

Chapter V

IMPORTANT ISSUES AND ST MLAs (General)

FOREIGNERS' ISSUE

Foreigners' problem is the main burning problem of Assam affecting all sections of population. Due to the influx of illegal Bangladeshis, the identity of the indigenous Assamese people and the citizens of India residing in Assam is in danger. There are 33 tribal belts and blocks in Assam. The illegal foreigners have occupied the land in the tribal belts and blocks and forest land of Assam. From C S Mullan, Superintendent of Census ⁽¹⁾ to Lt. General S K Sinha, the present Governor of Assam have indicated explicitly the danger caused by the largescale infiltration into Assam. Due to the influx, demographic pattern of Assam has dramatically changed. ⁽²⁾

In 1931 Census Report of Assam, C S Mullan, Superintendent of Census, clearly indicated the danger of severe illegal migration. ⁽³⁾ The census figures of 1991 show a notable change in the demographic pattern in Assam with a massive increase of the Muslim population and according to the historians, the demographers and even the State Governor, largescale infiltration of people from the neighbouring country, specially from Bangladesh is the main reason behind the change.

The religion table of the 1991 census was made public only recently and as per the figures available, the Muslim population in the State increased by 77.42%

during the period 1971–1991, while, during the same period, the Hindu population of the State increased by 41.89%. The percentage of Hindu population during the period decreased from 72.51% to 67.13%, while the Muslim population increased from 24.36% to 28.43%. As per the 1991 census, four districts of the State – Dhubri, Barpeta, Goalpara and Hailakandi have turned into Muslim majority districts and some other districts including Nagaon, Morigaon and Karimganj will become Muslim majority districts soon. In the 1971 census, only two districts of the State were Muslim majority districts.

Sri N C Dutta, former Director of Census Operations, Assam, who was the Director during 1991 census, said that infiltration of foreigners is the main reason for the demographic change that took place in the State. ⁽⁴⁾ Sri Dutta pointed out that the national growth rate of population during the period 1901–1991 was 255%, while during the same period, the growth rate in Assam was as high as 581.35%. He said that the Muslim population recorded a much higher growth rate because of large scale infiltration of foreigners from Bangladesh. According to his assumption, at least 10 lakh Bangladeshi infiltrators might have entered Assam during the period 1971 to 1991. He pointed out that the Muslim population in some districts of the State like Dhemaji recorded abnormal increase in the last 20 years or so because the infiltrators have started to sneak into the areas where the resistance from the local people is less. Similarly because of the resistance from the local people, the infiltrators could not take roots in some districts like Kokrajhar and in fact, in Kokrajhar district, the percentage of Muslim population has decreased.

The former Deputy Director of Census Operations, Jogesh Chandra Bhuyan has also attributed the increase in Muslim population to infiltration of foreigners. According to Bhuyan, at least 11.50 lakh people migrated into Assam during the period 1971 to 1991. ⁽⁵⁾

The population of the other religious communities also increased sharply between 1971–1991. The population of the Buddhists increased by 183% while the Christian population increased by 95%. However, Sri Dutta said that as the total number of Buddhists is very less, a small increase increases the percentage. He also said that largescale conversion is one of the main reasons for the increase of the Christian population, particularly in the tribal dominated areas of the State.

It may be mentioned here that Governor of Assam, Lt. Gen. (Retd) S K Sinha attributed the increase of Muslim population to a large scale infiltration from Bangladesh. He had submitted a detailed report on the infiltration of people from Bangladesh to the President of India and suggested measures to check infiltration for the interest of the nation as a whole (see Appendix 10). He said that the problem should not be viewed as a problem affecting the region only and it should be viewed as a national problem. ⁽⁶⁾

Noted historian and the former President of Indian History Congress, Dr. H K Barpujari has also expressed fear that unless infiltration from Bangladesh is stopped, a large part of Assam may become a part of Bangladesh within the first decade of the next century.

Dr. Barpujari dwelt at length on the problem of infiltration in his book North East India Problems, Policies and Prospects and said that the influx has created crisis of identity of the indigenous people of Assam. He said that if the trend is allowed to continue, the economic, political and cultural life of the indigenous people would be endangered and their very existence would be at stake. ⁽⁷⁾

National Register of Citizens (NRC)

NRC was prepared as per 1951 census report. This Register can be treated as the basic document to safeguard the interest of the people of Assam. Presently NRC is not updated. The Government is in possession of records of all Indian Citizens of 1951. The NRC is the definitive document nearest to the Constitutional dateline of July 19, 1948. This is substantiated by the then Union Home Minister Sri G. L. Nanda's letter ⁽⁸⁾ in which it was said –

“What is actually being done in Assam is not the preparation of any new register but copying out from the NRC of 1951 Census the names and other details to verify whatever an individual suspected to be a Pakistani infiltrant was in fact a resident of India at the time of 1951 Census”.

That the detection of foreigners was done on the basis of the 1951 NRC is evident from the Home Minister's above communication. A letter from the Joint Director of Intelligence Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, on 30/5/64 to the Additional Inspector General of Police, Assam, fully confirms unquestionable utility of the 1951 NRC. The first paragraph of the letter reads :

“As you are aware the NRC is being used as a basic document for verification of Pak infiltrators in Assam

Prime Minister of India also admitted that detection of foreigners started from 1951–52 as dateline. The Prime Minister announced in the Rajya Sabha on 11/06/80 that :

“..... Anybody else who should have been deported earlier or who was deported according to 1951 or 1952 whatever it was, if he was on the list of being deported and either not been deported or had gone and returned, then, he should also be sent back”.

Government have no other record of Indian Citizens prepared before 1951 NRC and 1952 Electoral Rolls. That is why in reply to a question in Parliament on June 27, 1962 the then Prime Minister Nehru said :

“Infiltration should be stopped and effectively dealt with ... probably it would be difficult now to deal with Illegal immigrants who came before 1952. We might therefore fix 1952 as the date of our enquiry”.

The NRC, therefore, is a good record of each person, resident in India at the time of 1951 Census and it can be very conveniently considered as a record of all Indian Citizens. So, anyone whose name does not figure in the NRC can be subjected to enquiry within the meaning of Section 2 (a) of the Foreigners Act, 1946. ⁽⁹⁾

The Problem which is agitating the minds of people of the entire Assam and North East Region is the problem of influx of illegal foreigners from the neighbouring countries particularly Bangladesh. The influx of foreign nationals into Assam is not a recent phenomenon. The problem exists from the days of independence. The problem has become so alarming that the very existence of the indigenous populations is threatened. People of Assam expressed their determination to preserve their identity, their history, their culture and their heritage.

The people of Assam have reasons, based on real experience to be apprehensive of being swamped by foreign nationals in the near future. Commenting on this large increase of 34.95% per decade compared with the national figure of 24.80% (one of the highest in the world), the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) said to duty during the Conference of the Electoral Officers held on 24-26 September 1978.

“The influx has become a regular feature. I think that it may not be a wrong assessment to make on the basis of this increase of 34.95% between the two census, the increase that is likely to be recorded in 1991 census would be more than 100% over the 1961 census. In other words, a state would be reached when the state may have to reckon with the Foreign Nationals who may in all probability constitute a sizeable percentage, if not the majority population in the state.”

A silent invasion by foreign nationals from the neighbouring countries particularly Bangladesh is taking place. The problem has been deliberately neglected by the leaders leaving the destiny of Assam at the mercy of illegal foreign nationals. The illegal foreign nationals pose challenge to the integrity of India.

The first thing foreign nationals try is to enrol their names in the voter's lists with the connivance of antisocial elements, politicians, and officials on this side of border. The motive is crystal-clear. The infiltrators vote for the politicians who protect them in all respects. In fact politicians encourage infiltration to ensure their political survival.

The harmful effects of continues immigration are evident in every sphere of life. Tensions in the social, political, economic and cultural fields have already surfaced and both Central and State Governments must act before it is too late. Attempts to develop the region industrially cannot succeed unless the record population growth due to influx is fully halted. The problem has badly hit the tribal populations. All the 49 blocks and belts reserved for the tribal people are on the verge of extinction. Pressure on economy has reduced sizes of the reserved tribal blocks. Forest resources are fast disappearing due to indiscriminate felling of trees and occupation of the area by the foreign nationals.

A population may gain in size due to influx of migrants and it may diminish in size by an exodus of some of its members to join another group of population. If this immigration or out-migration is selective of people with particular demographic, social or economic characteristics, it will affect not only the size but also the composition of the population. Thus, the movement of people from one resident to another is a component of population growth and composition.

Movement of population may be classified broadly into two categories: Internal migration and international migration. Internal migration may be :

- (1) Within the district.
- (2) From one district to another district within the state and.
- (3) From one state to another state within the country.

If people from one country migrate to another country such movement is called International migration.

Migration takes place due to various factors

Migration may occur as a search for an opportunity to improve one's life. Migration may also occur as a flight from undesired social or economic situation. Internal migration is not very important for the present discussion. At present Assam's population is hardly affected due to movement of people from other states.

International Migration

As already discussed, migration is an important characteristic to assess the changes in the structure of the population. Internal migration, i.e. the movement of people from one part of the country to another varies from time to time. International migration, on the other hand, should normally be nominal. But after

the partition of India in 1947, the international migration outnumbered the internal migration, particularly in the bordering state.

Immigration from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) to the state of Tripura after independence was so heavy that the migrants outnumbered the indigeneous population of the state. The extent of immigration from Bangladesh to Assam is far more serious than the migration from other parts of the country .

