

INTERVENTION PAPER

Assam :

Bending Over Backwards

(Trespassing Causes Demographic Damage)

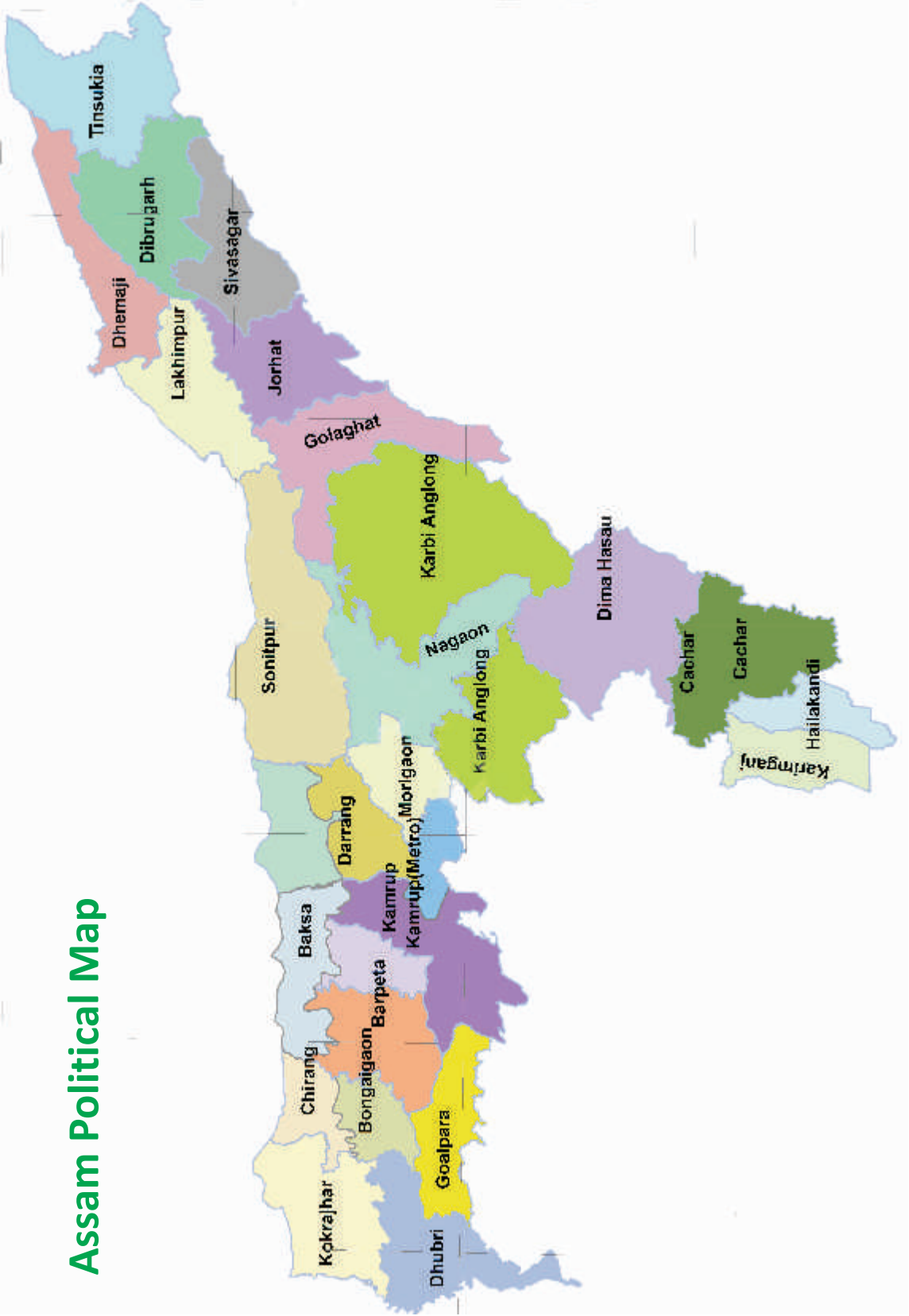


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India Policy Foundation

भारत नीति प्रतिष्ठान

Assam Political Map



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Compiled and Edited by:
IPF Research Team



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Published by

India Policy Foundation

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Edition

First, 2012

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Price

Rupees Thirty Only (30.00)

Printed at

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Preface

One wonders what has happened to Assam over the years. Where is all its melody gone! In this land of Brahmaputra today one seldom gets a mood or moment to sing Bhupen Hazarika's famous song 'Buku Hom-Hom Kore.' Immigrant Bangladeshis have infiltrated into the State and destroyed the original fabric of this Bihuland. The war over resources and political ascendancy between the gatecrashers and the original Indian citizens has led to frequent incidents of violence in the State.

In the late 1970s the All Assam Students Union (AASU) began agitating to expel all illegal aliens from Assam. It demanded a National Register of Citizens, Bangladeshis' disenfranchisement from electoral rolls and their deportation. When elections were scheduled for Assam's Legislative Assembly in 1979, the AASU campaigned to put off the elections until the foreigner issue was resolved. But in vain.

The recent clashes between Bodo tribals and immigrant Muslims can be attributed to the latter's continued bid to control land and resources of the State. Kokrajhar and Chirang were Bodo tribal majority areas till 1990s. Due to illegal colonization of 'Mymensinghias', one of the sub-divisions of Kokrajhar district called Gossaigaon, has seen its demographic characteristics changed radically. The Bodos are now reduced to just 29 per cent of the population in the area. The increased population of the alleged Bangladeshis and their control over land in the Bodo heartland in Kokrajhar and other districts of Bodoland Territorial Council have created fear psychosis among Bodos.

In order to check the demographic shifts, the Centre, the Assam Government and the Bodoland Liberation Tigers (now disbanded) signed Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) agreement in 2003. But this has hardly been implemented. Non-Bodos, particularly the settlers, opposed the creation of the BTC. They questioned how Bodos could rule when they constituted just 29 per cent. And, ironically, the governments at the Centre and in the State have kept quiet.

Clearly, there has been a complete lack of political spirit among State and Central parties to resolve the issue. They have all indulged in vote-bank politics. The Congress governments at the Centre and in Guwahati have exploited the situation: fanning the paranoia of the locals and registering the settlers as voters.

The Assamese people's most genuine complaint today is that there is insufficient central government intervention in Assam to protect them from 'foreign' domination. They accuse the Congress of playing with the sentiments of the original Assamese. There is a lot of substance in this. The Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunal) or IMDT Act, which was enacted in 1983, is a case in point. The Act had been the biggest reason behind the growing illegal immigration from Bangladesh till 2005 when the Supreme Court declared it as unconstitutional.

The approach of our governments at the Centre and in the State is shocking indeed! All around the world illegal immigration is tackled very sternly. In the United Kingdom and the United States illegal trespassers are arrested, sent to prison and deported after serving their sentences. North Korea gives each gatecrasher 12 years' rigorous imprisonment. The Chinese government actually "kidnaps" illegal immigrants. But in India, illegal migrants are being viewed by all political formations, including the ones which make the shrillest noises against it, as their loyalists. In return for the illegal immigrants' registration in voters' lists these parties try to secure their political favour at the time of elections. And they help the illegal immigrants get without much difficulty ration cards, passports, driver's license and whatever is necessary to prove themselves as "Indians".

Such an anti-India approach has to be changed. This paper is being published with a view to acquainting the citizens of India with the real scenario in Assam and reminding our policy-makers of their first and foremost duty to save the State and preserve the unity and integrity of the NATION. I hope it would help our governments to realize the gravity of the situation in Assam and act against the demographic change that has taken place in the State due to illegal migration before it is too late.

Prof. Rakesh Sinha
Hony. Director
India Policy Foundation

When Gatecrashers become the Rulers

Nearly 100 people killed, over three lakh people displaced, hundreds of villages in flames, trains and bus services disrupted, large scale rioting, army called in to control the situation, curfew imposed in the violence-hit districts, refugees overflowing at relief camps, state government clueless, central government directionless, political leaders in denial of the real cause of the problem and the main stream media conveniently overlooking the real problem - this is the grim and worrisome picture of Assam recently.

Violence, however, is not new to Assam in the recent past. Neither is mainland India's apathy towards Assam and our north-eastern states. For Assam to figure in our momentary discussion and debates, there has to be either a large scale violence or a natural disaster of epic proportions. But unlike the earlier cases of violence and rioting, the recent disturbances are a clear warning of a dangerous and complex security problem looming large. What is more depressing and disturbing, is the fact that neither the Central government nor our national media is making an attempt at acknowledging and understanding the real problem plaguing the strategically important north-eastern state - the problem of the large scale infiltration by Bangladeshis.

Ask anyone from Assam for the real cause of the disturbances and you will get an unadulterated answer - the unabated infiltration of Bangladeshis into the state and more shockingly, the covert support of the political leaders to the infiltrators to build up a large vote bank. The recent clashes between the Bodos and the immigrant Bangladeshi Muslims is a culmination of half a century long design by Bangladesh and Pakistan and the opportunistic mischief by our political parties.

That this infiltration is a part of a larger design is evident from what Zulfikar Ali Bhutto had said, even before the formation of Bangladesh in 1971 - **“Our controversy with India is not on the problem of Kashmir only. In Assam, there are some Muslim majority districts which should have been given to Pakistan at the time of Partition, these districts were wrongly included in India..”**

If that does not suffice, the words of Mujibur Rahman are more revealing - **“The population of East Bengal is increasing at alarming speed. The inhabitants face acute shortage of land. The Bengalis need land which can be given by Assam. Assam abounds in good forests and beautiful scenes of nature. If some inhabitants of Bangladesh migrate to Assam and settle there permanently, they will be very happy. Actually Assam should have been included in East Pakistan”**.

But these words, again did not receive the kind of attention they warranted. More importantly, what Henry Kissinger foresaw, decades ago could have served to be a warning to us. He had predicted - **“The inevitable emergence of Bangladesh – which we had postulated- presented India with fierce long term problems. For Bangladesh was in effect East Bengal, separated only by religion from India’s most fractious and most separatist state. West Bengal. They share language, tradition, culture, and above all, a volatile national character. Whether it turned nationalist or radical, Bangladesh would over time accentuate India’s centrifugal tendencies. It might set a precedent for the creation of other Moslem states, carved this time out of India. Once it was independent, its Moslem heritage might eventually lead to a rapprochement with Pakistan”**.

Sadly, we did not attach much importance to his words either.

