997.²² Even though some legislation has been enacted regarding the Regional Council and the Hill District Councils, other important clauses of the accord have not been given due legal status or recognition. It is, therefore, essential to complete the process of endowing legal-constitutional validity to the Peace Accord of 1997.

Rehabilitation of Repatriated Pahari Refugees. The Pahari refugees of the CHT constitute a long – suffering group who have been uprooted and forced to move from one place to another on both sides of the border. After repatriation from India, most have found their former lands and homesteads occupied by others and have not been able to dislodge the occupiers. Measures should also be taken to provide better medical support, improved water and sanitation facilities to the Pahari refugees living in camps.

Rehabilitation of Pahari Internally Displaced Persons. While most refugees have been provided with official assistance and put up in camps set up by the administration, the Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) are living in the remote interior of the CHT, largely in the Reserve Forest (RF) areas.²³ Furthermore, they have had to survive without the benefit of food rations or other kinds of assistance from the state and international agencies.²⁴ Even though the Peace Accord stipulates that the IDPs are to be rehabilitated, little has been done to do so. A reliable food distribution system should be established for the Pahari IDP, with the capacity to monitor and anticipate food shortages over the year and deliver food assistance in time even to remote settlements.²⁵

22. Ibrahim – *Interview*, *Op cit*.

23. Roy [1995: p. 72] and Chakma & Hume [1998].

24. *Vide* Hume [1999].

25. Based on Hume [1999:p. 8].

Withdrawal and Relocation of Bengali Settlers. There is not enough cultivable land to provide viable agricultural holdings to both the Pahari and the Bengali populations of the CHT. Furthermore, if the trend of occupation of Pahari lands by Bengali in migrants and the state continues in the future, it will inexorably reduce the fraction of CHT lands still available to the Hill peoples. This will inevitably intensify ethnic conflict and political unrest, threatening the precarious stability of the CHT. These are critical considerations which underscore the need not only for the prevention of further in-migration to the CHT, but also for the withdrawal and relocation of Bengali settlers to the plain districts of the country.

Securing the Lands of the Hill Peoples

Moratorium on Further Acquisition of Pahari Land. Acquisition of the common and private lands of the Hill peoples constitutes one of the most significant factors generating discontentment among them.²⁶ A complete moratorium should be imposed on further acquisition of the private and common lands of the Paharis by Bengali settlers and non-residents, the Forest Department, as well as for development projects. The moratorium should not be lifted until all pending land conflicts in the CHT have been resolved and resultant land rights have been officially recorded through a survey and registration process.

Plugging Legal and Administrative Loopholes. Various legal and administrative loopholes have been utilized for the takeover and transfer of Pahari lands even after the Peace Accord. It is imperative that necessary revision of legal and administrative procedures is undertaken by the concerned authorities in order to plug the loopholes through which acquisition of Pahari lands has been taking place. All existing laws and regulations pertaining to the CHT should be amended, as necessary, to make them consistent with the clauses related to restrictions on land settlement, transfer, leases, etc, as specified in the Peace Accord, and subsequently incorporated in the 1998 HDC Acts.²⁷

Asserting and Establishing the Legal Rights of the Hill peoples to Land. It is imperative that land rights are formally asserted and established, particularly given the tendency of government officials and settlers to uncritically treat all lands in the CHT as state-owned.²⁸ The Hill peoples and their representatives should explore all possible judicial, political and administrative avenues to assert

26. See discussion by R.C.K. Roy [1996: p.129].

27. *Vide* Roy [1998: Pp. 8-9].

28. We found such attitudes among Bengali officials in the CHT during fieldwork, inclusive of particular staff members of the CHT Development Board.

and formally establish the land rights to which they are entitled, in accordance with the CHT Regulation of 1900 and other prevalent laws. All necessary legislative and administrative measures should be undertaken by the government to formally institute the land rights of the Hill peoples which are partially acknowledged in the CHT Regulation of 1900.²⁹

Restitution of Illegally Occupied Pahari Lands. The importance of resituating the forcibly and illegally occupied lands of the Hill peoples cannot be overemphasized. Restitution of their alienated lands would also help restore the faith of the Hill peoples in the political order and legal institutions of Bangladesh. As a matter of principle, the concerned authorities should take measures to reconstitute the alienated lands of the Hill peoples as early as possible.³⁰