In the developed countries, the collection of data on international migration is not so difficult. Collection of statistics on the movement of people across the international borders through check-gates, passports, population registers and census data are the reliable sources. But in our country, particularly to the border states, most of the immigrants enter illegally and there is no effective procedure to detect such people. Under this circumstances, it is not possible to estimate the actual number accurately. We have, therefore, no other alternative but to estimate such data indirectly. For example, the intercensal growth of people of particular communities, religious or linguistic group help us to make a rough estimate of immigrants from the neighbouring country in particular .

Immigration to Assam is quite different in the last hundred years compared to other states of our country. This issue can be broadly divided into two periods, pre and post-independence eras.

It is necessary to compare the growth of Assam's population with the country as a whole from the beginning of the century.

Population of India and Assam, 1901-91 ⁽¹⁰⁾

Year	Population		Percentage Decade Variation	
	India	Assam	India	Assam
1901	238,396,327	3,289,680	-	-
1911	252,093,390	3,848,617	+ 5.75	+16.99
1921	251,321,213	4,636,980	(-) 0.31	+20.48
1931	2,789,772,388	5,560,371	+ 11.00	+19.91
1941	318,660,580	6,694,790	+ 14.22	+20.40
1951	361,088,090	8,028,856	+ 13.31	+19.93
1961	439,234,771	10,837,329	+ 21.51	+34.98
1971	548,159,652	15,625,152	+ 24.80	+ 34.95
1991	846,302,688	22,414,322	+ 54.39	+ 53.26

Note: 1981 census could not be conducted in Assam due to disturbed situation prevailed at that time.

Assam's population grew six-fold in the ninety years from 1901 to 1991 compared to two and a half fold growth in India during this period. To be exact, Assam's growth rate was as high as 581.35% where as country's growth rate was only 255%. The growth rates for pre and post-partition periods, i.e. 1901-47 and 1951-91 were 103.51% and 179.17% respectively for Assam while the corresponding rates for the country were only 33.67% and 134.38%. It is clearly evident that Assam's growth rates was consistently higher than that of the country. The natural growth rates obtained from different sources, however, indicate that there is very little difference between Assam and the all-India figures.

From the beginning of the 20th century until 1931, the migration of outside labour to work in the tea-gardens was a regular feature. Most such migrants never

went back to their parent states after their contract of work was over. Migrants from Nepal also contributed to the high growth rate of Assam. But the most significant contributor to the unnatural growth of population was the large-scale migration of Muslim cultivators, mostly from the erstwhile Mymensingh district of undivided Bengal.

In the 1931 Census report of Assam C. S. Mullan, Superintendent of Census, Assam mentioned that the amount of emigration from Assam was very small. The net figure of immigration was always in favour of Assam, which means that in-migration to Assam was much more than the out-migration.

The rate of immigration to Assam after independence may be divided broadly into two parts, pre-1971 and post-1971. Large-scale immigration did take place between 1951 and 1971, which included Hindu refugees as well as Muslim migrants. During 1951-61, the population growth rate of Assam was higher among the major states. During that period the growth rate among the Muslims was high as 38.37% compared to 33.87% for the Hindus. As per estimates made by the Register General, India, natural growth rate of Assam was about 22.4% for that decade. Even if we presume that the natural growth rate of Muslims is slightly higher than those of other communities and that some of those who left the state after partition, returned after the 1951 Census, the growth rate of 38.37% clearly indicates that a sizable number of Muslims entered Assam along with those who had fled immediately after partition. The growth rate of Hindu population also confirmed that the flow of refugees coupled with the immigration of Nepalis and persons from other parts of India remained unabated during that period.

During 1961-71 a large number of Hindus continued to cross over to Assam from East Pakistan, what is now called Bangladesh. This is the only plausible

explanation from the higher growth rate 37.18% for Hindus in Assam during that period. Although a large number of illegal migrants, mostly Muslims, were pushed back across the border between 1964 and 1969, after the formation of Foreigners' Tribunal in 1964 there were instances in which many of them re-entered Assam surreptitiously. The growth rate of 30.99 per cent for Muslims clearly indicates that infiltration of people of the community continued during 1961-71, albeit at a slightly reduced rate. The process of detection and deportation suffered some setback and had to be stopped later due to political interference.

The 25th of March 1971 is considered to be most important date for determining the legality of the entry of Bangladeshi Nationals into India. The reference that of 1st April for the 1971 census is therefore, quite ideal as a landmark for the study of the growth of population in the border States of North-Eastern India.

The question of illegal migration of people from Bangladesh after 25th March is a major political issue, not only in Assam but in the entire region. Due to various reasons, it is not possible to correctly estimate the size of such illegal migrants. The data on the natural growth rates of different religious groups in this regard was discussed by Dr. Ashish Bose in his article "1991 Census Data-Muslims rate of growth" published on September 9th, 1995 in the India Express. In absence of state-wise reliable natural growth rates for different religions communities, the extent of migration can only be estimated indirectly. Different assumptions made for the purpose may not be free from controversy. In spite of these limitations it is necessary to make an attempt to estimate the extent of migration and the religious composition of the migrants.

Growth of Different Religious Communities, 1971-91 Assam. ⁽¹¹⁾

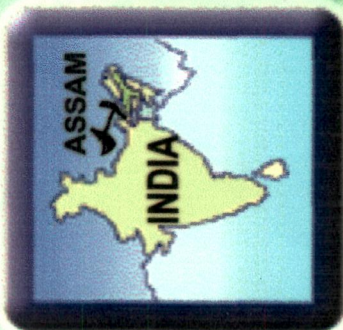
Religious Communities	Population in Assam		Percentage of Total population		Growth Rate during (1971-91)
	1971	1991	1971	1991	
Hindus	10,604,618	15,047,293	72.51	67.13	41.89
Muslims	3,592,124	6,373,204	24.56	28.43	77.42
Christians	381,010	744,367	2.61	3.32	95.37
Buddhists	22,565	64,008	0.15	0.29	183.66
Jains	12,914	20,645	0.01	0.01	59.87
Sikhs	11,920	16,492	0.08	0.07	38.36
Other religious of persuasions	1	138,230	Negligible	0.62	--
Religion not stated	--	10,083	--	0.05	--
Total	14,625,152	22,414,322	100.00	100.00	53.26

During 1971-91 the growth rate of Hindu population seems to be slightly less than the natural growth rate. This shows that immigration of Hindus has slowed down considerably. In fact conversion of some Hindu, mostly tribals, and out-migration of some to other states during the period of agitation affected the growth of Hindu population.

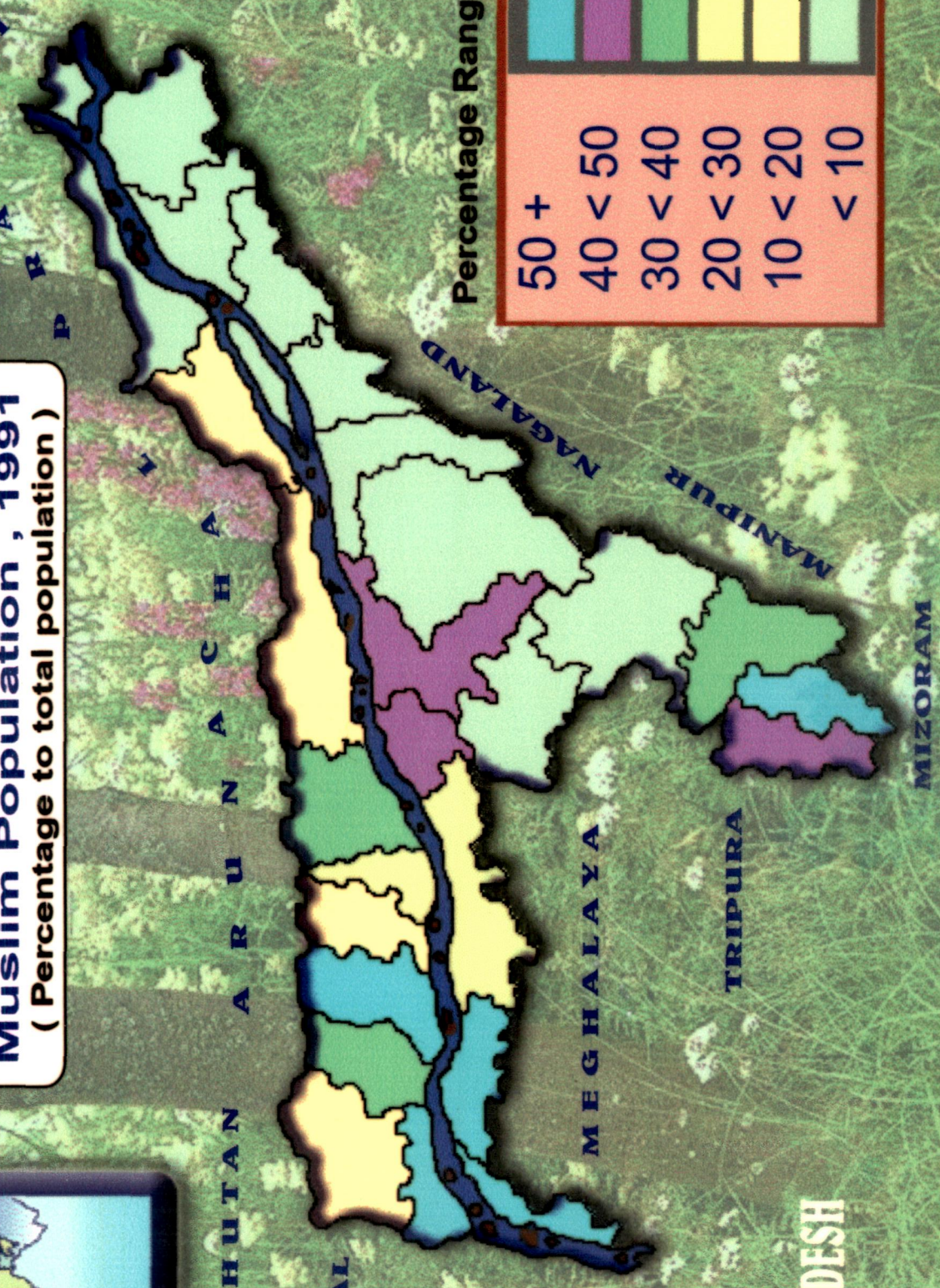
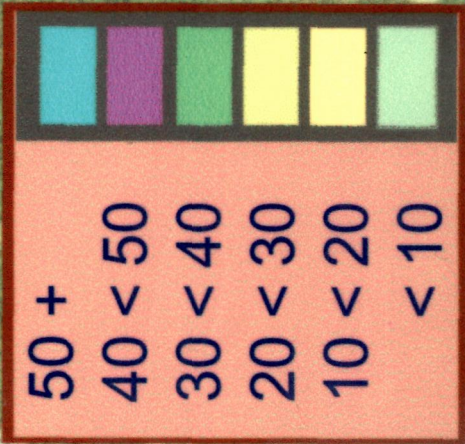
Some of us think that only a very negligible Muslim population has migrated into Assam during this period from Bangladesh. It is therefore appropriate to study the growth rate of population in the district of Bangladesh during 1981-91. Since earlier census was conducted in 1974, instead of 1971 due to liberation struggle in that country, we restrict our discussion to the growth of population in general and major religious group in particular for this period only.