However, there were a few thoughtful Indians who had raised this issue at both national and international platforms. Dr. Nagendra Singh, India’s representative in the Sixth Committee of the United Nations General Assembly, while speaking on the Definition of ‘Aggression’, made a statement, wherein he said: **“The first consideration, in the view of the Indian Delegation, is that aggression must be comprehensively defined... Aggression can be of several kinds such as direct or indirect, armed in nature or even without the use of any arms whatsoever. There can be even direct aggression without arms. For example, there could be a unique type of bloodless aggression from a vast and incessant flow of millions of human beings forced to flee into another State. If this invasion of unarmed men in totally unmanageable proportion were to not only impair the economic and political wellbeing of the receiving victim State but to threaten its very existence, I am afraid, Mr. Chairman, it would have to be categorized as aggression...”** (Vol. 11 (1971) Indian Journal of International Law p. 724).

Even the Law Commission of India in its 175th Report on the Foreigners (Amendment) Bill, 2000 (submitted in September 2000) dealt with this issue. While noting that entry of illegal migrants and other undesirable aliens into India posed a grave threat to our democracy and the security of India, especially for the eastern part of the country and Jammu and Kashmir, the Law Commission observed that influx of migrants from Bangladesh remained unabated and had acquired frightening proportions.

Lamentably, the governments of the day did little to check the constant infiltration of Bangladeshis into India. In fact, rather than making attempts to fence the long and porous Indo- Bangladesh border and deport the infiltrators, the government passed the Illegal Migrants Determination Tribunals (IMDT) Act, which became a great impediment in deporting the infiltrators.

The Supreme Court, while striking down the IMDT Act as unconstitutional, quoting figures from the Directorate of Census, Government of India, categorically observed: **“There are three Districts**

in Assam, which has borders with Bangladesh viz. Karimganj, Cachar and Dhubri. All India percentage of decadal increase in population during 1981-1991 is 23.85% whereas the Border districts of Assam namely, Karimganj shows decadal increase of 42.08%, Cachar district 47.59% and Dhubri district 56.57%. From the above it can be assumed that the infiltration of foreigners from Bangladesh contributed significantly to the sharp increase of population in Assam”.

Not just the Supreme Court of the country, even the then Governor of Assam, Gen SK Sinha, in his report to the President of India on 8th November 1998, had extensively spoken about the infiltration problem. He warned of the disastrous consequences stating with points:

1. **The unabated influx of illegal migrants from Bangladesh into Assam and the consequent perceptible change in the demographic pattern of the State has been a matter of grave concern. It threatens to reduce the Assamese people to a minority in their own State, as happened in Tripura and Sikkim.**
2. **Illegal migration into Assam was the core issue behind the Assam student movement. It was also the prime contributory factor behind the outbreak of insurgency in the State. Yet we have not made much tangible progress in dealing with this all-important issue.**
3. **There is a tendency to view illegal migration into Assam as a regional matter affecting only the people of Assam. It’s more dangerous dimensions of greatly undermining our national security is ignored. The long cherished design of Greater East Pakistan/Bangladesh, making in-roads into strategic land link of Assam with the rest of the country, can lead to severing the entire landmass of the Northeast, with all its rich resources from the rest of the country. They will have disastrous strategic and economic consequences.”**

He further elaborated the dangers posed by the infiltrators to the indigenous population, **“These immigrants are hardworking and are prepared to work as cheap labour and domestic help for lower remuneration than the local people. This makes them acceptable. Moreover, with corruption being all-pervasive, corrupt officials are bribed to provide help. As a result of population movement from Bangladesh, the spectre looms large of the indigenous people of Assam being reduced to a minority in their home State. Their cultural survival will be in jeopardy, their political control will be weakened and their employment opportunities will be undermined....”**

These reasons are precisely the cause for today’s clashes – the snatching away of land, employment and economic opportunities and the cultural subjugation of the local Assamese people. What we are witnessing is a mere backlash by a people fighting for their socio-economic and cultural survival in their own homeland.

Sample these words of Bhargabi Baruah, a law student from Naogaon – one of the highest infiltrated districts of Assam: **“Most of the jobs in the government are taken by Bangladeshis. You**

find them in schools, colleges, courts, markets – practically everywhere. There are certain areas which are forcibly occupied by the infiltrators in the market places, so the entire local market is in their hands. They are also employed in tea estates and other agricultural activities. It is impossible to find a single rickshaw driver who is an Assamese. Sometimes I end up wondering if I am in Assam or in Bangladesh- that is the scale of infiltration. That day is not far when we might end up as refugees in our own land.”

What Bhargabi is saying is in no way an exaggeration. Today, there are more than 4 crore Bangladeshi infiltrators in the country! The significant rise in the population of the Bangladeshis has naturally resulted in their political dominance in the state. The infiltrators are today, the decisive voters in more than 50% of the Assembly constituencies in both Assam and West Bengal – a vote bank that the ‘secular’ parties are jealously guarding. It won’t be a surprise if these voters will elect one of their own – an infiltrator – as their MP and MLA tomorrow. We will then be the only country in the world to have foreign infiltrators as our constitutional representatives. Our liberalists and secularists can then pat their own backs on having set a new benchmark of liberalism and secularism for the rest of the world to emulate!

In spite of such alarmingly high levels of danger posed by the infiltration, we continue to stay in a state of denial. Successive governments in Assam with the Centre looking the other way have done nothing to tackle this issue head-on. Even after this week’s incalculable crises, our reactions and response remain the same – denial and complacency.

By looking at the state of affairs in Assam, one can say that there is not much hope left for the indigenous people of Assam. We need to understand that what we are witnessing today in Assam is not merely a humanitarian crisis, it is more of an alarm of a complex security crisis waiting at the corner. If we do not heed to these alarm calls now, that day is not too far when we will witness another exodus of the indigenous people of Assam from their homeland – just like we mutely witnessed the exodus of the Kashmiri Pandits.

The words of the 19th century philosopher Augustus Comte are apt in today’s circumstances: “Demography holds the key in a Democracy”.

Now the question is will we ever understand this all important lesson?

Appears not, as the recent spate of violence that began in the Kokrajhar district of Assam in July 2012 and then spread to the adjoining districts of the Bodoland Territorial Council, primarily between the Bodos and the Muslim community of immigrant origin settled in these districts, has once again unleashed a vicious debate on the perils posed by alleged unrestricted illegal immigration from Bangladesh, this time even on the floor of the Lok Sabha.

The situation has been further complicated by a 'protest' in Mumbai against 'violence on Muslims in Assam' turning into a riot or by sundry attacks as 'retaliation' against people from North East elsewhere in India. But, thanks to the fallout of votebank politics in India, while Assam Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi blamed the Centre for delaying the deployment of the army, Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh visited the relief camps and said that the "pain and suffering the recent incidents have caused to a large number of people have saddened all of us". He lets in the word "ethnic conflict" and says it is "unacceptable and must stop". He, perhaps, has a habit of talking tongue-in-cheek. "We must also address the causes of the conflict," he said.

The people of Assam or rather India thought he would go into the real causes of the conflict where the flood from Bangladesh is squeezing the local Bodos into narrower and narrower areas as the illegal immigrants usurp their land, but he qualified the issue of addressing the "causes" by adding "if the conflict has been instigated, the guilty must be punished". So his government and the state government are not going to zero in on the "causes of the conflict". They would treat it as a mere law and order issue.

Not only that, the Prime Minister even promised Rs 300 crore to Assam for relief and rehabilitation, development schemes and housing. In fact, with houses provided to the illegals and development and rehabilitation for them along with the Bodos, the illegals would become legals. And that would encourage more illegals to come and push out the local Bodos. **Does the Congress believe that its remedy would be swallowed hook and line by the country and that there would be no more clashes? Or is it saying to the illegals, "come, my friends, in droves and if you drive away the Bodos and occupy their land, we would be sorry for the local people but would give you all houses, development and everything else"?**

The unstated part of this deal is that the illegals would soon get absorbed into Assam and would become vote banks for the Congress.

Not to say, but as Dr. Singh appears aware of the fact that Assam – once upon a time famous for its peace and tranquility – has now started witnessing full-fledged violence only because of the dilly-dallying approaches of both the Centre and the state governments in paying heed to the problem cropping up in the region for a very long. And, as most of the governments of India didn't even bother to take cognizance of unabated Muslim infiltration to this region from the erstwhile East Pakistan, the clash between the original Assamese people and the infiltrators is tearing up the tranquility of the region.

The latest spell of violence claimed more than 95 people and many more injured, leaving around 5 lakh people taking shelter in 278 camps in several districts in the state. If we go into the genesis of the problem, it all started with the killing of two Muslims by some miscreants as stated by All Bodo Student Union president Pramod Bodo.

There had been several incidents in the past where large scale of violence are reported in the region. Many such incidents can be mentioned where such clashed were reported like the Idgah incident at Fakiragram being the recent one, or the Udalguri violence four years back. A strong violent mob of Bangladeshi Muslims attacked villages of the local residents in the Udalguri district of BTAD area, resulting six people dead and more than hundred injured. At that time also more than one lakh people became refugees in their own land. Neli violence is also one such incident where 1800 people were killed. These incidences tensed the situation all over BTAD area. The ever-increasing number of Bangladeshi infiltrators in Assam has not only disturbed peace and amity in the region but created socio-economic and political problems also as claimed in the region.

Outbreak

Scanning through the news reports and information - it, prima facie, appears that the region has turned into a dormant volcano, as the government seems waiting for its eruption, by merely putting wools on lamb's eyes in terms of accepting the truth and address the Assam problem with honest intent. It indicates that despite all efforts made by the government of Assam on Law and order front, tension and violence is still recurring and far from getting over in the lower Assam region after the violence broke out in the state on July 22, 2012, in a bigger way. It, however, came to notice to everyone fairly much late, but according to the reports of local media and people, it actually started on July 6, 2012.

Tension was prevailing in the region from quite long as Bodoland People's Front MP Bishwajit Daimary claimed that this round of violence was due to a call for the band by Ana-Bodo Suraksha Samiti (ABSS) in Goreswar near Guwahati in May. The Bodos were forced to put down the shutters of their shops and they were even attacked when they refused to accept the diktat. **How isolated Bodos were? Bodos are neglected in the area. (Outlook, August 13, 2012).**

But the government did not pay any heed to it despite the fact that lower Assam and the entire Bodoland Territorial Area District (BTAD) have always been reporting violent clashes. Ethnic clashes have been recurring in the state from a very long time. Moreover, if the chief minister of the state Tarun Gogoi is saying that "Assam is sitting on a volcano. Is the Prime Minister listening," then the matter seems really serious. "Assam is just like a volcano. You don't know what happens where," Gogoi said. "Clashes keep occurring in the state, whether in Kokrajhar, Karbi Anglong or Dima Hasao."



