

Research Title:

**Kaptai Dam: Revisiting Old Experiences**

**ABSTRACT:**

Internal Displacement in South Asia has now been a regular scenario that requires the critical understanding of environmental, social and economic factors in the region. In many cases South Asian displacement falls in the category where displacement is almost periodical that takes place due to the nature of the land e.g. displacement caused by river erosion or periodic floods or cyclones. In other cases, domestic violence, political upheaval, discriminations based on religion and race, development projects and alike are the major driving forces that cause internal displacements. This research paper will focus on the later determinants with particular attention to the displacement due to development projects. It will specifically consider the Kaptai dam project which is the only hydropower source in Bangladesh that submerged 22000 ha of cultivable land (40% of all such land in CHT) and displaced 100,000 people without proper compensation and rehabilitation. The geo-political importance of this project was and is immense. It was constructed without giving adequate importance to the issues of consultations with the local indigenous communities. As have already mentioned, the issues of resettlement of the displaced were taken place in an abominable way. This has often been argued that the government and the donor agency USAID did not pay adequate attention to understand the culture and lifestyle of the indigenous communities. The social and economic costs of the project were remarkable. Most importantly, the government of Bangladesh has proposed an extension plan to install two new hydropower units, 50 MW each, in the dam. As a result, approximately 7500 ha of the cultivable land may result in inundated. This plan has raised the same old debate that whether the government and the dam authority taken proper measures to accommodate the views of the local indigenous communities and whether the consequences of the proposed plan will be the same with the previous one?

The paper will be prepared trying to find the answers of the following 5 (five) particular questions:

- i) What economic policies of the state played the vital role to construct this dam?
- ii) What political factors played as the driving forces behind this dam construction?
- iii) What are the major economic and social costs of this project?
- iv) What biodiversity losses occurred due to this project?
- v) What is the status of the proposed extension plan of the Bangladesh Power Development Board (PDB) and the issues of noncompliance?

This research work will be based on both qualitative and quantitative methods. Necessary information will be gathered from the published references. Atleast two cases studies will be incorporated based on the field trips by the researcher to the region.