ASSAM

Muslim Population , 1971
(Percentage to total population)

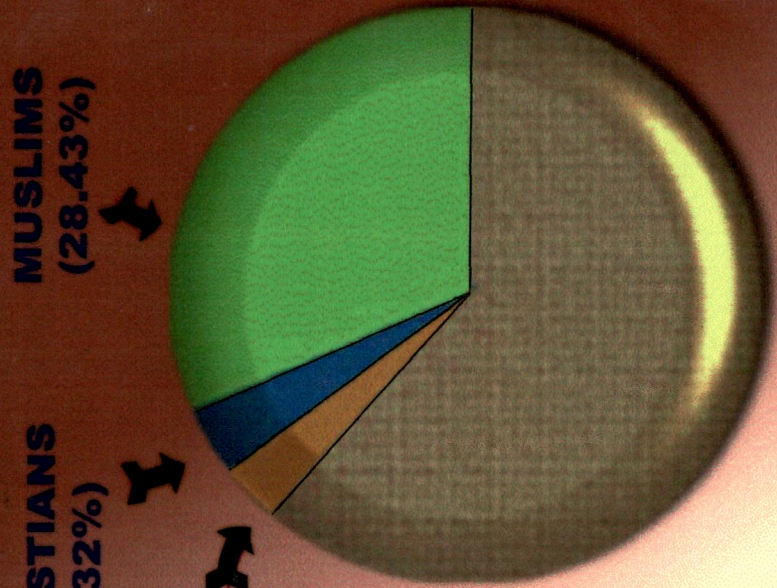


ASSAM
Muslim Population , 1991
(Percentage to total population)

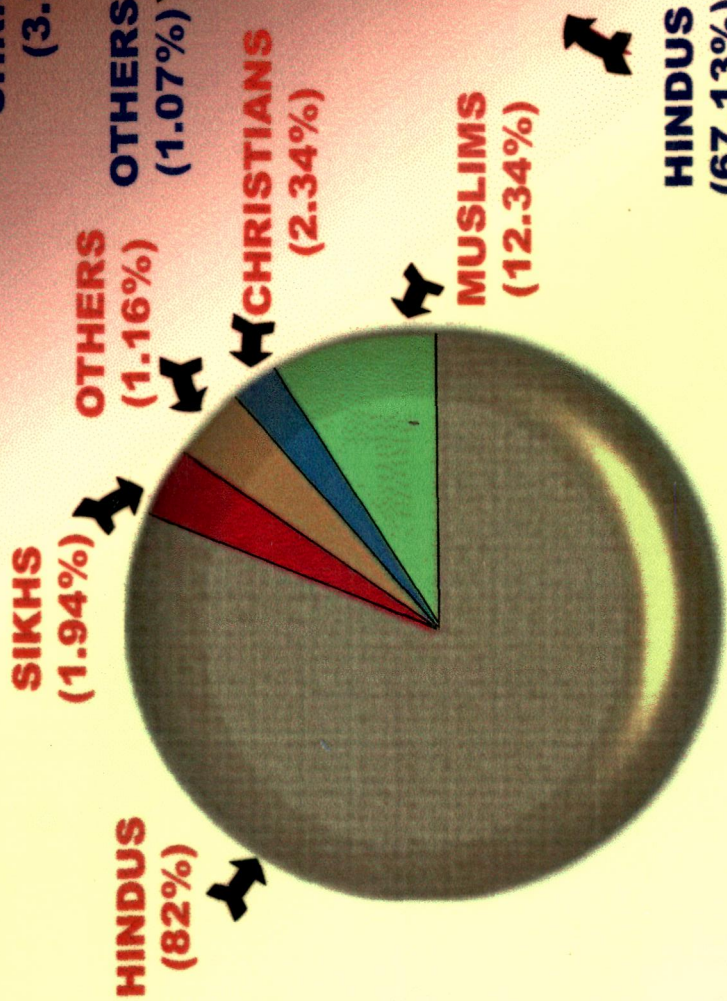


BHUTAN
 WEST BENGAL
 BANGLADESH
 ASSAM
 ARUNACHAL PRADESH
 MIZORAM
 MEGHALAYA
 TRIPURA
 MANIPUR
 NAGALAND

POPULATION DISTRIBUTED BY RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES, 1991



ASSAM



INDIA

Statement III below shows the districtwise growth rate in Bangladesh during 1981 and 1991.

STATEMENT III

Districtwise population of Bangladesh ⁽¹²⁾

1981 - 91

(Figures in 1000)

Greater District	Population		Growth Rate
	1981	1991	1981-91
BANGLADESH	87.120	1,04,766	20.25
Dinajpur	3,200	3,858	20.56
Rangpur	6,510	7,781	19.52
Bogura	2,728	3,302	21.04
Rajshahi	5,270	6,384	21.14
Pabna	3,424	4,106	19.92
Kushtia	2,292	2,754	20.16
Jessore	4,020	4,813	19.73
Khulna	4,329	5,014	15.28
Barisal	4,667	5,372	15.11
Patuakhali	1,843	2,014	9.28
Mymen singh	6,568	7,767	18.26
Tangail	2,444	2,944	20.46
Jamalpur	2,452	2,981	14.60
Dhaka	10,014	13,151	31.33
Faridpur	4,764	5,428	13.94
Sylhet	5,656	6,680	18.10
Coomilla	6,881	8,183	18.92
Noakhali	3,816	4,621	21.10
Chittagong	5,491	6,645	21.02
Chittagong Hill Tracts	580	738	27.24
Bandarban	171	230	34.50

If we assume that there was no out-migration from Bangladesh, the growth rate of population during 1981-91 would represent the natural growth rate of the country. During this period the growth rate of Muslim population was 21.64%,

while that of Hindus was only 15.29%. This figures clearly show that not only Hindus but also Muslims out-migrated from that country in large number. Otherwise, the growth rate of Muslims would not have been as high as 77.41% in Assam during 1971-91 which means a decadal growth rate of about 33%. The natural growth rate of Muslims of Bangladesh and those who migrated to Assam should not very wide, as such immigration of Muslims from Bangladesh in large number is proved beyond any resonable doubt. The low rate of population growth during 1981-91 in the border districts of Bangladesh also prove the out-migration from that country.

Indo-Bangla border is open. BSF is not effective to prevent infiltration. Till 1965, the task of guarding the international border in Assam was with Assam Border Security Force Battalion. There after it was taken over by Government of India and the Border Security Force has been guarding the international border. It is pertinent to note that between 1963 and 1995 more than 2 Lakh Pakisthani illigal migrants were detected and deported under foreigners act.

The Government of India expressed before the Supreme Court that while it is true that the responsibility to check infiltration at the border lies with the border management authorities, i.e. the Border Security Force in respect of the border with Bangladesh. All power of the Central Government under section 3(2)(c), (cc), (d), (e) and (f) of the Foreigners' Act, 1946 and under the Foreigners' Order, 1948 have been delegated to the State Government with their prior consent. The powers under section 3(2)(c) of the Foreigners' Act 1946 and under the Foreigners' Order, 1948 relate to detection and deportation of foreigners, including Bangladeshi national staying in India unauthorisedly. In addition, administrative instructions in the form of D.O letters at various levels addressed to the Chief Secretaries/Home Secretaries of the State Government have been issued from time to time for making special efforts to detect the

Bangladeshi nationals staying in India illegally for their deportation to Bangladesh. Letters have also been issued to all State Government on 16-9-1997 and again to the Home Secretaries of all State Governments on 9-9-1998, incorporating consolidated instructions outlining the detailed procedure to be followed for the deportation of Bangladeshi nationals staying illegally by the concerned State Government.

Raising of additional battalions of the Border Security Force involves heavy expenditure to the tune of Rs.40 Crores approximately for each battalion. In spite of financial constraints, the Government of India has taken up expansion of the Border Security Force in a phased manner. A working Group on border management was constituted by the Ministry of Home Affairs in 1992 to make recommendations relating to the Border Security Force for border management. This Group comprised representatives from Joint Intelligence Committee, Ministry of Home Affairs, Intelligence Bureau & Border Security Force. After detailed terrain and sensitivity analysis, the Group recommended, inter alia, that, for guarding the Pakistan and Bangladesh border, 179 Battalions would be the optimum deployment level, where after any further manpower accretions would be counter-productive and it is therefore, recommended that raising of 32 additional battalions of the Border Security Force over and above the existing level of 147 battalions in a phased manner, depending on training capabilities and resource position. The above recommendations included 16 additional battalions for the Indo-Bangladesh border.

