

**POLITICAL ECONOMY OF LAND LITIGATION IN BANGLADESH
A CASE OF COLOSSAL NATIONAL WASTAGE**

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Land litigation is a curse to the family in litigation. About 2.5 million operating land litigation including 1.4 million pending cases are clogging the courts annually. This causes a colossal national wastage: about 120 million people are affected by land litigation; suffering-year is equivalent to 27 million years; amount of total land under litigation equals 2.35 million `acres` (one-fourth of all land); cumulative amount of money spent to meet litigation cost is higher than the annual development budget of the country; the total amount of loss of assets by the households under litigation is Tk 115,195 million per year; and the annual amount of incidental expenses related to land litigation is Tk. 248,599 million with 50 percent as bribe. The actual loss, however, would be much higher than these figures show. The actual loss shall include the opportunity cost of time, cost of forced erosion in

standard of living, cost of many externalities including physical and mental sufferings, cost of lost opportunities and care for the health and education of the family members, cost of deteriorating social bondages and relations, cost of corruption, and cost of deteriorating law and order situation within the framework of criminalized economic, political and administrative system.

Land litigation mediates destitution and distress among the families in litigation. It is a losing battle for both parties. It is a win-win situation only for the officials of the corrupt system including the judiciary; police, land administration and management, advocates, influential locals, touts, and alike. To prevent this colossal national wastage it is necessary to reduce the astronomically huge number of unnecessary land litigations and to minimize the high extent of distress and destitution of families involved in land dispute, conflict and litigation. To this end, it is argued to institute rule of law; to bring about reforms in the judiciary, and land administration and management systems; to promote dispute resolution at the grass root level through village courts and salish; to ensure poor people's lawful rights to khas land and water bodies; and to devise efficient mechanisms to involve citizens in the process.