Interestingly, Tarun Gogoi, himself admitted the cracks in the state machinery and subsequently sought for a CBI probe from the Centre, stating that the state had limited intelligence capabilities. (Indian Express, August 8, 2012). One can imagine about the safety and security of the people and region, with a troubled border – handicapped in intelligence network. At the same time, it also indicates the seriousness of the Indian government in tackling such serious issues.

The recent clashes – triggered by two incidents in Kokrajhar district, i.e. the first one on July 6, 2012, when unidentified gunman shot dead two Muslims and another on July 19 when again, unidentified gunman shot at a leader of All Bodoland Minority Student Union and All Assam Minority Student Union.

But, this tale has a bigger tail. On July 20, four supporters of the erstwhile Bodo Liberation Tigers (BLT) were lynched by a mob in Joypore, a Muslim-dominated village. Their public butchering had a message – the infiltrators had on their way to establish their dictatorship in the region!

Not only that, an ancient Brahma Mandir, a revered place of worship for the Bodos, was also plundered in Anthaibari, Gossaigaon. The Bodos retaliated after this triggering the widespread violence spreading across over 400 villages in the Bodo Territorial Autonomous Districts region (BTAD) from both sides. Houses were burnt down and Muslims looted abandoned houses. Without enough police officers in Chirang, Udalguri and Baksa districts, the rioters got a fair chance to rule the roost. A sub-divisional police officer from Bijni in Chirang district candidly admitted that he did not have enough guards to venture out at a time of violence [**Narayan Das, the officer concerned resigned to protest lack of adequate police force, (Outlook, August 13, 2012)**].

According to the information provided by the government, there were more than five lakh people lodged in 278 relief camps. But an objective estimate suggests that not more than 70,000 to one lakh people should have been uprooted from their home following the riots. The state home department statement, which was issued after violence subsided, had said that as per initial reports 244 villages have been affected and around 5,000 houses burnt. Now, assuming that 50 houses on an average were in every village and 6 members were in every household, the total number would add up to 70,000 only by any calculation. So to say misinformation is at the centre in this violence affected region as the total population of Kokrajhar is 2.63 lakh and displaced around 1 lakh but there are more than 4 lakh Muslims in the camps. From where these other three lakh Muslims taking shelter in the camps have come? This is frequently being asked and is the concern of the people. Testimony to the fact is that Assam chief minister Tarun Gogoi himself announced that only those Indian Muslims, who fled Bodoland during the clashes and having bona fide land ownership, would be settled in BTC area. (**TOI, August 31, 2012**). This is what BTAD chief Hagrama Mohilary has been saying that the meeting discussed the issue of rehabilitation of

relief camp inmates. He said the Government of Assam and BTC administration had arrived at a decision to rehabilitate the genuine Indian citizens having valid land documents to their respective villages, who are in different relief camps in Dhubri and Kokrajhar. He also assured that no India Muslim would be victimized.

But the very purpose of keeping the political parties silent was Bangladeshi infiltrators registering themselves into voters. The Congress itself encouraged it in the '50s to increase its vote tally. The then Congress president, Dev Kant Barua told Kuldeep Nayar that they would have Ali (Muslims) and Coolie (Bihar's labourer) from their places and win the polls. **(Mainstream, August 10-16, 2012).**

Similarly, the incumbent Assam chief minister Tarun Gogoi does not want to detect foreigners as they give edge to the Congress. The last two elections in the state which he has won have been primarily because of the 'voters' from across the border. **(Mainstream, August 10-16, 2012).**

But another issue is forcing the Congress CM in the state to rethink that earlier these people used to support the Congress but now they have AAMSU and AIUDF as their own parties. So they don't have to look for the Congress. Infiltration and demography are the main issues of confrontation between Bodos and Muslims in Assam. With the number of infiltrators growing unabatedly, now they found themselves in a position where they can chalk out their own strategy. Old Congress supporter Bangladeshi infiltrators have now formed All Assam Minority Student Union (AAMSU) and a political party of Muslims All India United Democratic Front led-by Badaruddin Ajmal, who is not even a decade old in Assam politics. So their aspiration is growing. This is the line that senior BJP leader L K Advani took in a Parliamentary debate on the issue when he said that it is not a Hindu-Muslim clash but a clash between Indian verses outsiders. **(Sahara Time, September 1, 2012).**

Reality of Violence

The Assam government was caught napping not only in terms of preparedness to deal with the situation but it also proved ineffective after the violence broke. A lot of the animosity between Bodos, the original inhabitants and Muslims is traced to the former's real and perceived loss of land. Primarily agriculturists, Bodos leased out portions of their land to Muslims farm labourers, but later it resulted in illegal and forceful occupation of land **(Outlook, August 13).**

These infiltrators are occupying land with the connivance of government officials. Assam observers say that they came here as rickshaw pullers and laborers and have become landholders by occupying land and resultantly replacing the local people by becoming numerically superior to them. All Bodo Student Union Pramod Bodo have always been arguing about dismal condition of Bodos in the region. Pramod Bodo argued, "This kind of violence is nothing new in Assam but now

the situation is worsening by the day. There are three major problems that are plaguing the region: (1) Land grabbing spree of migrants (2) Ethnic problems are a major concern that the government is ignoring for long (3) Illegal migrants are a big issue as local people feel suffocated in such a situation.” (**Sahara Time, August 18, 2012**).

BTAD deputy chief Khampa Bargoyary also said the influx from Bangladesh was the main cause of ethnic violence between Bodos and Muslims.

Infiltration menace

With increased infiltration from Bangladesh, the number of Muslim population in the region has increased manifold. It has distorted the social, economic and political balance in the BTAD area. Not only it has also increased the risk of ethnic clashes, rather it has paved a safe passage for terrorism and smuggling of arms – making an immense threat to the stability in the region. According to the government records, about 35 per cent of the forest land has already been graced by Bangladeshi Muslims in Kokrajhar district. Now, Muslims in the BTAD region are realizing that their number is of no use in the erstwhile BTAD political system. So they started a systematic campaign against the BTAD and they have started their demand for Muslim reservation in Bodo territorial council. Pramod Bodo was of the opinion that had there been an honest implementation of Bodo Accord, there would not have been such crisis in the region. (**Sahara Time, August 25, 2012**).

Now, Muslims are demanding reservation in the BTAD area. BTAD chief Hagrama Mohilari, on July 24, 2012, blamed all Bangladeshis – who came from Bangladesh – for present turmoil in Assam and demanded to seal the Indo-Bangla border immediately. He also alleged that local Muslims have been informed the people from outside, particularly Bangladesh, who entered the area and instigating the local people to indulge in violence in Kokrajhar district.

Reportedly infiltration issue appears to be visible on ground zero. Porous border along is helping people from Bangladesh to cross over to Indian side of the border. Once they are in the Indian territory, all the other facilities are provided to them by the people, who had already sneaked into this side of the border. Local people say that as soon as they enter into Indian territory, settlements are made and it grows at a very fast pace. Moreover, despite the fact that Bodos of the BATD area are recognized as plains tribe in the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution and it is not permitted for anyone to buy land from them, still the number of Bangladeshi infiltrators are growing and occupancy of land by them is also increasing. There are ways to take control of the land:

- 1) All these settlers, who are not from Assam, if they are Bangladeshi or whatever, are definitely occupying the government land or land that has no claimant. Very soon settlements are made

on these lands making it impossible to get vacated. With incessant increase in the minority population, the Bodos – with some 15 lakh populace in the area, have no other option than to flee, as they are now outnumbered by Muslims.

- 2) Land being the base for Bodos to be counted upon, experienced observer say, the immigrants had since long been adopting several modus operandi to own their property. The immigrant youths, for instance, marry into underdeveloped matriarchal tribal families – alluring the girls with false promises of flashy life in bigger town and eventually seize their land. **(Sahara Time, August 25).**
- 3) Though the existing land rights of non-tribal citizens are protected under the constitutional amendment Act 2003, there is widespread fear of losing such rights, which the BTC has not been able to address. This is the single major cause of distrust and the practice of ‘benami’ holdings of tribal lands by non tribals and encroachment on tribal lands has vitiated the inter-ethnic relations. **(Sahara Time, September 1).**
- 4) The land occupied, bought or encroached upon by non-Bodos before 2003 is stated to be substantial and remains to be the cause of friction. The matter was even taken up in Parliament on the day when the debate over illegal infiltration by Bangladeshi rocked Parliament, the home ministry admitted in the Rajya Sabha that 82,585 Bangladeshi nationals with valid travel document have gone missing in India. **(The Assam Tribune, August 12, 2012).**

Actual figure of illegal immigrants from Bangladesh is a politically hot potato. But official data revealed a disturbing trend, where over 58,000 Bangladeshi citizens came to India and became traceless in the past three years. **(TOI, August 15, 2012).**

People all across the country accept that the problem in Assam is more due to government negligence and droopiness than anything else. According to former Home secretary Gopal Krishna Pillai, it would be a mirage to see a tranquil and peaceful north-eastern region, without establishing peace and trouble-free governance in Assam. Though a number of political leaders accepted this theory, in practice they were bogged down by short-term political gains.

BJP president Nitin Gadkari finds the Congress responsible for the ongoing conflict. "If we don't wake up, the country will be on the verge of another Partition," Gadkari warned. RSS joint general secretary Dattatraya Hosabale had said in Guwahati that tensions between Bangladeshi Muslim and local communities have prevailed in the region for many years now. "The ever increasing number of Bangladeshi infiltrators has not only disturbed peace and amity in the region but created socio-economic and political problems also," said Hosabale. **(Sahara Time, September 1, 2012).**

Several newspapers reported that Muslim organisations are not ready to agree such arguments as Jamiat Ulama-e-Hind has its own theory on Assam. Jamiat Ulama-e-Hind president Arshad Madni has been propagating this theory that the violence in Assam is an attempt to drive away

indigenous Muslims from there. They were driven away from their homes and later their houses were set on fire. This is purely an ethnic cleansing by Bodos to increase their number beyond 50 percent in the region as they are just 35 per cent in the region at present.