While the need for 179 Battalions of Border Security Force is endorsed by Government, the raising of Battalions has been constrained by the limitation of resources. At present, there are 157 battalions of Border Security Force in position. The strength of the Force has increased over the years as per following details :

Strength of Border Security Force (1965-99)

Year	1965	1972	1983	1989	1991	1994	1999
Strength (No. of Bns)	25 1/2	75	84	127	147	156	157

A proposal for raising 6 more battalions of the Border Security Force is presently under consideration by the Government of India.

Due to pressing commitments for maintenance of internal security and non-availability of adequate strength of para military forces for this purpose, a part of the Border Security Force deployed on the Indo-Bangladesh border is withdrawn at times for redeployment elsewhere.

Compulsory registration of nationals and foreign nationals illegally staying in the country along with action to prevent infiltration at the border and deportation from hinterland is the only way to check illegal immigration. In this backdrop a proposal is under consideration to issue Multi-purpose National Identity cards to all citizens of the age of 14 years and above. The main idea behind the proposal, inter alia, is to stop illegal immigration into the country as also for easy identification and tracing of illegal migrants. The scheme of Multipurpose National Identity cards is at formulation stage. Many border states have strongly supported the scheme. The scheme will be finalised in consultation with the state Governments/Union Territory Administrations.

The Government of India is also considering additional proposals for the construction of border roads and fence along the Indo-Bangladesh border. Already 507 Kms fence along the West Bengal segment of the Indo-Bangladesh border stands sanctioned out of which 470 kms of fence has been completed by 31-3-1999.

To detect a illegal foreigner, Foreigner's Act of 1946 ⁽¹³⁾ is applicable in the country. But it is not applicable in Assam. In Assam to detect post 1971 illegal foreigners the Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunals) Act i.e IMDT Act ⁽¹⁴⁾ is applicable. IMDT Act is not even applicable in West Bengal or in Meghalaya. This Act is the main hurdle to detect foreigners in Assam. The Prime Minister, Home Minister, Governor of Assam also stated publicly that IMDT is a discriminatory act and this act should be repealed. Again the repeal of the provision of the Citizenship Act ⁽¹⁵⁾ which has violated the spirit of Assam Accord by offering voting rights to the foreigners and their descendants till 1986 (as per Assam Accord of 1985 the date of deportation is 25th March 1971) is very much essential.

Unemployment in Assam

Assam has crossed over three decades of planning but the problem of unemployment could not be solved. Whatever employment would be generated have been neutralised by the release of manpower in the employment market due to growth of population, rapid expansion of educational facilities, handicapped by lack of growth of industries, lack of entrepreneurship and shyness of capital. Whenever and whatever opportunity comes, outsiders avail the opportunity depriving the son of the soil, though the young Assamese generation is equally intelligent and capable and quite at par with their outsider counterparts.

As per the 1971 Census, Assam has a population of 146 lakhs representing 34.95 % growth rate against all India average at 24.80 % during the period 1961-1971. The projected population of Assam as on 1st March, 1988 was 244.31 lakhs which indicates increase of 98.43 lakhs people over that on 1971. This increase in the population is the root cause to aggravate the employment problem in Assam. As per the projection, the population in the age-group 15-59 years was 104.05 lakhs in 1981 which will increase to 143.13 lakhs on 1st March, 1991.

This shows an addition of 39.07 lakhs of population in the age-group 15-59 years by 1st March, 1991. At this rate 20 lakhs will be added to the labour force which will make the unemployment problem in Assam more acute.

The increase in the population is mainly due to incoming of Bangladeshis. Immigration from Bangladesh is at its peak. More and more people from Bangladesh are encroaching land in the forests of Assam. Assam being a fertile land attracts the hard working Bangladeshis. The local Assamese farmer do not know how to get maximum profit by utilising minimum finance. The Assamese farmers are appear to be reluctant to reap the benefit that they will get by utilising the scientific method of cultivation for increasing food production. Storage and credit facilities are lacking in the rural sector. Local farmers are handicapped by these constraints. The constraints of finance, storage, etc. forced the local farmers to depend on only single crop pattern. The Bangladeshis exploited the situation and occupied all vacant forest land and the char and grazing areas. Gradually the cultivable land have become scarce to Assamese farmers.

The problem of illegal immigration is the deep rooted malaise in Assam. The people of Assam is no longer enthused about the cause of illegal immigration from erstwhile East Pakistan which had inflamed them to revolt for six years. Even after formation of the Asom Gana Parishad Government in Assam nothing have been done to resolve the actual problem. Nothing have been done to move in the direction of sending away the illegal immigrants from Assam and the unemployment problem in Assam is growing more and more as the effect of this continuing and untreated cancer. C.S. Mullan, the then Census Superintendent in his report -1931 said, it is said but by no means improbable that in another 30 years Sibsagar District will be the only part of Assam in which Assamese will find themselves at home. Thus incoming of unlawful settlers in Assam has been a trial for the Provincial Government since 1918.

This problem assumed serious proportion on account of the large influx of immigrants in 1944-45. In the Census of 1961 the all India percentage increase of population was 21.64 %. For the same decade population increased in Assam by 34.98 %. The Census of 1971 saw an all India increase of population of 14.8 %. and in the case of Assam it was again 34.90 %. Much more disturbing in the case of Karbi Anglong District and North Cachar Hills District. The percentage growth rate mentioned below from the Census reports of 1951 onwards shows how alarming is the situation.

Percentage of growth of Population in the Hills Districts

	1951	1961	1971
Karbi Anglong	30.06	79.21	63.28
North Cachar	6.16	36.95	40.00

The Chief Election Commissioner during the conference of Electoral Officers held in 1978 observed that the influx has become a regular feature and that the increase in population which is likely to be recorded in 1991 Census would be more than 100 % over the 1961 Census. A stage would be reached when Assam will have to reckon with the foreign nationals which will constitute a sizeable percentage. The fact that a large number of immigrants succeeded in illegal migration to Assam and settling down unnoticed, proves that the measures so far taken have not been effective. Land is the core for the existence of the Assamese people. As the Assamese are loosing their right over land their future, the future of their progeny, jobs, employment opportunities have become an illusion to the Assamese people and today Assam has become an account of human error compounded by arrogant and immatured decisions.

This have further been aggravated by fresh influx of Bangladeshis and the high birth rate among them. The population in Assam have increased alarmingly

and it has now on the one hand become difficult for an Assamese farmer to get sufficient land to engage himself and his children fully in agriculture and whatever land they have, they cannot cultivate the same for the whole year fully, due to successive floods in the summer and scarcity of water in the winter. The stage has come when the Assamese farmer can engage himself and his children only 120 days in a year in his land. The rest of the days in a year, they remain idle and this has resulted in the unemployment in the villages, yielding on rush of young villagers to the towns seeking employment. The number of job seekers through employment exchanges of the state went up by 2.8 % between January and September, 1988.

Agriculture in Assam which is the main economic activity is characterised by mono cropping and high risk of flood, low productivity and very poor extension and support system. It is gradually becoming less attractive and the rural youth is running after white-collar jobs. The rural youth feel that farming is not viable and cannot sustain them. They feel helpless because of their lack of skills that can fetch them alternative appointment. Today for the youth in Assam on the one side there is an increase in the cost of living and lack of alternatives on the other. Though a few industrial projects are being set up but it will take a long time before the impact on the rural population will be seen. The large industries like Oil Refinery or Paper Mills are not a solution to rural unemployment.

On 31.12.89 the live registers of employment exchanges which covers only a segment of the unemployed persons had 977126 registered unemployed in the State of Assam of whom 552215 are educated unemployed. For solving the unemployment problem the State Government should set up rural industries to give adequate employment avenues and to stop the mobility of skilled and semiskilled work force from the rural to urban areas.

Assam's Record in comparison with some other states

	Assam	Andhra Pradesh	Gujrat	Orissa	West Bengal	All India
Per Capita State Income at Current Prices (1994-95)	5999	7155	10578	5157	6877	8282
Life Expectancy at Birth (1989-93) years	54.9	60.6	60.1	55.5	61.4	59.4
Infant Mortality Rate (1995) Per 1000	77	66	62	103	59	74
Literacy as on 1991 percentage wise	53	44	61	49	58	52
Rice Productivity kg/ha (1993-94)	1350	2630	3.3	1430	2160	1920
Gross Irrigated Area (%) (1993-94)	15	40	29	26	29	37
Per Capita Milk Production (kg) (1994-95)	33.5	58	87.1	17.5	42.7	68.9
Production of Fish Per Capita (kg) (1991)	5.8	3.98	13.48	5.78	10.78	4.91
Electricity consumption per Capita (kwh) (1993-94)	69	309	520	180	176	270
Percentage of Household with Drinking water	43.2	63.4	75.1	50.9	84.9	68.2
Population per Hospital bed (as on 1991)	1968	1505	749	2168	1186	1324

In Assam, the number of unemployed persons is increasing gradually not only among workers but also among the educated middle class. Unemployment leads to poverty. Unemployment and poverty are not only bad but it degenerates man to less than human being and if this trend is allowed to continue, it will jeopardise the economy and it will lead to explosive situation of grave consequences. ⁽¹⁶⁾

The projected present population in Assam is about 243 lakh. 90 % of this population i.e. 219 lakh lives in villages, only 44 lakh people live in towns. For the villages, agriculture is the only employment source. But only 36 lakh persons are engaged in agriculture out of 219 lakh which indicates that 6 persons depends on the income of only one person in the villages. As such the unemployment problem in the rural sector is more serious, but the Government pays little attention towards this acute problem. It is estimated that the number of employable unemployed in the villages of Assam will be approximately 70 lakh i.e. one third of the rural population. There is another field which can absorb the candidates for white-collar jobs i.e. in the Government and semi-Government offices. The educational system which has stimulated a large production of graduates and masters have swelled the number of educated unemployed in Assam. Competition among too many aspirants struggling for few jobs is leading to frustration and the educated unemployed have developed revolutionary instinct.