Setting Up of a Land Commission. The Peace Accord of 1997 explicitly stipulated that a Land Commission would be set up to resolve conflicts over land in the CHT.³¹ The effective functioning of the Land Commission is of critical importance for resolving the on-going legal, economic and political conflicts over land in the CHT. Indeed, the crucial significance of this step cannot be overemphasized for the attainment of durable peace and stability in the CHT. An Act for the Land Commission was hurriedly published in July 2000; however, its contents remain flawed.³²

Agricultural Production

Jum Cultivation. Although it is the mainstay of the traditional Pahari economy, jum cultivation has begun to have an adverse impact on the soil and the environment of the CHT because of its increasing frequency and shortening fallow periods.³³ The following measures may be taken to make jum cultivation in the CHT more productive and viable:

1. The fallow period of jum cultivation should not be allowed to be shortened to less than five years.
2. Cultivation of jum on steep slopes should be discouraged, if not stopped altogether.
3. Low-cost measures for preventing or reducing soil erosion and run-off should be erected on jum fields, wherever feasible.³⁴

29. R.C.K. Roy [1996: 131] and Roy [1998b: p. 17].

30. *Vide* Roy [1994: p. 24].

31. GoB PCJSS [1997: 11-12]. Articles Gha-4 to Gha-6.

32. GoB [2001].

33. Roy [1997a: p. 38].

34. Sopher [1993: 361-362] refers to the ways in which the indigenous peoples of the Garo Hills in Assam had organized themselves to regulate cultivation in an improved manner.

Water Bodies and Fisheries. Threats to Pahari fishermen are posed by plans to lease out water bodies, particularly parts of the Kaptai reservoir, to private individuals and companies.³⁵ Such privatization of common fishing grounds would result in many poor Pahari fishermen being deprived of their only means of livelihood. Attempts to privatize common fishing grounds in the Kaptai Lake and other water bodies of the CHT should be firmly opposed. No such steps should be taken without protecting the interests of the fishermen.³⁶

Horticulture. Expansion of horticulture can provide a significant avenue of generating incomes among the Hill peoples of the CHT. Soil erosion affecting horticultural production should be reduced by adoption of innovative techniques and practices such as provision of contour-line hedgerows.³⁷ In order to be effective, policy-making pertaining to horticulture should therefore focus on enhancing the relative bargaining power of Pahari producers, as well as reforming the prevalent structure and restrictive practices of the markets for horticultural produce and their transportation.

Economic Diversification

Oil, Gas and Other Mineral Recourse. Extraction of oil and gas and other minerals by multinational corporations constitutes a major source of investment of foreign capital in the CHT. Such investment is likely to generate additional employment and incomes, though it may not necessarily result in net benefits for the people of the region.³⁸ Adequate measures should be taken to ensure that potentially adverse socio-economic and environmental impacts of the extraction of oil, gas and other minerals in the CHT are reduced as far as possible.³⁹

Hydroelectricity Projects and other Counterproductive Interventions. New hydroelectricity projects have been proposed on the Sangu and the Matamuhuri rivers of the CHT, even though these would lead to submergence of precious lands in the valleys, the lower hill slopes used for jum cultivation, village settlements and forested tracts.⁴⁰ Also disturbing is the proposal to install an extra turbine at the Kaptai hydroelectricity plant with foreign aid and technical assistance.⁴¹ Before such projects are implemented, due provisions should be made for socio-economic impact assessment and involuntary resettlement.

35. Roy [1998d: p.8].

36. Roy [1998d: p.12].

37. Roy [1995: p.87].

38. Roy [2002a: Pp.31-32].

39. Cf. Roy [1998d: p.1].

40. Löffler [1991: p.14] discusses the proposed dam on the Sangu River.

41. Roy [2002b: Pp.64-69].

Provisions of Institutional Credit

Money Lending. In order to reduce poverty among the Hill peoples, it is absolutely essential to eliminate exploitation through money lending contracts (e.g. dadan). Such practices are undertaken in the CHT by non-Pahari (Bengali) traders and money lenders. It is significant that the Peace Accord lists money lending businesses among the subject area that are to be transferred to the jurisdiction of the Hill District Councils.⁴² The government should enact or amend laws, as relevant, to ensure that Hill people are not exploited by money lenders and traders and lenders through various forms of credit contracts.