However, the Supreme Court had warned that large-scale infiltration from Bangladesh is continuing and these infiltrators are occupying land with the connivance of government officials. Even then, the concerned officials are helping them to procure all those documents that can prove them bona fide Indian citizens. Infiltration and change in the demographic structure are the main issues of confrontation between Bodo and Muslims, besides the subsequent law and order issues. Observers of the northeastern region are of the view that people of the region are very apprehensive about the mass infiltration by Bangladeshis. But the issue has now taken a bigger proportion as the infiltration menace is not only confined to the lower Assam and the Bodoland area but it has gone to the areas like Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh. Around three-years ago, student organisations of Arunachal Pradesh drove out more than 10,000 such settlers from the state. Similar move was about to start in Nagaland but was stopped on the government request due to problems in South India.

Dimensions and history of illegal migration

Assam was occupied by British in 1826 and placed under the administrative unit of Bengal Province. The British brought English knowing Bengalese to assist them but after partition of Bengal in 1905 the geo-political reconstitution of the region started with fast pace with the flow of Bengali speaking population particularly the Muslim peasantry moving from over populated East Bengal to sparsely populated fertile lands of Brahmaputra and Surma valleys. The formation of All India Muslim League (AIML) in 1906 at Dhaka also helped them to expand its numerical strength in Assam and initiated organised migration of Muslims from East Bengal. Nawab Salim Ullah Khan, a prominent Muslim leader and one of the founder members of AIML in his public meeting after the concluding session of the League, "exhorted the Muslims to migrate to Assam and settle there".

After 1937 elections, Gopi Nath Bordoloi headed a Congress-led coalition government in Assam and tried to stop the unhindered flow of immigrant Muslims. But his Government had to resign in November 1939 to respond to the Congress High Command's call for resignation of all its Provincial Governments in protest against the War policy of the British. This decision of the party, however, facilitated the formation of an alternative Coalition Government in Assam headed by Sir Saadullah of AIML. "During the period between 1939-1941, Saadullah Government allotted one Lakh bighas (Little less than an acre) of land in Assam valley for the settlement of East Bengal immigrants" (**Political History of Assam - Edited by A. C. Bhuyan and Shibopada De, Vol. III, Publication Board of Assam, 1999, Page 262**).

Saadullah ignored the protest of Assam Congress leaders like Bishnuram Medhi and others on the plea that the Muslim exodus from Bengal to Assam was necessary for the success of 'Grow more food' scheme in the state. But after partition in 1947, the Assamese people expected that there would not be any further trans-migration of Muslims from East Pakistan to their new political territory. Muslim populations in Assam considerably decreased in 1947 partly due to inclusion of Sylhet in Pakistan and also return of sizeable number of earlier immigrants to their original land due to fear of backlash. But the situation changed, when Moinul Haque Chaudhary, the Private Secretary of Jinnah and also a prominent leader of the youth wing of AIML joined Congress along with the supporters of Pakistan en-mass. On the eve of partition, he was shaky whether to opt for Pakistan or stay back in India. He was, however, told by Jinnah, "Wait for ten years! I'll present Assam on a silver plate to you." (**Politics of Alienation in Assam by Bhawani Singh, 1984, Page 72**).

Jinnah died in 1948 but the Congress fulfilled his promise by inducting Chaudhary in the Cabinet of Congress Government led by Gopi Nath Bordoloi. It is often alleged that Chaudhary stayed back in Assam on the advice of Jinnah and other Pakistani leaders to help the immigrants from Pakistan for their settlement in Assam. After Independence the flow of illegal migration from East Pakistan again increased aggressively as in absence of any population planning by its government or any social movement for creating awareness to control population, its people remained facing the problem of living space for survival. To carry forward the political legacy of AIML that East Pakistan / Bangladesh needed more lebensraum or living space, its leaders continued their plan for Islamic expansionism in Assam through infiltration of Muslims as the country was unable to shoulder the burden of its multiplying population. The successive governments in Pakistan pursued the twin policy of squeezing out the Hindus and infiltrating the Muslims to settle down in Assam and other bordering states in India.

Against the evil geo-political design of Pakistan that had scared the Assamese middle class of the threat to their marginalization in their own land, Government of India never had any organized plan or definite policy. Nehru-Liaquat Pact (April 1950) with "special provisions for restoration of rights of immigrants over their properties if they would choose to return not later than the December 31, 1950" (**Assam Issue -The Beginning - The End -The Beginning by Vijay Kumar Dewan, United Publishers Guwahati, 1985, Page 34-35**). Rather, it helped Pakistan to accelerate infiltration, as the pact had validated entry of immigrants up to 31.12.50, was against the spirit of Immigrants (Expulsion from Assam) Act 1950 enacted by Parliament on February 13, 1950. As per a conservative assessment about a million of Muslim infiltrators settled down in the vacant areas contiguous to the areas where Muslim migrants in British India were already settled. Moinul Haque Chaudhury – who later became a minister in the Indira Gandhi government and former President of India Fakharuddin Ali Ahmad, were widely known for being instrumental in the settlement of illegal Muslim immigrants. Gradually, the Muslim population in Assam, which was about 19 Lakhs in 1947, increased to about 36 Lakhs within 25 years of Independence by 1972.

In 1971, Bangladesh emerged as a sovereign nation after liberation war against Pakistan with the help of Indian Army. Instead of being grateful, the new nation maintained the same policy of Pakistan on Muslim infiltration in Assam. The argument of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the first president of Bangladesh was written on the wall: “Without the inclusion of Assam the East Bengal economy could not be balanced.”

There are several other aspects, corroborating similar views about infiltration theory. In 1970, the total population of Bangladesh (erstwhile East Pakistan) was 7.5 crores but in 1974 it had come down to 7.14 crores. On the basis of 3.1 per cent annual population growth rate of that period, the population in 1974 should have been 7.7 crores. Moreover, the Muslims-Hindu ratio in 2001 was 75:25 and over the ten years it has increase to around 80:20, as per official estimates. Shortfall of six million people can be explained only why large scale migration. Assam specific figure of illegal migrant have been worked out from available statistics as follows:

Community-wise growth

Year	Assam		All India	
	Hindus	Muslims	Hindus	Muslims
(i) 1951-61	33.71	38.35	20.29	25.61
(ii) 1961-71	37.17	30.99	23.72	30.85
(iii) 1971-91	41.89	77.42	48.38	55.04

Infiltration has been done with a proper strategy, indeed. Before the BTAD violence, the modes operandi of the Muslim leaders in Assam was that as and when violence happened in the state they used to propagate it as an Indian (Bhartiya) and Assamese fight. And labourers, who had left the working place were mostly from united Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, were replaced by the Bangladeshi labourers into these work places in Assam. There were two things that the Muslim leadership was adopting to accomplish their design of infiltration: 1) By using ethnic violence as cover, they had been able to get people from Bangladesh to cross over to India side of the border 2) They were also able to keep people’s attention away from these infiltration to do it smoothly.

As far as the infiltration of Bangladeshi Muslims is concerned successive governments have accepted that it is very much happening even on the floor of Parliament that there are huge number of presence of Bangladeshi infiltrators not only in Assam but also across the country.

- A 135-page report submitted by the group of ministers during the NDA government after detail survey found that there are more than 1.27 crores Bangladeshi in the country.
- Union minister of state in the UPA-I government, Shri Prakash Jaiswal informed the Parliament that there are 1.57 crores Bangladeshi infiltrators in the country.
- Lt. Gen. Ajay Singh, the then Governor of Bengal in his report to the President of India, stated that six thousand Bangladeshi are entering in India every day.

- DG of BSF in 2nd week of October 2008, had revealed that 12 lakh Bangladeshis, who entered India legally between 1972 and 2005, had not returned to their country and became traceless.
- But, if other sources are to be believed, the actual figure of Bangladeshi living in India has gone beyond 3 to 4 crores.

Bangladeshi immigration over the years and consequences

Former deputy director of census Jogesh Chandra Bhuian remarked in his article on illegal migration from Bangladesh and demographic change in north east that the growth of Muslims population in the period 1971 to 1991 were very unusual and unnatural:

1971-1991

Sl.	Districts/state	Actual growth rate of Muslims	Supposed growth rate
1.	Assam	77.41	33.20
2.	Dhubri	71.12	30.83
3.	Kokrajhar	100.83	41.71
4.	Bongaigaon	92.78	38.83
5.	Goalpara	86.52	36.58
6.	Barpeta	65.19	28.52
7.	Nalbari	93.40	39.06
8.	Darrang	108.10	52.23
9.	Marigaon	70.26	30.47
10.	Nagaon	81.91	34.86

(Chirang district was carved out of Bongaigaon districts at the time of Bodo Agreement in the year 2003)

The above mentioned table shows that even after formation of Bangladesh the Muslim influx remains a continuous phenomenon and unabated. The table shows that how much illegal influx a Bangladeshi has actually taken place in the erstwhile district of Kokrajhar and Chirang.

There are sufficient data, information and facts available about Bangladeshi infiltration causing perpetual unrest in the state. The 1991 census shows that the Muslim population of the country increased by 4.02 million, or 65.47 per cent over that of 1971, in Assam the increase has been by 77.42 per cent. Muslims now form a majority in the district of Dhubri (70.42 per cent), Goalpara (50.18 per cent), Barpeta (56.07 per cent) and Hailakandi (55.18 per cent). **(Insurgency in North-East India-The Role of Bangladesh, Edited by Dipankar Sengupta and Sudhir Kumar Singh, Authors Press, 2004, Page 51).**

In addition to these four Muslim majority districts other five districts namely Bongaigaon (32.74 per cent), Morigaon (45.31 per cent), Nagaon (47.19 per cent), Karimganj (49.17 per cent) and Cachar (34.49 per cent) are having Muslim population varying between 32.74 per cent to 49.17

Muslim Populated Districts in Assam

Number	District	Total Population	Muslim Population	Percentage
1	<u>Barpeta</u>	1,647,201	977,943	59% ☾*
2	<u>Bongaigaon</u>	904,835	348,573	39% ★
3	<u>Cachar</u>	1,444,921	522,051	36% ★
4	<u>Darang</u>	1,504,320	534,658	35% ★
5	<u>Dhemaji</u>	571,944	10,533	2%
6	<u>Dhubri</u>	1,637,344	1,216,455	74% ☾*
7	<u>Dibrugarh</u>	1,185,072	53,306	4.5%
8	<u>Goalpara</u>	822,035	441,516	54% ☾*
9	<u>Golaghat</u>	946,279	74,808	8%
10	<u>Hailakandi</u>	542,872	312,849	57% ☾*
11	<u>Jorhat</u>	999,221	47,658	5%
12	<u>Kamrup</u>	2,522,324	625,002	25% ★
13	<u>Karbi Anglong</u>	813,311	18,091	2%
14	<u>Karimganj</u>	1,007,976	527,214	52% ☾*
14	<u>Kokrajhar</u>	905,764	184,441	20%
15	<u>Lakhimpur</u>	889,010	143,505	16%
16	<u>Marigaon</u>	776,256	369,398	47.5% ☾*
17	<u>Nagaon</u>	2,314,629	1,180,267	51% ☾*
18	<u>Nalbari</u>	1,148,824	253,842	22%
19	<u>North Cachar Hills</u>	188,079	4,662	2.5%
20	<u>Sibsagar</u>	1,051,736	85,761	8%
21	<u>Sonitpur</u>	1,681,513	268,078	16%
22	<u>Tinsukia</u>	1,150,062	40,000	3.5%