Employment Status

Year	No. of Job seekers on the live Register	Vacancies Notified	Placements
1980	348000	13003	6297
1990	1052000	9497	4675
1995	1147000	12659	539
1996	1284000	3511	3002
1997	1496000	5466	1956

Source : Economic Survey of Assam 1997-98

One peculiar characteristic of Assamese Society is the existence of various social groups whose adult members only do certain types of works. As a result of spread of education, more people are joining the ranks of those who go for white-collar jobs only.

Labourers are to be brought from far away places like Bihar to do earth work on road and irrigation projects. Even in the case of the crash programs for employment which sought to provide employment to rural unskilled youths in their own villages, it has been found that in the off seasons also, only a few persons report for work though a large number of people remain unemployed or underemployed in the neighbourhood. Which indicates that people are not availing themselves of these opportunities in full, in spite of unemployment and underemployment being rampant.

Assam is rich in oil, but the crude oil of Assam has been pumped out of the state to feed of a bigger refinery located at Barauni in Bihar. Even for the toy refinery at Noonmati (Guwahati) the Assamese people had to launch a movement. Assam produces tea, but all the major offices of the tea companies and the office of the Tea Board have been functioning from West Bengal. Major industries remain still a far cry in Assam as necessary infrastructures have not been created for growth of industries during the 50 years of independence. Assam remained neglected due to the weak leadership. The State is rich in natural resources, but the job generating industries are conspicuous by their absence in the State. Again there is the problem of migration of the rural educated youth to the towns in search of white collar jobs. While the urban sector is facing challenge of providing white collar jobs to the educated, the rural sector is facing the problem of landless farmers or workers, marginal farmers, rural artisans, fishermen, etc.

In the urban sector the tendency amongst the unemployed youths is to run after jobs from office to office. The white collar jobs being limited, most of them remain unemployed and continue to inflate the number of unemployed. A strong feeling has developed that the young boys and girls leaving schools, colleges and universities regards manual work and vocational employment as something

inferior to clerical works. This attitude is a handicap for fuller employment, economic growth and development in the Assamese society. In Assam the Arts graduates dominate the field of education and most of them are not getting any job though their names are in the live registers of the employment exchanges for years together. The unemployed youth should tune their mind to the alternative facilities other than the paid jobs. The problem of unemployment in Assam has assumed such a magnitude that the planners have always stressed the need for arresting this widespread problem. Whatever little result could be achieved, is neutralised by factors like growth of population, rapid expansion of educational facilities and release of vast manpower in the employment market.

Most of the educated job seekers of the state do not pass successfully in the examinations held by various Staff Selection Commission of the Central Government and other public sector undertakings. State Government may therefore provide necessary pre-recruitment training facilities to the local youths so that they could overcome their shortcomings and can compete with the candidates of other states having advanced training facilities.

According to the Seventh plan document, the backlog of unemployment in India in March 1985 was the order of 9.2 million. However, during the period December 1984-July, 1989, the number of persons registered with the employment exchanges increased from 23.5 million to 31.6 million or by 34 %. The Seventh plan was expected to generate about 40 million standard person years of employment. According to the EMI programme, employment in the organised sector of the economy increased by about one million during the first four years (upto December, 1988) of the plan. Besides the special employment programme like NREP, IRDP, TRYSEM, two new employment programmes called the Jawahar Rozgar Yozana and Nehru Rozgar Yozana have been introduced for the benefit of rural and urban unemployed persons respectively. "

Different Employment Schemes

Head	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98
TRYSEM	10,317	6277	7302
DWCRA	856	823	1,256
JRY (lakh mandays)	179.08	91.54	107.69
IRDP	59,030	38,087	89,585
EAS (lakh mandays)	183.02	162.38	207.76

Source : Economic Survey of Assam 1997-98

The trend of unemployment in Assam has assumed a serious proportion with the everincreasing expansion of educational institutions. In 1947-48 there were 7574 primary schools, 742 middle schools, 191 high schools and 16 colleges. In the year 1988-89 the position increased to 28,807 primary schools, 5,635 middle schools, 3,110 high and higher secondary schools and 181 colleges in the State.

The number of passed out candidates in the High and Higher Secondary examination increased from 2,490 in 1947-48 to 69,008 in 1983-84. ^(iv) The total number of educated job seekers registered with the employment exchanges was 1,44,800 in 1980 while it stood at 4,97,868 at the end of 1988. This huge growth of educated unemployed in Assam is also responsible for the acute unemployment problem in the State.

There is vast disparity between manpower requirement and planning. Before launching the new educational programme in the country we ought to have thought of appointing properly trained career masters in every school whose duty will be to maintain assessment cards of every students by which the guidance officers can assess the ability of a particular student in relation to his interest in particular course of study leading to particular field of occupation. Wrong choice of subject under the diversified curricular study leads not only to

a frustrated person in his later vocational life but also cost the state exchequer to a great extent in making training facilities available in technical institutes and engineering colleges.

Implementation of State Policy on Creation of Employment in Assam

General : During the 3rd Five-Year Plan, an expenditure of Rs.3.50 lakh (40% state share) and Rs.0.12 lakh (40 % state share) in the ad-hoc plan were incurred in setting up of new Employment Exchanges, Vocational Guidance Units, Professional Executive Office in the State Directorate, Special Employment Exchange for Plantation Labour, Employment Information and Assistance Bureau in rural areas and University Employment Information and Guidance Bureau at Gauhati and Dibrugarh University to tackle the unemployment problem of the state. ⁽⁹⁾ The remaining part of the plan also envisages organisation and restructuring of the employment service which will include (1) strengthening of the employment service to help efficient utilisation of national manpower particularly initial skilled requirement for planned economic growth, and (2) Gearing up the employment service machinery to play a positive role in meeting the manpower requirement of various employment oriented economic development programmes in both urban and rural areas.

The 4th Five-Year Plan schemes under this sector envisage continuance of the measures already undertaken in the plan viz. (i) Expansion of Employment Service, (ii) Collection of Employment Market Information, (iii) Vocational Guidance and Employment Counselling and (iv) Occupational Research and Analysis.

Hill Areas : The 4th Five-Year Plan schemes under this sector envisage continuance of the measures already undertaken in the previous plan and the measures are (i) Expansion of Employment Service, (ii) Vocational Guidance and Employment Counsellery.

The 4th Plan also envisaged the setting up of an unit at the State Headquarters to deal with Development Schemes in the hill areas and also appointment of Development Officers at the selected exchanges for public relation and promotion of employment service collection of guidance programme will be further intensified during the plan period.

An amount of Rs.3 lakh have been proposed for implementation of the schemes under employment during the 4th Year Plan. ⁽²⁰⁾

5TH FIVE-YEAR PLAN

General : By the end of the 4th Five-Year plan, there were 4 zonal offices, 27 employment exchanges including one special employment exchange for plantation labour and three university employment information and guidance bureau, 15 Employment Information and Assistance Bureau, (2) Collection of Employment Market Information units including one State unit and 9 Vocational Guidance units in the state. An enforcement cell for enforcement of the Employment Exchanges (Compulsory Notification of Vehicles) Act, 1959, was set up in the State Directorate during the third year of the 4th Five-Year Plan.

Stress on the following points have been given in the 5th Five-Year Plan :

1. Penetration of Employment Service in the Rural Areas and also strengthening of the existing Employment Information and Assistance Bureau.
2. Building for the Employment Exchanges.
3. Strengthening of the Employment Exchanges.
4. Setting up of cells at the Zonal offices for enforcement of Employment Exchanges (Compulsory Notification of Vacancies) Act. 1959.

5. Vehicles for the Employment Exchanges.
6. Setting up of Vocational Guidance units at the Employment Exchange and also strengthening of the existing units.
7. Setting up of special Guidance centres to cater to the special needs of certain categories of employment seekers e.g. Scheduled Castes /Scheduled Tribes, ex-servicemen, physically handicapped, women etc.
8. Publicity of activities of the Employment Services.

The estimated expenditure on the implementation of the schemes during the 5th Five-Year Plan will be Rs.20 lakh.

Hill Areas : By the end of 4th Five-Year Plan there will be two Employment Exchanges, Five Employment Information and Assistance Bureaus, two collection of Employment Market Information units and one vocational guidance unit.

Stress on the following points have been given in formulation the Fifth Five-Year Plan for the Hill Districts of Assam.

1. Penetration of Employment Service in the Rural Areas.
2. Building for the Employment service in the Rural Areas.
3. Strengthening of the Employment Market Implementation Units of the Employment Exchanges.
4. Setting up of cells at the Employment Exchanges, for Implementation of the Employment Exchanges (Compulsory Notification of Vacancies) Act. 1959.
5. Vehicles for the Employment Exchanges.

6. The Employment Market Information unit of the District Employment Exchange, Guwahati strengthened.
7. Two rural enforcement cells were set up at Guwahati and Jorhat.
8. Cell for physically handicapped persons were set up at the State Directorate under the centrally sponsored scheme.

The expenditure during the review was Rs.10.72 lakh. Programme for new scheme during 1980-85 (6th Five-Year Plan).