Micro-Credit. Most Paharis are not well-versed in the kind of frequent and regular money transitions required in the repayment of micro-credit. Concerned authorities should ensure that the implicit rates of interest on micro-credit in the CHT, inclusive of ‘service charges’, do not reach extortionate levels. Steps should be taken to ensure that Paharis defaulting on loan repayments are not forced to lose their land rights and assets due to litigation and unduly coercive measures of loan recovery initiated by the concerned lending agencies.

Issues Related to Development

Dealing with Absence of Institutional Memory. Recalling the lessons provided by mistakes of the past may help all agencies concerned with development from making similar blunders in the future e. g. the Kaptai disaster. However, the problem is not simply that of the lack of ‘institutional memory’ among development agencies operating in the CHT. Rather, it is the pursuit of other overriding goals such as ‘security objectives’ or covert private gains. Therefore, the Hill peoples and their leaders and sympathizers will have to remain vigilant against the continuous possibility of counterproductive interventions being made in the ‘name of development’.

Dealing with the ‘Rush’ to Develop the CHT. All government departments, donor agencies and NGOs as well as development consultants and contractors, have their own agenda and institutional pressures to ‘expand’ their activities. Therefore, development projects in the CHT should require the approval of the concerned HDC and the RC before being taken up for implementation. A new ‘Code of Conduct’ should be designed for development agencies which should reflect the views of the Hill peoples regarding the nature of development interventions that they would prefer, as well as the kind of ‘development’ that they would like to avoid.

42. GOB & PCJSS [1997: 7], Article 34. See also the first schedule of the HDC Acts of 1998.

Role of Donor Agencies. Donor agencies can play a crucial and strategic role in improving the position of the Hill people. The donor agency staff should ensure that they do not repeat the mistakes of their predecessors by supporting and funding development programmes that can be used directly or indirectly by the state and its security forces for ethnic repression and counter post insurgency situation activities in the CHT.⁴³

The CHT Development Board. Even though the CHT Development Board (CHTDB) is the leading development institution of the region, its organizational structure and decision-making processes continue to be fundamentally undemocratic. The situation has worsened perceptibly with the appointment of an openly pro-settler MP as the Chairman of the Board, in flagrant violation of the letter and the spirit of the Peace Accord.⁴⁴ It is absolutely essential that the selection and appointment of CHTDB personnel, including the Chairman and top officials, is based upon objective assessment of their capability to perform their duties fairly, with priority being given to qualified Pahari candidates.

Roles of the Regional Council and the Hill District Councils. The Peace Accord specifies that the Hill District Council (HDC) will have an expanded role in the development activities of various government departments and agencies operating at district level.⁴⁵ It also specifies that the Regional Council (RC) will coordinate all development activities in the region including those of the CHT Development Board. The clauses of the Peace Accord concerning the roles of the RC and HDC in development activities should be substantively implemented by the government.⁴⁶

Role of NGOs and People's Organizations. Relevant people's organizations and NGOs can play a very significant and useful role in defusing ethnic conflict in the CHT. In particular, NGOs and people's organizations can facilitate and coordinate sensitive programmes such as the voluntary withdrawal and relocation of Bengali settlers from the CHT, provision of technical support to the activities of the Land Commission, rehabilitation of the Pahari refugees and internally displaced persons, development of appropriate educational material and institutions for the Hill peoples as well as many of the other policy options that have been put forward.

Role of the Hill Peoples and their Leadership. In view of their past experience, it is particularly important that the Hill people and their leaders

43. Brauns & Löffler [1990: Pp.243-244] and Mohsin [1997].

44. *Vide* GoB & PCJSS [1997: p.10], Article Ga-10.

45. GoB & PCJSS [1997] and Roy [1998:p.9].

46. Ibrahim, *Op cit.*

take the initiative to define their own objectives and strategies of development based on their internal policy analysis. Indeed, the Pahari leaders must proactively come up with the kind of development programmes needed to ensure growth of incomes and employments, and sustain their culturally distinctive ways of life.⁴⁷

Privatization and Private Appropriation

While privatization has its merits, it is important to recall that some forms of private appropriation have played critical roles in generating poverty in the CHT.⁴⁸ It is therefore necessary to have a balanced policy approach towards privatization and private appropriation of resources in the CHT. Steps should be taken to stop any further appropriation of the common lands of the Pahari groups in the CHT by agencies of the state, private individuals and/or corporate entities. Threats to the livelihood of the Hill peoples are also posed by the prospect of privatization of common property resources in other sectors of the economy, particularly forests and fisheries.⁴⁹