Percentage Decadal Variation in Population since 1951 in India and Assam

	1951-61	1961-71	1971-81	1971-91	1991-01	01-2011
India	21.64	24.80	24.66	54.41	21.54	17.64
Assam	34.98	34.95	-	53.26	18.92	16.93
Dhubri	43.74	43.26	-	45.65	22.97	24.40
Dhemaji	75.21	103.42	-	107.50	19.45	20.30
Karbi Anglong	79.21	68.28	-	74.72	22.72	18.69

per cent. Although the 2001 Religion census is yet to be declared, an independent analysis that was conducted seems to show that there has been a sizeable growth in population among Muslims in Assam. It records that as a community Muslims had registered an increase of 16.17 percent growth in 2001 figures **(Terror Sans Frontier: Islamic Militancy in North India by Jaideep Saikia, Ford Fellow, July 2003, page 17).**

As per the general estimates, out of 27 districts in Assam - 11 districts are now Muslim-dominated districts. One may wonder that how the Muslim population of Assam from 19,81,857 in 1951 had increased to 63,73,204 in 1991. Taking into account the pace of growth rate between 1951 to 1991 the Muslim population in Assam, as per the Census figures, it has a significant increase of nearly 35 percent by 2005. On the other hand, the Hindu population in the state has decreased from 72.51 per cent in 1971 to 67.13 per cent in 1991, i.e. decrease rate of about 5 per cent in 20 years.

“No sovereign nation can permit the influx of foreign nationals into its territory. But the North Eastern region of the country in general and Assam in particular have been experiencing the area being utilized as the dumping ground for a large numbers of foreigners being vomited out by a neighboring country since a long time. Besides, a large number of such foreigners were appeased with political rights by entering their names in the voters' list of the state for petty political games at the instance of the vested political forces that were at the helm of affairs since Independence.” **(Terror Sans Frontier: Islamic Militancy in North India by Jaideep Saikia, Ford Fellow, July 2003, page 17).**

Replying to the debate in Rajya Sabha, the Home Ministry maintained: “The Government is fully seized of the matter. Efforts towards finding a solution satisfactory to all concerned are continuing.” **(Terror Sans Frontier: Islamic Militancy in North India by Jaideep Saikia, Ford Fellow, July 2003, Page 25).**

Ironically, even after the alarming report on the 'demographic invasion' by Bangladesh by the Governor of Assam in 1998, the problem of Muslim infiltrators remains as acute in Assam as ever. Report on *'Illegal Migration into Assam* as submitted to the President of India by the then Governor, Lt. Gen. (Retd.) S. K. Sinha in 1998 categorically 'warned' that if the present trends are not arrested, the indigenous people of Assam would be reduced to a minority and there may, in course of time, be a demand for the merger of Muslim dominated bordering districts with Bangladesh.

The biggest irony to the problem, however, is tight-lipped approach of the government, like other issues of crime, including murder, dacoity, riots, forceful occupation of land and other law and order issues. “According to a study conducted by a few scholars of Toronto University and the American Academy of Arts and Science, 15 Million Bangladesh nationals have infiltrated in India.

According to another study done by another American organisation, namely, The Advancement of Science, 20 million Bangladesh nationals are presently staying in India.” **(The Silent Invasion by Hiranya Kumar Bhattacharyya, Spectrum Publications, Guwahat: Delhi, 2001, Page 83)**

Muslim infiltration from Bangladesh into India is somewhere between 10 millions to 20 millions. **(Pioneer dated 22.9. 2004 by S.Gurumurthy, a widely known economists)**

But there is an argument in some quarters that a recipe for destabilization as the Bodos – a plain’s tribe did not enjoy overwhelming majority in BAC area, unlike the Khasis or Garos because of geography, better communication and steady process of integration of Bodos – described as Kacharis in the census in the society and culture of Assam Plains. The Bodo areas for this very reason were not placed under the much-hyped ‘Partially Excluded Areas’ like the Khasi, Mizo, Naga Hills Districts of Assam by the British under the Government of India Act 1935. In fact, the sub-committee, set by Dr. B R Ambedkar, under Chairmanship of G N Bordoloi, the then chief minister of Assam, on excluded areas, was on record disfavoring application of 6th Schedule to plains tribal areas on the ground that ‘the Tribes were assimilated in high degree the life of the plains - a position endorsed by the Bodo leader R N Brahma.

So with such kind of arguments, Muslim leaders like Jamiat Ulama-e-Hind president Arshad Madni and All India United Democratic Front president Badruddin Azmal claim raising the issue of illegal infiltration is mere phony, as they find this opinion as an attempt to throw Muslims out of Assam. AIUDF chief goes even further when he alleged that the government is behind Assam riots. He gave the number of people killed as 100. He also said that there are 5.5 lakh Muslims are living in different camps. Several Muslim villages have been destroyed. He said that this is absolutely wrong that attackers have come from Banglaesh but killers are definitely Bodos. **(Inquilaab, August 2, 2012)**

On the other hand AIUDF president, Badaruddin Ajmal, alleged that Bodo miscreants had been attacking non-Bodo communities (particularly Muslims) at the instance of BTC administration in a bid to reduce the population of non-Bodos to less than 50 per cent. He claimed that Bodo population in BTAD was around 29 per cent. The AIUDF’s position has been evoked sharp reaction from the BPF and other Bodo groups such as ABSU, which charged Ajmal with issuing provocative statements.

Other Urdu newspapers have taken altogether a different line on the issue. They were rather taken the line that it is Bodo verses indigenous Muslims. Some of the newspapers even questioned the role of the CM and other political parties. Urdu Times, on July 2, 2012, criticized the fact that killing of Assam Muslim is continuing in the state and instead of stopping them, the Assam government and political parties are indulged in the blame game. Assam chief minister Tarun Gogoi said that when he asked for Army from the Central government, the Army reached very late while the

Centre is refuting it. All India United Democratic Front president Maulana Badruddin Ajmal alleged that the state government is in pact with Bodo terrorists to finish Muslims in the state.

But BATD chief was very critical to the role of Azmal when he said that he has been demanding a complete sealing of the international border with Bangladesh and action against Badruddin Ajmal (AIUDF leader and Dhubri MP). He is behind all this. He is facilitating the entry of illegal Bangladeshi infiltrators into India. The demand of sealing border also came from AABSU president Pramod Bodo. But even Indigenous Assamese Muslim groups joined the All Assam Students Union (AASU) and BATD chief Hangrama Mohilarey in charging the All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) chief Badruddin Ajmal with fanning communal sentiments in the wake of the recent violence in Assam.

Sadou Asom Gariya – Moria Desi Jatiya Parisad (SAGMJP), an influential body of about 25 lakh Assamese Muslims, held Ajmal responsible not only for the Assam violence but also for North East students and workers leaving Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala. SAGMJP president Sahiruddin Ali Ahmed was of the opinion that Ajmal said the clash in Kokrajhar and Chirang was between Muslims and Bodos. All Muslims are not involved in the clash. Ajmal is trying to consolidate his political position by indulging in communal politics. SAGMJP and AASU also blamed the Gogoi government for not taking stern action against “a section of Muslim politicians” whose inflammatory comments triggered Kokrajhar clash. Ajmal is alleged to have been neglecting Assamese Muslims rights from the day of creation of the AIUDF. His political outfit is only concerned about the interests of Muslims of Bangladeshi origin. **(Hindustan Times, August 17, 2012)**

Ajmal was not only instigating communal overtones in his speeches, rather he used new media devices in his support. This was reported and even Parliament sought detail regarding inflammatory contents in Ajmal’s sight. The CID of Assam Police, on August 28, registered a case under various provisions of the IPC and the Information Technology Act against a Facebook account purportedly belonging to AIUDF president and Lok Sabha member Badruddin Ajmal, and served a notice on Facebook. SSP (CID) Debaraj Upadhyay said the case was registered and the account had already been blocked. **(Indian Express, August 29, 2012)**

It appears the main issue that needs to be addressed that it is not Muslim verses Bodo, instead of playing a hoodwinking stunt on the matter. Does talking about Bodos versus Muslims mean the issue was being communalized or someone playing into the hands of fundamentalist forces? When senior BJP leader Lal Krishna Advani made it a point in Parliament that eruption of violence in Assam is not a fight between Hindus or Muslims rather it is a clash between Indians and outsiders. Advani further said that the root lies in infiltration that has been going on from Bangladesh for many years.

Indigenous Assamese Muslims leader claimed that old inhabitants are quite distinct from the immigrant Muslims of Bangladeshi origin. Underscoring the differences with the immigrants, Zaman said: “Because the indigenous Assamese Muslims never thought of a separate political space ... Bengali-speaking Bangladeshi Muslims are cornered about all benefits meant for religious minorities.”

It appeared like Minority Commission of India was speaking the language of Ajmal as the team of Minority Commission of India led by Wazahat Habibullah had something different to tell. The Assam riots was not triggered due to infiltration from Bangladesh, but is a fallout of clashes between “Bodos and resident Muslims” over land in Bodoland Territorial Autonomous Districts (BTAD). The observation of the National Commission for Minorities (NCM) had warned Assam government of militancy and radicalization of Muslims, if their security was not ensured. Also, the riots could have been averted or checked earlier if the police were active enough. The team led by Habibullah appears to have gone beyond its briefs when it suggests to the CM that the Bodos need to be told firmly that they cannot under any circumstances engineer a mass exodus of non-Bodos. Nor would they ever get statehood this way. The team also pointed out that the ‘danger of Muslims in the BTC becoming militants’ is inevitable, if their security was not ensured. **(TOI, August 18, 2012)**

The NCM sent its report to the Prime Minister after visiting districts and refugee camps in Kokrajhar, Gossain Gaon and Dhubri affected by month-long violence. The team comprised Planning Commission member Syeda Hameed, Planning Commission advisor G B Panda and NCM member Keki N Daruwalla. Daruwalla, surprisingly, articulated that there was no sudden influx of immigrants in Assam. He even opined that infiltration was not at instrumental triggering the communal riots there. However, he was contradicted by the group of indigenous Muslims who alleged that the minority commission team did not visit refugee camps of Bodos and asked how can they pass on the judgment without understanding the plight of the other aggrieved?