1. Setting up of Employment Exchanges.
2. Purchase of department vehicles for the State Directorate.
3. Strengthening of the State Directorate by setting up of a department vigilance cell.
4. Setting up of a planning cell at the State Directorate of Employment.
5. Setting up of a enforcement cell at the zonal officers.
6. Strengthening of 4 zonal officers in the state at Guwahati, Jorhat, Tezpur and Silchar.
7. Setting up of Vocational Guidance units at the employment exchange.
8. Setting up of self-employment cell at the state Directorate.
9. Strengthening the 3 University Employment Information and Guidance Bureaus during 1983-87.
10. Setting up of Employment Market Information unit at the Employment Exchange, Doom-Dooma.
11. Setting up of job Development and Industrial services.

An additional allocation of Rs.1 Crore provided during 1980-81 for implementation the schemes on employment for educated youths. After the detailed schemes finalised, amounts were allocated to the concerned department.

(b) Programme for the Annual Plan 1981-82

During the year 1981-82, proposals have been made for providing Rs.5.86 lakh as plan allocation in General Areas under the employment. The amount includes an expenditure of Rs.4.40 lakh for meeting the expenditure of the following continuing schemes:

1. Expansion of Employment Service	Rs. 1,55,000/-
2. Collection of Employment Market Information	Rs. 1,24,000/-
3. Vocational Guidance and Employment counselling	Rs. 1,33,000/-
4. Occupational Research and Analysis	Rs. 28,000/-
Total	Rs. 4,44,000/-

The remaining amount of Rs.1,45,000/- have been proposed for implementation of the following new schemes during 1981-82 under the major scheme Expansion of Employment Services.

1. Purchase of a departmental vehicle for the Employment wing of the State Directorate	Rs. 50,000/-
2. Strengthening of State Directorate of Employment by setting up of a Departmental Vigilance Cell	Rs. 57,000/-
3. Setting up of a planning cell at the State Directorate of Employment	Rs. 38,000/-
Total	Rs. 1,45,000/-

Hill Areas

(a) Brief Review of 1974-75 to 1977-80

Out of there existing Employment Exchanges at Diphu, Haflong, and Hamren, the Employment Market Information units of the Employment Exchanges at Haflong and Hamren were strengthened and the Vocational Guidance Unit of the Employment Exchanges, Hamren was also strengthened for rendering better service to Hill tribal applicants. The construction work of the officer building of the Employment Exchange at Diphu and Hamren had been completed and construction of officer building of the Employment Exchange at Haflong was started.

(b) Proposals for 1981-85

The Employment Service facilities created in the post-plan period was sustained during the Sixth Plan period. Provision was made for completion of incomplete construction works during the Sixth Plan period. In order to shift the officer the Hamren Exchange from Donkamokam, residential quarters for the staff will have to be constructed at Hamren where rented accommodation for the staff of the exchange are not available. One more Employment Information and Assistance bureau at Harangajan in N.C. Hills will be established raising the total number of such unit at Block level to six, Two new Employment Exchanges at Bokajan and Garampani will be opened.

General

(a) Position of Employment Service at the end of 1979-80 in General Areas

There were 8 District Employment Exchanges, 18 Employment Exchanges, 3 University Employment Information and Guidance Bureaus, 15 Employment Information and Assistance Bureaus, one each at the 15 Block Development Headquarters, 24 Employment Market Information Units, 14 Vocational Guidance Units, 1 Special Employment Exchange for Plantation Labour at

Dibrugarh. One special Employment Exchange for Physically Handicapped persons and one professional and executive Employment Officer at State Directorate of Employment at Guwahati. There are also 4 zonal officers of the Deputy Director of Employment at Guwahati, Jorhat, Tezpur and Silchar.

(b) Achievements During the 6th Five-Year Plan (1980-85)

During the year 1980-81, an Employment Exchange for unskilled job seekers had been set up at Guwahati. During the year 1981-82 and 1983-84, it was not possible to implement any new scheme for want of fund. During the year 1983-84, six Sub-divisional employment exchange at Kokrajhar, Goalpara, Barpeta, Mangaldai, Sibsagar and Karimganj have been strengthened and upgraded to District Employment Exchange for consequent upon creation of 6 new districts in the states 10 new employment exchanges have also been set up one each at (i) Jonai, (ii) Chapakhowa, (iii) Garamur, (iv) Sonari, (v) Biswanath Chariali, (vi) Gosaigoan, (vi) Hatsingimari, (ix) Hojai, (x) Rangia, (xi) Udalguri is consequent upon creation of new sub-divisions. ⁽²²⁾

(c) Programmes for 7th Five-Year Plan (1985-90)

Objective of Employment Service : The Employment Service in the State continued to serve the broad aim of the National Employment Service, as has been done over the years through the programmes included in the 7th Five-Year Plan documents. The objective of these programmes were :

- (i) To extend the registration facilities to all sections of the population inhabiting in both urban and rural areas.
- (ii) To disseminate information regarding the opportunities offered to the unemployed and underemployed sections of the population by the development activities, more particularly by the activities in the industrial sector in the state and outside.

- (iii) To establish liaison between the employment seekers and employers with a view to make a match between job seekers employability and an employers requirement.
- (iv) To render vocational guidance to the young people as also seekers regarding choice of career, vocational course and the work of occupations.
- (v) To promote as much as possible, self-employing ventures amongst the enterprising unemployed youth through motivation, counselling and guidance.
- (vi) To collect, process and disseminate employment in the different fields of economic activities for the benefits of employers, job seekers and manpower planners.
- (vii) To improve working necessary accommodation component and manpower for implementation of the different schemes including schemes taken up for the benefits of the seekers such as physically handicapped persons, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes applicants and women job seekers.

To achieve the objective mentioned above, schemes for the following are considered essential for inclusion in the 7th Five-Year Plan.

Formulation of 7th Five-Year Plan (1985-90) and Annual Plan (1983-84) under Employment

HILL AREAS : Position of Employment Service at the end of 1979-80 (5th Five-year plan)

There were 3 Employment Exchanges at Diphu, Haflong and Hamren in

Hill areas at the end of 1979-80. There were also 3 Employment Market Information Units and 3 Vocational Guidance units, one each at the aforesaid Employment Exchanges. There were also employment information and Assistance Bureaux including 3 in Karbi Anglong district and 2 NC Hills district.

During 1980-81, a post of Deputy Director of Employment (Hills) was created together with one class III and IV staff with the headquarters at Diphu for liaison and supervision of the work in Employment Exchanges in the two hill districts. One post of LDA was created in the District Manpower Planning and Employment Generation Councils of the District Employment Exchange, Haflong 1983-84.

(a) Programme for 7th Five-year plan (1985-90)

Objective of Employment Service: The Employment Service in the state will continue to serve the broad aim of the National Employment Service, as has been done over the years, through the programme included in the 7th Five-year plan document. The objectives of these programmes will be:

PART I

- (i) To extend the registration facilities to all sections of the population inhabiting in both urban and rural areas.
- (ii) To establish liaison between the employment seekers and employers with a view to make a match between a job seekers employability and employers requirement.
- (iii) To promote as much as possible, self-employing ventures amongst the enterprising unemployed youth through motivation, counselling and guidance.

- (iv) To improve working of the Employment service by providing necessary accommodation, equipment and manpower for implementation of the different schemes including schemes taken up for the benefit of the weaker sections such as the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes applicants.

To achieve the objective set above, schemes for the following considered essential for inclusion in the Seventh Five-year plan:

PART II

- (i) It was proposed to establish 2 new Employment Information and Assistance Bureaus under Hill areas plan, to be located in the interior Rural areas as also growth centres.
- (ii) The directions contained in the sixth plan for promotion of self-employment amongst the enterprising unemployed youth has not been properly implemented in absence of the necessary staff in the Employment Generation Councils which have been set up in the two District Employment Exchanges. The proposed unit consisting of the Assistant Employment Officer, one Lower Division Assistant and one peon in each of these two District Employment Exchanges will function as the Secretariat of the District Councils in the matter.
- (iii) Almost all the Employment Exchanges in the state are now accommodated in the hired buildings and accommodations is not available in the interior areas even for the purpose of hiring. With a view to giving a better look to the Employment Services, it has been proposed to have Employment Exchange buildings and staff quarters as per the layout of the Directorate General of Employment and Training., New Delhi. ⁽²³⁾

Achievement during the 7th Five Year Plan upto the end of 1988-89 :

During the year 1985-86

- (i) Strengthening the 8 District Employment Exchanges at Guwahati, Jorhat, Tezpur, Dibrugarh, Silchar, North Lakhimpur, Nagaon and Dhubri by setting up of 8 units of District Manpower planning and Employment Generation Councils by creation of 8 posts of Assistant. Employment Officers, 8 post of L.D. Assistant and 8 post of peon.
- (ii) Upgradation of the Sub-Divisional Employment Exchange, Nalbari by creating the post of Employment Exchange Officer, one U.D. Assistant, three L.D. Assistants and two peons.
- (iii) Strengthening the state Employment Market Information unit by creation of a post of Statistical Assistant. During the year 1986-87,
 - (1) Assam Zone, Guwahati by creation of a post of Chowkidar,
 - (2) Strengthening the zonal offices of the Deputy Director of Employment at Guwahati, Jorhat, Tezpur and Silchar by creation of four posts of L.D. Assistant, one post of L.D. Assistant, four each zonal offices of the Deputy Directors of Employment,
 - (3) Strengthening the zonal offices of the Deputy Director of Employment at Tezpur and Silchar by Setting up of 2 enforcement cells for enforcing the compulsory Notification of Vacancies Act, 1959 with creation of two posts of Assistant Director of Employment (Enf.), two L.D.Assistant and two Peons. One Assistant Director of Employment (Enf.) one L.D.Assistant and a Peon in each of the two Zonal Offices of the Deputy Director of Employment,

(4) Setting up of Employment Exchanges, one each at Jagiroad, Moranhat and Patharkandi by creation of three Assistant Employment Officers, three U.D. Assistants, six L.D. Assistants, six Peons and three Chowkidars,