Expansion of Education and Raising People's Consciousness

Language of Instruction and Learning. The absence of a common language as well as a common script poses obvious problems for designing a common educational system for all Pahari ethnic groups. By default, Bangla serves as the medium of instruction as well as the lingua franca for communication among Pahari groups as well as between them and the Bengalis to the discontentment of Paharis.⁵⁰ Every effort should be made to impart primary education to Pahari children in their mother tongue.⁵¹

Primary School Teachers. Primary schools in remote rural areas of the CHT are plagued by shortage of teachers as well as the irregular attendance of those who take up these posts. Evidences suggest that the teachers are likely to be present regularly, if they also belong to the same locality.⁵² Therefore, primary school teachers in the CHT should be recruited from qualified persons who are already resident in the proximity of the concerned school.

47. Instances of needless and counterproductive development' projects, motivated by the prospect of making private gains from foreign aid provided to Bangladesh, are discussed by Jansen [1992].

48. This does not involve any doctrinaire position against all forms of privatization.

49. Roy [1998 : Pp. 8-12].

50. In fact, some of the Pahari intelligentsia read, write and speak Bengali with great proficiency, particularly among the Chakmas, Marmas and Tripuras.

51. Mohsin [1997: Pp. 213-214].

52. *Vide* observations by Hume [1999: Pp. 9-10].

Adaptation of Academic Calendar to Pahari Culture and Lifestyles.

The academic calendar of educational institutions in the CHT should be adapted to the seasonality of cultivation and other subsistence activities of the Hill peoples. Hence, school holidays should be fixed to accommodate the specific need of the concerned community.

Schools for Ethnic Groups and Areas with Low Literacy Rates.

Priority should be given to those ethnic groups that have proportionately lower rates of education and literacy compared to the others. Similarly, priority should be given to setting up well-equipped schools in remote and inaccessible areas inhabited by Pahari groups.

Facilities for Rural Students in Urban Areas. The institutions of higher education in the CHT are almost invariably located in urban centres. Therefore, inexpensive board and lodging facilities for Pahari students should be set up in urban centres having institutions of higher education, so as to make them affordable for those belonging to distant rural areas.

Vocational Education and Training. The Hill District Councils, with the support from the government and the Regional council, should expand facilities of vocational education for Paharis, in order to enable them to take up new occupations. This measure would also fit in with the proposed policies of diversification of the CHT economy and the consequential increase in market demand.

General University in the CHT. The government should take necessary steps to set up a general university in the CHT for the long term human resource development of the Hill peoples.⁵³ Priority should be given to recruiting as teachers of this general university the many well-educated and highly qualified Paharis presently working outside the CHT (both at home and abroad).

Contents of Educational Curricula. If the present educational curricula continue to be followed in the CHT, integration and assimilation of the Hill peoples to the national mainstream should be possible. Appropriate steps should be taken to rectify the systematic distortion of the history and culture of the Hill peoples of the CHT, as part of the attempt to assimilate them into the national mainstream.⁵⁴

Informal Education and Awareness Rising among the Common Paharis. Informal adult education programmes among ordinary Paharis should be taken up by people's organizations and NGOs, with the objective of raising their

53. This is to be distinguished from the earlier project to establish a university of technology in the CHT.

54. Mohsin [1997: 213-214] and Van Schendel [1995].

awareness. Attention should be focused on the various mechanisms of exploitation and domination which have contributed to their subordinate position, as well possible ways of dealing with such mechanisms.⁵⁵

Public Education for Dispelling Inter-ethnic Prejudice. It is likely that a Bengali population, consisting of administrators, security forces and other professionals, will continue to be present in the CHT. Therefore, informal public education can be deployed as a powerful tool for dispelling prejudices and misunderstandings that have been contributing to the ethnic conflicts in the CHT. In collaboration with the RC/HDC the government should initiate a programme of public education in the broadest sense of the term.