The report also said there were repeated outbreaks of riots between Bodos and non-Bodos, including Muslims, Santals and Adivasis (Koch Rajbansis), in 2004, 2006, 2008. In 1996 also the Bodos tried to drive out the Adivasis -- 'Santals' and 'Tea-Tribes', namely Orang and Munda. The repeated clashes are triggered by the struggle for land. It's not a clash between religious communities. Instead of taking infiltration responsible for the situation, the commission held Bodos responsible for it. The team found that "Most people feel this strife is caused because Bodos think driving out other ethnic people is in their interest".

After Bodos got an autonomous council, they found there were not in a majority. The Bodo population is about 30 per cent in the area. They feel if their population goes up to 50 per cent and more they will be able to demand statehood for Bodo Land.

It is, however, true that Muslim population in Assam is not homogeneous. It is divided into different categories on the basis of the history of its migration and the settlement: Indigenous Assami-speaking Muslims whose forefathers came as Mughal warriors and settled in different part in the state, indigenous Bengali Muslim from east Bengal who settled in Assam during pre partition days, Bengali speaking Muslims who migrated from erstwhile east Pakistan in different streams, in Bengali speaking illegal immigrants from Bangladesh after the creation in 1971, who crossed over through the porous India-Bangladesh Border.

Flip flop by the government on the issue

July 18, 2000: A status report annexed with the union of India's affidavit sworn by director, ministry of home affairs stated; "The demographic composition in district bordering Bangladesh has altered with the illegal immigration from Bangladesh. The district of Assam and West Bengal bordering Bangladesh have recorded growth of population higher than the national average."

August 28 2000: An affidavit filed by Assam government stated: "There are three districts in Assam which has borders with Bangladesh, i.e. Karimganj, Canchar, and Dhubri. All India percentage of decadal increase in population during 1981-1991 is 23.85 per cent where as the border district of Assam, namely, Karimganj, shows decadal increase of 42.08 per cent, Cachar district 47.59 per cent. From above it can be assumed that the infiltration of foreigners from Bangladesh contributed significantly to the sharp increase of Population in Assam."

August 8, 2001: The government that came to power in Assam in May 2001, sought to withdraw earlier affidavit of August 28, 2000 and file a new one stating, "Affidavit filed by the former AGP-led government does not reflect correct position of law. The state government is of the opinion that the IMDT Act is constitutional and there is no question of either repeal or striking down of the act."

In response, the Union of India, filed an affidavit sworn by director ministry of home affairs stating, "The large-scale illegal migrants from Bangladesh have not only threatened the demographic structure of the area but seriously impaired security of the nation, particularly in the present circumstances. The need for expeditious identification of illegal immigration is more pressing now than ever."

November 24, 2004: The first United Progressive Alliance government at the Centre, which has come in earlier that year, filed another affidavit stating that on reconsideration the central government has taken a decision to retain the IMDT Act in Assam and that allegation were made by organisation that a large number of genuine Indian citizens had been deported under the Foreigners act, 1946. **(Front Line, 26 August 2012)**



Bodo movement

If the entire Bodo movement from violence to Peace accord is any indication, contradiction became more prominent after the signing of the first tripartite Bodo Accord by the All Bodo Student Union and its political wing, the Bodo Peoples' Action Committee, with the Centre and the Assam government in February 1993 – drawing a curtain on six-year-long vigorous statehood movement by the Bodos, which technically began in 1987 under the leadership of Upendra Nath Brahma of the ABSU.

For decades, the Bodos coexisted in Bengali Speaking Goalpara, which was an integral part of a district under Cooch Behar division of Bengal Presidency, till its transfer to the new province of Assam in 1874. (This permanently settled tract, east of Brahmaputra was curved out of Rangpur and formed into the North West Rangpur District in 1822.) After 1947, recognising the need of protecting the land rights of the Tribals, the government of Assam introduced a new chapter in the land revenue regulation for creating tribal belts and blocks. These measures proved ineffective and raised the voices of dissidence among the Bodos, who had created a political platform in late 60s, proclaimed as 'Plains Tribal Council of Action' (PTCA) that eventually led to demand for a separate statehood. It was supported enthusiastically by several Bodo militant groups in the 1990s.

Though the entire North-East is itself the most combustible region as some 250 ethnic groups are arrayed against one another to fight for their identity, infiltration from Bangladesh has more or less ignited and compounded the problem. The need of the hour is to understand that even the Assamese, who were given a separate state in 1955 when India was reorganized on the basis of language, have become a minority in Assam itself. The Bodos, the plain tribe in the state, want to get back their land which the infiltrators or outsiders have occupied since the British left in 1947. They have also been demanding a separate Bodo state. **(Main Stream, August 10-16, 2012)**

Second peace accord

Informal talks between the government and the erstwhile BLT started in 1991 formal cessation of hostilities was declared on March 15, 2000. The BLT signed the peace accord, popularly known as Second Bodo Accord with New Delhi and Dispur on February 10, 2003. In December 6, 2003 the total 2630 BLT cadres led down arms which included 508 assorted weapons and 17137 different pieces of emanations on July 31, 2012. The accord was signed on February 20, 1993. Though the

BAC's charter included measures to protect the 'demographic complexion' meaning preservation of Bodo tribal and cultural identity, the Accord left the BAC territory undefined with a provision that its 'geographical area can be changed with the mutual consent of BAC and the Government of Assam'.

Moreover, the reservation of 30 seats in the BTC for Schedule Tribes, five for non-tribals, five open for all communities and the remaining six to be nominated from unrepresented communities have given the Bodos an edge. The power of the Executive Council has been made unrestrained in a subtle manner in the 2003 Accord by stating under clause 5.7 that the offices of Deputy Commissioner and Superintendent of Police will be outside the 'superintendence and control' of BTC. The existing autonomous district council under the Sixth Schedule in Meghalaya and Mizoram don't enjoy even a fraction of the powers. However, the ground reality characterised by following facts are unlikely to make BTC workable as evident from the opposition of other ethnic groups such as the Muslims, Bengalis, Adivasis, Nepalis, Raj bangshis which got reflected in recurring ethnic riots that took place during 1994-2008 and 2008 involving Bodos and non Bodos. The Bodo-Muslim clashes, in 2012, are just the continuation of this unending cycle of violence.

Understanding Bodos

Before British came to India, Bodos were part of the Dimasa Kachari Kingdom – spreading far and beyond Assam including Cooch Behar of Bengal to some adjoining areas of Bihar. Bodos were given the opportunity to take advantage of scheduled tribe (ST) status only after 1947. In the early 1960s the Plains Tribals Council of Assam (PTCA), a political party representing Bodos and other plains tribals of Assam realized that tribal belts and blocks were gradually being acquired by rich landlords or new immigrants through illegal means. Bodos had little or no access to the economic aid that was given by the Centre. There were hardly any roads and other infrastructures that connected Bodo dominated area to the main cities of Assam. These were the reasons for which, in 1967, PTCA demanded a Union Territory called Udayachal, to be carved out of Assam. The creation of tribal belts and blocks (for scheduled-tribes) was a mechanism to protect farming and grazing lands mainly from rich landlord and illegal immigrants. Due to persistent apathy of successive governments towards Bodo community, by the end of 1970s – it became clear that Bodos had a little or no influence in the Indian political process. Often the financial packages meant for tribal-development were diverted and misused. For similar reasons, Khasis and Garos, were also carved out to Meghalaya from Assam. In the late 1980s, All Bodo Students' Union's (ABSU) became very concerned about decades of neglect and apathy by the subsequent state government towards the Bodo community. ABSU and Bodo political parties jointly demanded a separate state Bodoland.

As per documents provided in **The official Bodoland Movement [George, Sudhir Jacob (1994)] and The Bodo Movement in Assam, Asian Survey 34(10) [pp. 878-892]**, the movement for

independent Bodoland started on March 2, 1987 under the leadership of Upendranath Brahma of the All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU). The ABSU created a political organization, the Bodo Peoples' Action Committee (BPAC), to spearhead the movement. The ABSU/BPAC movement began with the slogan "Divide Assam 50-50". The ABSU/BPAC leadership of the movement ended with the bipartite Bodo Accord {Bodo Accord, February 20, 1993, signed by Government of Assam, ABSU and BPAC} of February 20, 1993 and the creation of the BAC. The accord soon collapsed amidst a vertical split in ABSU and other Bodo political parties brought about mainly by the split between S K Bwiswmuthiary and Preamsingh Brahma, and violence erupted in Bodo areas leading to a displacement of over 70,000 people.

When AASU agitation to drive out illegal immigrants (year 1979-85) was slowing down, the demand for a separate state called the Bodoland was gaining momentum. Despite the Bodo accord, neglect remains, with no economic improvement is evident in Bodo dominated areas. The movement for a separate Bodo state was launched by the splinter group in late 80s against foreign nationals. This was confined to 4 districts -- Kokrajhar, Baska, Udalguri, Chirang bordering Bhutan and covering 8,975 km, which constituted 'Bodoland Territorial Areas District' after extension of autonomy under the Sixth schedule in 2003 has been the scene of recurring ethnic violence involving the Bodos and other ethnic groups. The unabated violence is yet another manifestation of what Sanjib Baruah an expert on NE India called a state of 'durable disorder'- a process that began in 1994 soon after the grant of autonomy and creation of 'Bodoland Autonomous Council' by an Act of Assam Assembly,"comprising contiguous geographical areas between river Sankosh, and Mazbat / Pasnoi river following the Bodo Accord dated 20.2.1993 (**Sahara Time, September 1, 2012**). Though the BAC's charter included measures to protect the 'demographic complexion' meaning preservation of Bodo tribal and cultural identify, the Accord left the BAC territory undefined with a provision that its 'geographical area' can be changed with the mutual consent of BAC and the Government of Assam.