(5) One zonal office of the Deputy Director of Employment at Dibrugarh was set up with one Deputy Director of Employment, Two L.D. Assistant, one Peon and one Chowkidar,

(6) One coordination cell for the District Manpower Planning and Employment Generation Council was up in the State Directorate by creation of Deputy Director of Employment, one Investigator, two L.D. Assistants and one Peon during the year, 1987-88,

(7) Setting up of 7 units of Employment Market Information in the 7 Employment Exchanges at Rangia, Gossaigaon, Hatsingimari, Udalguri, Viswanath Chariali, Sonari and Hojai by creation of 7 posts of Statistical Assistants and 7 posts of L.D. Assistants,

(8) Setting up of 2 Employment Exchanges, one each at Koliabor and Duliajan by creation of two Assistant Employment Officers ⁽²⁴⁾, two U.D. Assistants, four L.D. Assistants, two Peons and two Chowkidars,

(9) Setting up of 3 Vocational Guidance and Employment Counselling units and strengthening one V.G. unit at the District Employment Exchange, Barpeta by creation of four posts of Assistant Employment Officers, three L.D. Assistant and 3 Peons,

(10) Setting up of the four Employment Information and Assistance Bureau one each at the Block Development Headquarters at Bijni in

Kokrajhar District, Dhakuakhana in Dhemaji Sub-Division by creation of 4 posts of U.D. Assistants,

(11) Strengthening the five District Employment Exchanges at Barpeta, Kokrajhar, Goalpara, Mangaldai and Sibsagar by setting up of 5 units of District Manpower Planning and Employment General Council with creation of 5 Assistant Employment Officers, 5 L.D.Assistant and 5 Peons,

(12) Setting up of a Mobile Employment Exchange attached to the State Directorate. ⁽²⁵⁾

(13) Setting up of four units of Employment Information and Assistance Bureau in the 4 Development Block Headquarters at Rupahi in Barpeta district, Bajali Chowkathi in Barpeta district, Bokakhat in Golaghat district and Demow in Sibsagar district. Setting up of an Employment Exchange at Dhansiri Subdivision in the headquarter at Sarupathar. Strengthening the Mobile Employment Exchange attached to the state Directorate.⁽²⁵⁾

LANGUAGE PROBLEM

Language is the means by which the individual expresses his personality. Alphabet is the means by which language is written. Script is the means by which the alphabet is written. Any alphabet can be written in any script. It, therefore, follows that any language can be written in any script, provided the alphabet has the necessary sounds. If it has not then, they may be added and visual symbols invented or adopted to represent them. Of Course, the script, adopted for writing an alphabet must have certain qualities - clarity, legibility and capacity for easy manual and mechanical manipulations.

It may be noted that most of the Indian Language have close affinity with one another, so far as pronunciation, grammar or vocabulary are concerned. For instance, Marathi and Gujarati are practically one and the same language as Assamese and Bengali are. Again, there is a close affinity between Kanadas and Telegu. These two language are twins, more or less with the same grammar and similar vocabulary. The literary traditions, rules and prosody are also uniform for both the languages. Since the script is different, an emotional barrier is erected between the two communities. The most striking example is Hindi and Urdu. Both may be considered as one language in every sense of the term. But their scripts are utterly different. The same thing is true of Punjabi and Hindi. Both of them are again one language. But the Akalis insist that Punjabi should be written in Gurmukhi. To some extent Tamil and Malayalam are similar to one another but again their scripts are different. Much of the linguistic trouble in this country is due to script. India lacks unity in script. There are at present nine scripts currently used in India. They are, Devanaguri or Nagari, Bengali, Assamese, Oriya, Gurmukhi, Telegu-Kannada, Tamil-Grantha, and Malayalam. Kaithi and Gujarati are forms of the Nagari script. Grantha is used to write Sanskrit in the Madras State, side by side with Nagari. Gurmukhi is at present confined to Punjabi and that too to Sikhs. The Hindus in Punjab to write Panjabi in Nagari and the Muslims always use the Perso-Arabic for the same language. The Gujarati, the Kaithi and the Mahajani are the broken forms of Nagari. In Kashmir, there is the Sarada alphabet, close to Gurmukhi used by Hindus. It may be noted that all these are derived from the Brahmi script which existed in Ancient India. It was an all India script which existed several hundred years before Christ. At any rate, there was one script for the whole country before 300 A.D. Later on Brahmi script went on changing and as a consequence different scripts came into existence. Yet, it must be said that the Nagari script is used by a large number of languages. It is employed not only to writ Hindi, Marathi, Nepali and

frequently Punjabi and Gujarati. It is being adopted to write Sindhi also. Since the foundation of three Indian Universities in 1857, the Nagari script has been accepted as the Pan Indian script for Sanskrit. Nagari has been used extensively for printing original Mahabharata and Rig-veda Samhita. Many people though that Devanagari script is the only script for Sanskrit. However, the fact remains that there are many scripts in India.

Language has a close relationship with script. Therefore we are discussing here about the origin and development of Assamese script. Assamese script is a member of Kutil branch of the Gupta Group. In ancient India the script was broadly divided into two main group - viz. Brahmi and Khorostri. The Brahmi letters flow from left to right and Khorostri from right to left. The old Kamrupi script belongs to the Gupta Group of the Brahmi family of alphabet along with its uterine sister Maithili and Bengali. The old Kamrupi script was used in traditional manuscript. The evidence of the Kamrupi script can be traced in the copper-plates inscription of Nidhanpur during the reign of Bhaskaravarman.

Modern Assamese script cannot be said to be the true manifestation of the Kamrupi script. For want of printing press no Assamese manuscript was printed and for the first time Assamese books came out in printed from Sreerampur Printing Press in Bengali. The Kamrupi script development in a regular and continuous process of evolution till the nineteenth century. When the first Bengali campaign was started by Carey and others of the Sreerampur Mission. The Sreerampur Mission used the same script for Bengali and Assamese which was designed and engraved by one Atmaram Sarma of Koliabor in the Nowgong (Assam), when Assam came under the British rule, Bengali became the language of courts and the medium of instruction of schools. It continued nearly for forty years. For the reason that the Assamese script was similar with that of Bengali it became the language of the courts of Assam. As a result of that the Kamrupi script gradually disappeared.

The modern Assamese-Bengali script was used to express the Assamese language in written form. But it was Hemchandra Borua who introduced the traditional 'ra' and 'wa' into the modern Assamese alphabets. The Sreerampur Mission used common script for Assamese and Bengali for convenience and since then both have been using the same script. This has, of course, led to a serious misunderstanding that Assamese is an offshoot of Bengali. Bengali campaign was started by Sreerampur Mission, likewise Assamese campaign was started by Brown, Bronson and others of the Baptist Mission. The Baptist Mission began printing books in Assamese language with types cast in one and the same foundry in which Bengali books were printed.

The script of both the languages, the Assamese and Bengali, nevertheless is identical, based on the infrastructure of Assamese and Bengali script. The Maithili and the Manipuri have ramified into distinct languages. The Tripuri language also followed the suit of Manipuri language as regards the script. On the other hand Arunachal and Nagaland have accepted Devnagri and Roman script respectively. Likewise Mizoram and Meghalaya have accepted the Roman script. Each plain-tribe of Assam has a language of its own. All these languages are at different stages of developments. Until recently, at least three of these tribal languages - Bodo, Mising and Rabha accepted the Assamese script. Now the Bodos want to switch over to Roman script severing it from Assamese which had been followed so long. The Mising are in between the two horns of dilemma whether to continue with the Assamese script or to switch over to Roman script. The reason is sentimental. They feel that they are neglected and are getting a step-motherly treatment in the hands of the Assamese. The Assamese community, to make a clean breast of the fact, is backward in comparison to the people of other states almost in all department. The Bodos which is a part and parcel of the Assamese community is lagging behind their compatriot.

Bodo Movement is mainly an ethnic movement where language plays a crucial role. It is on the one hand a symbol of identity and on the other hand an instrument of political mobilization.

Bodos are a major ethnic and linguistic group among the many tribal groups of Assam. Ethnically and linguistically they belong to the Tibeto-Burman group. Although they are scattered throughout the north region of India, their main concentration is now on the northern bank of the river Brahmaputra, starting from Dhubri and Kokrajhar subdivision of Goalpara district in the west, to Dhemaji subdivision in the East. There are some other pockets of Bodo concentration in the Southern bank of the river Brahmaputra. Kokrajhar is the highest Bodo concentrated subdivision in the state of Assam.

Broadly speaking Bodos are a part of the composite Assamese society which consists of different ethnic and linguistics groups. The Bodos comprise 3.65 % of the total population of Assam. Efforts to maintain language and culture as the markers of ethnic identity were unknown to them till the end of the first half of the century. They used Bodo for intra-group communication and Assamese, the dominant language of the State for inter-group communication. It was only towards the later half of this century that they formed a Sahitya Sabha of their own for promoting literary activities. It was on November 26, 1952 that they organized a convention of Bodo people in Kokrajhar and Bodo Sahitya Sabha (BSS) was formed. Bodo Sahitya Sabha heightened the linguistic ethnic and political consciousness of the Bodo people which eventually resulted in a serious of movements.

The evocation of this new consciousness manifested itself in a mass movement over a rather complicated question of script. Like many other minor languages Bodo does not have its own script. In India values of permanence are attached to the script and higher status is ascribed of those languages which have

ancient and individual writing systems. More often the separate identity of a language is even recognized depending on the individuality of the script. This explains the creation of new scripts for unwritten languages and the reluctance of the minority languages for sharing the script of a neighbouring major language.⁽²⁵⁾ This is precisely the case with Bodo language which suddenly decided to switch over from Assamese script to Roman script. The general tendency of the minority language is to share the script of the dominant major language. But conflict arises when a minority group in such a situation tries to deviate from the general tendency. When for other reasons conflict arises they express themselves through such deviation. The attitude of the Bodos towards the major scripts of the state and in fact of the region i.e., Assamese, Bengali, Manipuri scripts caused serious repercussions. The Bodo script movement resulted in police firing. Both the State and Central governments expressed concern at the turn of events. The Assam Sahitya Sabha, so far indifferent to such causes, also showed serious concern over the issue.