Short Run Measures

Food Security: Coping with Food Shortages, Malnutrition and Starvation. Food shortages, malnutrition and death from starvation have been noted among the Paharis even after the Peace Accord.⁵⁶ It is absolutely essential that the concerned government and donor agencies, as well as NGOs, take immediate steps to ensure food security for such vulnerable groups in remote areas of the CHT.⁵⁷

Improved Shelters. The dwelling houses of large section of the Hill peoples have become increasingly dilapidated, particularly because of their growing lack of access to forest resources.⁵⁸ Concerned government and donor agencies, as well as NGOs, should assist Paharis living without well-constructed shelters to have access to the building materials and money outlays required for the construction of low-cost houses that can provide adequate protection.

Short -Term Employment and Income Generation. In order to deal with shortages of food and other basic needs of the Hill peoples, it is essential to increase their incomes and/or buying power. Concerned government and donor agencies should take measures to generate adequate wage employment among distressed Pahari groups, particularly during the agricultural lean season. These could be based on Food-for-Work types of programmes.⁵⁹

55. See Loffler [1991: p 8].

56. This section is largely based on a report by Ina Hume [1999: p.8].

57. After the first jum products begin to be harvested in September, a stream of other products continue to be harvested up to the following March.

58. Hume [1999: p.9].

59. However, there should not be any repetition of Food-for-Work resources being used for 'jungle clearing' or other security – driven activities.

Basic Health and Medical Facilities. Despite some expansion in health and medical facilities in the CHT in the last few decades, much remains to be done to ensure that basic facilities are available in remote rural locations, as well as accessible to the poor.⁶⁰ Provision of urgent medical treatment and supplies should be directed to areas and groups with acute malnutrition and health problems.

Medical Personnel . A critical problem is that of ensuring the effective presence of medical personnel in the more remote and inaccessible locations of the CHT. Medical personnel in a remote area should have some links with the local community. Health assistants could be recruited from the same ethnic group as the communities that they are to serve.⁶¹

Safe Water Sources. Traditionally, the site of their water source has been a matter of major concern to the Hill peoples.⁶² In certain areas, traditional water sources have become polluted due to human interventions. Concerned government and donor agencies, as well as NGOs should undertake programmes to enable Pahari communities to shift from traditional water sources that have become contaminated and unsafe to safer modern water supply system.

Enhancing Information Systems

Improving the Quality of Data on the CHT. The bulk of the data on the CHT produced by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) and other official agencies are published in aggregated forms, and do not provide pertinent breakdowns of distinct ethnic groups and their socio-economic strata or classes. The attention of BBS and other official agencies generating data on the CHT should be drawn to the policy relevance of providing breakdown between ethnic groups and socio-economic strata.

Logistical Support for Advocacy Campaigns. Many strategies have discussed the possibility of initiating advocacy campaigns in order to persuade policymakers with critical influence to consider development activities in the CHT. Concerned organizations mounting advocacy campaigns in the interests of the Hill people should develop the capacity to undertake research, carry out monitoring activities and evaluation, collect and process data, generate outputs in print and other media, and disseminate these swiftly to organized networks,

60. Hume [1999].

61. For example, among the internally displaced Chakmas who had moved to Sajek, there are relatively few who are educated to the level required to become health assistants. This means that local Pankhos (Mizos), who are more educated, are likely to be appointed to these posts [Hume, 1999].

62. Sopher [1963-1964] and Brauns & Loffler [1990].

CONCLUSION

There are no quick fixes for dealing with the post insurgency situation in the CHT. The discussion has attempted to demonstrate the complexities and constraints likely to be faced in any attempt to deal with these problematic issues. That is also the reason why a number of different policy options have been put forward with respect to certain issues, reflecting different degrees of realism about what is politically or technically feasible under prevalent conditions, as distinct from what might be ideal or optimal.

Recommendations for the strategic management of post insurgency situation in the CHT may stand a relatively greater chance of success if implemented through institutions which are acceptable to them. This applies particularly to the Regional Council and the Hill District Councils, which have been designed to be elected bodies with due safeguards for Pahari interests, in accordance with the Peace Accord. These institutions are relatively more likely to have the faith and confidence of the Hill peoples, as compared to bureaucratic agencies of the state overwhelmingly manned by non-Paharis.

Finally, whether policies for strategic management of post insurgency situation in CHT will succeed or not, depend essentially on the relative power of those wanting to implement the recommended measures and those resisting them. Therefore, improvement of the conditions of the Hill peoples in the CHT through policy interventions remains a political question, contingent upon the overall balance of power in the region.

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