But, not only the territorial demarcation was problematic in the Bodo Accord, the Bodos had not been given political or financial control in it. Contrary to it, the Assam government's land policy led large scale eviction of Bodos from forested areas and stirred up new fears. (**Outlook, August 13, 2012**)

More critically, the reservation of 30 seats in the BTC for Schedule Tribes, five for non tribals, five open for all communities and the remaining six to be nominated from underrepresented communities have given the Bodos a permanent political dominance. The power of the Executive Council has been made unrestrained in a subtle manner in the 2003 Accord by stating under clause 5.7 that the offices of Deputy Commissioner and Superidentant of Police will be outside the 'superintendence and control' of BTC. The existing autonomous district council under the 6th Schedule in Meghalaya and Mizoram don't enjoy even a fraction of the powers. However, the ground reality characterized by following facts are unlikely to make BTC workable as evident from

the opposition of other ethnic groups such as the Muslims, Bengalis, Adivasis, Nepalis, Raj Bangshis which got reflected in recurring ethnic riots that took place during 1994-2008 and 2008 involving Bodos and non Bodos. The Bodo Muslim clash in 2012 is just a continuation of this unending cycle of violence. Though the existing land rights of non-tribal citizens are protected under the constitutional amendment Act 2003, there is widespread fear of losing such rights which the BTC has not been able to address.

To resolve the Bodo problem, the state government of Assam had decided to setup Bodo Autonomous Council (BAC), by signing accord in 1993. But the Bodo people were not satisfied with it and they started another movement for a separate state of Bodoland. In the year 2003, the central government decided to create a more powerful autonomous area in favour of Bodos and an agreement was signed between Bodo Liberation Tigers, government of Assam and Central government leading to creation of BTAD. Now, the BTAD includes four districts as Kokrajhar, Baksa, Chirang and Udalguri. Kokrajhar is the head quarter/BTAD capitals.

The population of the BTAD is 35,15,355 comprising of Bodo Rabha, Garo, Koch Rajbhangsi, Sarania, Santhal, Oraon, Bengali, Nepali, Assamese, Hindi speaking people and Muslims according to 2011 census. There are two types of Muslims in BTAD, i.e. those who came in the 16th century and others as Muslim infiltrators from Bangladesh.

An amendment to the Constitution by way of the sixth schedule to the constitution (Amendment) Act 2003, gave BTAD the status of an autonomous district as six schedule area under the constitution. Thereafter, in accordance with Article 244 (2), Bodoland came to be administered in accordance with provision of sixth schedule.

But amid disturbance in Assam, the Indira Gandhi government in 1984, with no elected politicians from Assam to protest in Parliament, had little difficulty in pushing through the Act. But, due to some political reservations, the Determination by Tribunals (IMDT) Act of 1984, replaced the Foreigners Act 1946. No leaders from other states objected and the IMDT Act was activated only in Assam. This is the root cause of the problem as it was unable to serve the purpose it was supposedly formulated. The net effect was that it protected the mainly Muslim settlers, who had swarmed into Assam from Bangladesh following the liberation of that country, from detection and deportation. Not surprisingly, this same population made up the Congress' most dependable vote bank. But unrest continued in the state, finally AASU signed the Assam Accord with Rajiv Gandhi in 1984. It split into a political party called the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), which came into power in 1985 and an armed wing – the ULFA – had gone underground. Most of the Assam observers agree that the main reason for this dramatic reversal is the controversial IMDT Act of 1984, which replaced the Foreigners Act, 1946, in Assam and made it almost impossible to detect and deport illegal foreign migrants.

There are issues regarding the constitutionality of the IMDT Act itself as it goes against the Constitution. In April 2002, the Supreme Court decision that foreigners cannot claim the right to Indian citizenship on the ground that they are enrolled in voter lists, have ration cards and that they have been living here for a long time. There are other legal issues that complicate the picture including Rajiv Gandhi's 1985 "pardon" of all Bangladeshis who had come in before 1985, which was extra-constitutional and inconsistent with Article 6, which allows the Government to register only those who came to India by January 26, 1950.

There were several technical problems, too. In Assam, the Illegal Migrants – Determination by Tribunals (IMDT) Act of 1984 requires the burden of proof to rest on the accuser who must reside within a 3-kilometre radius of the accused, fill out a complaint form (a maximum of ten per accuser is allowed) and pay a fee of Rs 10. If a suspected illegal migrant is thus successfully accused, he is required by the Act to simply produce a ration card to prove his Indian citizenship. And if a case makes it past these requirements, a system of tribunals made up of retired judges will finally decide on deportation based on the facts.

Even in practice, the IMDT (Illegal Migrants-Determination by Tribunals) Act has been found to be highly impractical. The overwhelming majority of illegal migrants are Bangladeshis who tend to settle in contiguous groups over large areas and when they reach a certain mass, nearby locals leave and those areas get “ethnically cleansed”. It is, therefore, almost impossible to find any non-Bangladeshis living within a 3-kilometre radius and this also effectively prevents the police from being the detecting “accusers”. Ration cards are easily acquired without any real proof of citizenship. It would require tens of thousands of locals filing their ten allowed complaints each to bring actions against the hundreds of thousands of illegal migrants that have entered the state and only about a dozen or so named tribunals are expected to review all of these cases.

It is clear that the IMDT Act has not been effective in doing this in Assam. Even after 22 years of the enactment of IMDT Act, the Supreme Court repealed it. The Muslim leaders, who are not happy with the verdict of the Apex Court in the country, started making hands-in-glove relationship with the ruling party at Centre, to bring another legislation or ordinance for a substitute of IMDT Act. Baduddin Azmal, president, All India United Democratic Front, Assam, expressed his anguish against the Congress for its failure to defend the IMDT Act. His party is now at the centre stage of the Assam politics, with about 40 seats of the total 126 Assembly constituencies.

There is no doubt about the fact that these Bangladeshi migrants are in commanding position in several constituencies. The matter was taken to the court, the Guwhati High Court ruled that Bangladeshis in Assam had become the kingmakers and “a strong political will to free Assam from illegal Bangladeshis is the need of the hour coupled with public activism in that direction.” The order in this connection was passed in a 95-page judgment on July 27, 2008, while disposing of a total of 23 petitions moved by 61 petitioners, after they had been declared as foreigners by the respective Foreigners’ Tribunals.

“Till now, the petitioners have been successful in avoiding the proceedings against them as well as their deportation from India. In the process, they have incorporated their names in the voters’ lists on the basis of which they must have cast their votes. Thus the petitioners and such other large number of Bangladeshis present in the State of Assam have a major role in electing the representatives both to the Legislative Assembly and Parliament and consequently, in the decision-making process towards building the nation. They have become the kingmakers,” the judgment observed.

Justice Sharma of Guwahati High Court categorically observed: “It is no longer a secret or in the domain of ‘doubt’ that illegal Bangladeshis have intruded every nook and crony of Assam, including forest land. In some of the cases, the petitioners themselves stated before the police during investigation that they were living in government and forestland. If reports are to be believed, they have even intruded upon the most sacred Xattras lands. Very often, they are protected by extending the protective lands of ‘secularism’ branding them to be India “minorities” in Assam. The court warned that if the phenomenon continues, “the day is not far off, when the indigenous people of Assam, both Hindus and Muslims and other religious groups will be reduced to minorities in their own land and the Bangladeshis who are freely and merrily moving around the fertile land of Assam, will intrude upon the corridors of power.” **(The Hindu - July 29, 2008, Hyderabad)**

Supreme Court’s observation on Bangladeshi problems in context of IMDT Act

The matter was also taken to the Supreme Court. On 12 July 2005, a three-judge bench of the Supreme Court allowed PIL writ petition number 131 of 2000, (Sarbananda Sonowal Vs. Union of India) and struck down Illegal Migrants (determination by tribunals) Act, 1983 (IMDT Act). A special piece of legislation, the IMDT Act, according to its statement of objects, was enacted purportedly to deal with the detection of foreigners who illegally migrated into India across the borders of the sensitive eastern and north-eastern region of the country and remain in the country, posing a threat to integrity and security of the said regions. The statement of act further reads: “The act failed to serve the purpose for which it was enacted. Its very stringent provisions inter alia expected the prosecution to discharge an extreme heavy burden proving that an individual was illegal immigrant, contrary to the requirement in most laws, including the Foreigners Act of 1946, where the onus to prove that an individual suspected to be a foreigner is not a foreigner, lies on the individual and not on prosecution.” **(Front Line, 26 August 2012)**

The Supreme Court considered the Foreigners Act and also under the foreigners (tribunals) order 1964 is far more effective in identification and deportation of foreigners as compared to the procedure under the IMDT Act and the rules made thereunder. The IMDT Act has been so enacted and rules thereunder have been so minded that innumerable and insurmountable difficulties are created in the manner of identification and deportation of illegal migrants. The court also stated

Article 355 - the duty of Union is to protect state against external aggression and internal disturbance. Assam is facing external aggression and internal disturbance on account of large scale of illegal migration of Bangladeshi national, thereby drawing the attention of the Article 355 of the Constitution. A deep analysis of the IMDT Act and rules would reveal that they have been purposely so enactive and made so as to give shelter or protection to illegal migrants who came to Assam from Bangladesh on or after 25 March 1971 rather than to identify or deport them.

The Supreme Court came to the conclusion that provision of IMDT Act and rules clearly negate constitutional provisions contained in Article 355 of the Constitution. The IMDT Act, which contravenes Article 355 of the Constitution is, therefore, wholly unconstitutional and must be struck down. Thus the Bangladeshi national who have illegally cross the border and have trespassed into Assam or are living in other parts of the country have no legal right of any kind to remain in India and they are liable to be deported. It is foremost duty of the central government to protect its borders and prevent trespass by foreign nationals.

Despite all these brouhaha since Independence, infiltration in Assam has been increased unabatedly with the passage of time. Even the Nehru-Liyaqat pact in 1950, Indira-Muzib Accord in 1971 and much publicized Assam Accord (1985) too failed to stop this 'silent invasion'. In the absence of any definite policy of the Government, the infiltration gradually assumed an alarming proportion and the aliens became politically so strong that no political party in this state is in a position to form the government without them.

The drive to encourage Bangladeshi infiltrators into India as much as possible was undertaken much before the Independence, when Nawab Salim Ullah Khan, a prominent Muslim leader and one of the founder members of AIML (1906) in his public meeting after the concluding session of the League, "exhorted the Muslims to migrate to Assam and settle there". The alarming forecast of Census Superintendent CS Mullan in his Census report of 1931 validated the political conspiracy of AIML in Assam. By late nineteen thirties the AIML turned its expansionist design into a confrontationist Muslim politics in Assam. It encouraged the Muslim migrants to settle in Assam and since then the immigrants have become a chronic problem in the provincial politics of the state.

Mahatma Gandhi too expressed his concern over the problem of such unrestricted immigration but he could not do anything to check the exodus for the reason best known to him. After partition, the Assamese people expected that there would not be any further trans-migration of Muslims from East Pakistan to their new political territory but it continued unabated.

When the Assam agitation reached to its climax and turned violent, two separate delegations one of the 16 legislators led by Janata Party leader Golap Barbor and another of four writers led by Dr

Birendra Kumar Bhattacharyya emphatically narrated the alarming situation of illegal Muslim infiltration in Assam, in their respective memorandum to the Rajya Sabha Committee of Petitions. 73rd Report of the Committee of Petitions, Rajya Sabha dated March 22, 1982 while quoting the memorandum said: "The official statistics showed that a total of 2,20,690 Pakistani infiltrators were detected in the state during the period 1950-1961 and another 1,92,339 were spotted in the following decade. During the Bangladesh War of Liberation (1971) a total of 1,00,000 immigrants stayed behind even after Independence of their country. The prime factor responsible for this abnormal growth (of Muslims) was the geo-political ambition of Pakistan over Assam. The Report quoting the memorandum of Legislators led by Golap Barborra maintained: "That the problem of infiltration of foreigners in large scale has reached such a stage that unless immediate drastic steps were taken to solve it, the state of Assam, and for that matter, the entire North Eastern Region, faces the danger of being over run by foreigners in the next few years."

The memorandum also quoted the written address of the Chief Election Commissioner to the Chief Election Officers Conference at Ootacamund on 24th September 1978, who said: "I would like to refer to the alarming situation in some states, especially in the North Eastern Region, wherefrom disturbing reports are coming regarding large scale inclusion of foreign nationals in the electoral rolls."

Referring to Assam, the then Chief Election Commissioner further said: "The influx has become a very regular feature. I think that it may not be wrong assessment to make that on the basis of increase of 34.98 percent between the two Censuses (1961-1971), the increase that is likely to be recorded in the 1991 Census would be more than 100 per cent over the 1961 Census. ..."Another disturbing factor in this regard, is the demand made by the political parties for the inclusion in the electoral rolls of the name of such migrants who are not Indian citizens." **(73rd Report of the Committee of Petitions, Rajya Sabha dated March 22, 1982, Page 18-19)**

During negotiation with the agitating AASU leaders, the Government wanted 1971 as cut-off year for treating the immigrants as foreigners, which meant that all the infiltrators, who settled in Assam between 1951 and 1971 were to be accorded Indian citizenship. However, the negotiation broke down as AASU insisted on January 1951 as cut-off year. One fails to understand that why the Government did not take a tough stand on the cut-off year for the citizenship on the basis of the National Register of 1951?

Though IMDT Act hardly brought any desired result, the AASU leaders never raised this point assertively and after repeated negotiations signed Assam Accord in the early hour of August 15, 1985. Violating all the constitutional provisions, the Accord accepted the infiltrators between 1951 and 1971 as genuine citizens of the country. The Accord maintained 1971 as cut-off year for detection, deletion from voters' list and deportation.

Assamese people, who were tired of long agitation from 1979 to 1985 celebrated the Accord. AASU leaders while taking it as their first political victory formed a political organisation namely Asom Gana Parishad (AGP). Meanwhile, ULFA an off shoot of AASU/AGP raised armed rebellion against Government of India for cessation of Assam from India.

But the government policies on Assam boomeranged on them and they are taking the similar route without learning a lesson from the past mistakes. Pertinent question that strikes why action has not been taken for inflaming riots against second party. It is a serious question as no arrest has been ordered since four Bodos youth were killed. If equal justice could be done with both the parties then rate of anger will certainly decrease. Demand for arrest of Badaruddin Ajmal has become serious concern when BPF leader was arrested. Hangrama Mohilari has demanded for his arrest but it has been speculated that after arrest of BPF leader, it would be difficult to resolve minorities of Bodoland and restore peace in violent areas. (National Dunia, August 26, 2012)

Illegal arms and terror activities

With violence continuing in the riot-hit state, the Army on August 28 launched one of its biggest search operations ever in six districts of lower Assam to seize illegal arms and explosives that have repeatedly been used to spread terror. Muslim United Liberation Tigers of Assam (MULTA) is an Islamist extremist organization founded around 1996 in the eastern Indian state of Assam. The South Asia Terrorism Portal (satp.org) describes it as part of the All Muslim United Liberation Forum of Assam (AMULFA), and that Muslim United Liberation Front of Assam (MULFA) is a sister organization under the AMULFA umbrella. It is alleged that MULTA is supported by the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) agency.

Hangrama expressed possibility of ferrying arms and ammunitions to the state through Dhubri by the Brahmaputra river by Bangladeshis. The pro-talk ULFA leader Mrinal Hazarika also feared that one of the three boats full of arms and ammunitions reached by Brahmaputra through Dhubri districts and other two will be reaching soon through Bangladesh (When violence was on in the region). He also suspected the involvement of MULTA and Pakistani ISI intriguing the clashes in the BTAD.

Now, take these incidents in BTC areas recently: Four Bodo youths were killed in front of a police inspector and no harsh measures could be taken against the attackers. What more can be said? There is a permanent solution throw out illegal immigrants. They should be pushed out and action should be taken against them. Yes, it does, but not only in BTC. It is a threat to the country's entire north-eastern region. It has to be taken seriously by all parties concerned. Hangrama said, "I have been demanding a complete sealing of the international border with Bangladesh and action against Badruddin Ajmal (AIUDF leader and Dhubri MP). He is behind all this, as he is facilitating the entry of illegal Bangladeshi infiltrators into India. But, nothing could be done by the helpless

BTC officials, as they do not have essential powers to deal with these cases and prevent them. There are no others radical groups playing mischief here, apart from HUJI, Muslim United Liberation Tigers of Assam and United Muslim National Army. They are bent upon creating problems not just here but throughout the country.” (TOI, August 25, 2012)

The president of All Boro Students Union Shri Pramod Boro had called for sealing of border with Bangladesh. All India Assam Students Union Pramod Bodo demanded that the Centre must implement the Assam accord in toto and state government should cancel counterfeit ration cards and voter IDs. (Sahara Time, August 25, 2012)

Fencing hits Bengal land hurdle

State	Border Length*	Sanctioned for Fencing*	Fencing Completed*	Remains to be fenced*
Assam	263	230.03	221.56	8.47
Mizoram	318	352.33	206	146.33
Meghalaya	443	470.23	380.06	90.17
Tripura	856	856	730.50	125.50
West Bengal	2,216.70	1,528	1,222	306
Total	4,096.70	3,436.59	2,760.12	676.47

(The Statesman, 20 Aug 2012)

Indo-Bangladesh Border

President’s remark evokes sharp reaction

President Pranab Mukherjee’s remark on the need for “revisiting the Assam Accord to adapt it to present day conditions” on the eve of the Independence day had evoked sharp reactions in Assam and the All Assam Students Union (AASU), Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), and the Bharatiya Janata Party have demanded that instead of talking of amending the Accord, the President should have laid stress on implementing the Accord not only to safeguard the identity of the indigenous people of Assam, but also to protect the sovereignty of the country. (The Assam Tribune, 18 Aug 2012)

So, the clashes in Assam cannot be dismissed as a local law and order problem. The question is not how much money the Centre gives to the Assam government or what the latter does in regard to rehabilitation, rebuilding the burnt houses etc. The question is what the Centre and the state together are going to do to stop the illegal immigration on the one hand and how the illegals would be identified, at least those who have come in the recent years. The Congress may think that it has

a handy vote bank in letting the illegals stay and be soon considered as Indian citizens, but that would be a dangerous play with India's security and its true secularist polity.

Now the question is - What the government is doing to stop this? And the answer is nothing. The government is doing nothing, not because there is a lack of avenues, fund or manpower but because they don't want to. Free entry to outsiders in Assam hence is more out of design than compulsion. The Congress party which seems head-over-heels in patronizing these immigrants to the hilt doesn't stop at that. Rather coming on them with heavy hands these guys embrace them with motherly affection. They are issued with ration card, voter ID and even BPL card in due course of time. In a matter of couple of years, the Congress in connivance with few sycophants turned NGOs work overtime in transforming these refugees as our own citizens. And this systematic approach at sabotaging our national integrity is going on for decades together. There are even instances of refugees standing for election on the basis of the official documents supplied to them. These migrants who have swelled exponentially in last decade or so, even now are in majority in many tribal parts of Assam. And, these are the same elements who time and again show their original color by pouncing on the innocent native citizens in the name of their religion. Even though it is not that big a worry, worrisome is the behavior of our government every time such untoward incident happen, which at best in a civilized way can be termed as 'Ostrich like attitude'.

Now one wonders; why all this? How come a responsible government can allow this to happen? The long answer to the question is Vote bank and the short answer is Vote bank as well. There seems a close association of dirty vote bank politics in the region for things to go out of hands. The migrants are in full knowledge of the central government and the powers that be. Rather than throwing them out for illegal entry, they are nurtured and gracefully welcomed with goodies so that they turn into potential vote banks in the future; or even present. Lakhs of voter cards are issued to random elements without realizing the consequences in the long run. And the consequences of such overzealous act are there for all to see. Even the migrants are at times encouraged to take the law in their own hands. A classic example of indifference on the part of our government is when the issue of Chakma refugees hit the headlines. A bunch of migrated scumbags created mayhem among the locals only to instigate an ethnic conflict. The then Assam as well as the central government allowed it to carry on for ages till at least a good six dozen died. And what was the response to such criminal act? The anti-national elements were allowed to settle down with all state honor while our own men were told to lick their own wounds. All because of the vote bank that a golden opportunity to set things on track was squandered. Had we been harsh in dealing with the Chakma refugees back then, it is dead sure the fifty that died during 2008 or the 38 that are dead now wouldn't have lost their lives.

Then, the million-dollar question is: what could be the solution to this? As it is, when asked for a permanent solution for this problem, one senior Bangladesh army officer on condition of anonymity answered – "First ask your own government. Do they really want this infiltration to end?"

And, with the above-said 'golden lines' of Bangladeshi army officer, the question is not confined to the Northeast. Both Bihar and West Bengal have seen the demographic damage that is being caused due to the rise in Muslim population — both in absolute numbers and as a percentage of the total population of district after district.

The words of Arun Shourie appear best to summarize the issue: "This is bending over backwards." Or, the famous Urdu lines: "*Hum aah bhee bharte hain to ho jaate hain badnaam, wo qatl bhee karte hain to charcha nahin hota.*"



॥ प्रदीपयेम् जगत् सर्वम् ॥

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