The first Bodo books 'Kachari Reader' and 'The Kachari Grammar' were written in Roman Script and published in 1904 by the then British Government.⁽²⁶⁾ The Bodos claim that education was imparted to Bodo Children at that time in Bodo medium with the help of these books. Neog's comment that he never saw these books may be cited here.⁽²⁷⁾ The use of Roman script was discontinued after 32 years. Assamese script was adopted in 1936. The reason for this change of script policy is not known. Three months after its inception in 1952 the Bodo Sahitya Sabha demanded introduction of Bodo as the medium of instruction in the schools of Bodo speaking areas. After prolonged discussions the Government of Assam introduced Bodo in primary school of Kokrajhar district in 1962. It was followed by a demand for Bodo language at high school level for which Bodo Sahitya Sabha launched an agitation. However, the Government finally agreed in March 1968 to introduce Bodo to pre-high school level.

The question of Roman script arose first in 1966 during the eighth annual session of BSS. No resolution could be passed, however because of the lack of unanimity. The whole problem remained a controversy till 1974 when the issue again came up resulting in a powerful mass movement. ⁽²⁹⁾

Now a few questions arise: why had the BSS taken such a decision all on a sudden? What made them see demerits of the script which had been used ever since 1936? Did the demand for Roman script had any connection with the formation of the Plains Tribal Council and its demands for political autonomy? The whole problem has to be studied keeping the political, economic and social factors in mind.

The script controversy reveals the political nature of the problem. The Bodos, anxious to carve out an independent identity, wanted a symbol, to mark a break from the Assamese and also from Assam. The Roman script is perceived as irrevocably connected with English and it also signal a departure from the languages of the country.

The arguments of the Bodos in support of Roman script can be summarized as follows:

- 1) Roman is the first script used in Bodo language and therefore it should be retained.
- 2) Clarity and legibility make Roman the easiest to learn.
- 3) It faithfully represents the sounds of Bodo language and therefore spelling anomalies can be avoided.
- 4) It has international status.
- 5) Its use may serve as a connecting link between the Bodo speaking people living outside the state.

- 6) It is economic from the point of view of time and cost of printing and typing.

Their arguments against the use of Assamese script on the other hand can be briefly mentioned.

- i. Assamese script is too time consuming to learn, to read and to write.
- ii. It does not represent the Bodo speech sounds.
- iii. Its spelling anomaly is confusing and may cause hurdles in the learning process.
- iv. Cost of printing and typing will be more.

The arguments put forward in favour of Roman script and against Assamese script is refuted by a section of the society by the following arguments.

- i. In a country like India where the literacy rate is just 29.5% and only less than 4% of the people know English, Roman script is yet a foreign script. Roman script modified to suit Bodo would be equally inconvenient from the point of view of learning English. And there is no guarantee that it will save time.
- ii. The spelling system in English is very highly inconsistent. Thus adoption of such a script for an entirely different language of entirely different origin and sound system may cause serious inconvenience to the learners.
- iii. From phonetic point of view Roman alphabets are not scientifically arranged in accordance with place and manner of articulation like Indian scripts of Brahmi origin.
- iv. To call Roman script a simple script is a misnomer. Simplicity is a

relative term. Roman alphabet with 26 letters requires use of letters and combinations of letters in different values in different places. Sometimes two three alphabets are required to represent one single consonant sound while a single alphabet represents two three sounds. Even the vowels do not have consistent values. For example U is sometimes realized as /U/ and sometimes as /A/ . This means there is no one to one correspondence between actual speech and its alphabetic manifestation. To call a system with a less number of units where each unit is used more frequently and in different values simple in comparison to a system where there are larger number of units with each unit having consistent phonetic value is dubious.

- v. Roman script without any modification cannot represent Bodo speech sounds which means Roman with diacritic features added to it will be an extra burden to the learners in the context of the three language formula of the country. Under the three language formula, a child is expected to learn three languages and three scripts. The modified Roman scripts would impose unavoidable burden.
- vi. Adoption of Roman script will alienate the language from the people of other communities within the State. This may be detrimental to the growth of the language and its wider use for communication.

The arguments in favour of Assamese script have been forwarded as below by the supporters of the Assamese scripts:

- i. Assamese script provides symbol for most of the features of Bodo pronunciation including the retroflex series.
- ii. Spelling anomalies can actually be avoided in Assamese script.

- iii. As a result of interaction, Bodo is influenced by Assamese and vice versa. Thus there is close relationship between the languages. So it would be advantageous for a Bodo child to acquire Assamese which is necessary for participating in the socio economic development of the region.
- iv. Adoption of Assamese script will promote cultural exchange and sharing of each other's literature.
- v. If the target is genuine development of minority language it can be achieved through the script of the major neighbouring language for various geographic, economic and political reasons.
- vi. Since other minor tribal languages like Rabha, Mising and Karbi have decided to adopt Assamese script Bodo language with Roman script is likely to be isolated from the main stream of cultural, educational, economic and socio-political life of Assam.
- vii. Script is not merely a question of counting letters. Modern media of communication involve typing, teletyping, teleprinting, telegraphy etc. Where choice of script becomes most important. Use of the majority script of the region is likely to be more beneficial from this point of view for the maintenance of minority languages than the deviant versions of Roman script.

The above arguments show that considerations for the demand of Roman script are not purely linguistic. In fact their acceptance of Devangiri script was a compromise in so far as

- (a) it involves using of one of the three scripts other than Assamese learnt by Bodo children, which like Assamese would need least modification and

(b) seeking a solution within the ethos of Indian language culture.

This issue can be seen yet from a different perspective. In India Konkini is written using five scripts. So is Santhal. In fact Sanskrit's pervasiveness and longevity can be attribute to the language being written in different scripts in different parts of the country. As such Bodo language could be maintained by the Assamese script as much as by the Roman. But the fact that in 1970 the Bodo text book 'Bithorai' in Roman script was introduced in primary level without Government's approval escalated the conflict. ⁽³⁰⁾

Assam Sahitya Sabha (ASS hence forward) ever since its inception in 1917 has been working for the cause of the Assamese language. It never showed serious concern for other minor languages. Its sole concern was for the Assamese language. That development of other languages surrounding Assamese in the region was in the interest of the development of Assamese language never occurred to them. When Bodo was demanded in the 1950s, ASS did not play any role. As a result of long standing demand the Government of Assam published in 1956 the first text book written in Bodo language but it was not accepted by BSS on the ground that it was full of errors.⁽³¹⁾ Again, it took eleven years for the Bodos to fulfill the demand of Bodo as the medium of instruction. In 1963 the then Chaliha Ministry decided to introduce Bodo as the medium of instruction at primary level. There is no evidence of ASS supporting or helping the Bodos in this matter. Innumerable publications of books in Assamese as against non-publication of a single book ⁽³²⁾ in Bodo is a clear example of dominant monolingual policy of the Assam Sahitya Sabha.

Whether linguistic consciousness precedes and ethnic consciousness follows or ethnic consciousness precedes and linguistic consciousness follows or both operate simultaneously is a matter of debate. Probably language and ethnicity are just two sides of the same coin. Tribal consciousness can be seen

In India from the early historical times, 'This consciousness has found expression sometimes as an all pervasive tribal identity and sometimes as broken ethnic identities. An example from the North East is provided by the formation of the Tribal League in the pre-independence days which was an expression of tribal consciousness and worked for tribal identity. The league which was formed in 1933 and functioned till 1949 was a representative of the entire tribal population of Assam and was successful in securing reservation of nine seats in the State assembly under the 1935 Act. After the merger of the Tribal League with Congress in 1949 a new socio-cultural organisation called 'Tribal Sanggha' was formed. After the BSS was formed in 1952, the political interest of the largest tribal group, the Bodos, crystallized around it. The Plains Tribal Council of Assam, (PTCA) formed on 27 February 1967, was the successor of the Tribal League. Working as representative of the tribal identity it initially demanded political autonomy of the tribal people of Goalpara, Kamrup, Darrang, Lakhimpur and Sibsagar district and subsequently the creation of a separate Tribal State named 'Udayachal'. It may be noted the Bodos were in the leadership position of the PTCA. The PTCA was divided on the basis of the assertion of the identity of the Bodo Mising group and PTCA (Progressive) was formed in 1979. This new group demanded 'Bodo Mising Bhumi' as a separate Union Territory. ⁽³³⁾ The Bodo language Movement did not take Mising into its preview. Thus it was the assertion of a single ethnic identity. It is important to note that tribal identity assertion and individual ethnic identity assertion are not successive but often simultaneous.

The Bodo identity movement is linked up with similar movements in the North East. The Government of India, from time to time, have taken measures to meet minority aspirations in the North East. But, very often, it has left the various groups more dissatisfied. B.K. Roy Barman, in his article 'Crisis of

Identity Among Mizos' (Mainstream, July 14, 1984) gives an account of events leading to Mizo insurgency. He writes -

'The Sixth Schedule of Constitution of India was promulgated to safeguard the traditions, customs and practices of the hill tribes of North East India and to protect them from outside traders and exploiters. The Lushai Hills District Council was constituted in 1952. To satisfy the minority aspirations, the Pawi-Lakher Autonomous Region was carved out of the Lushai Hills District in 1953. In 1954, The Assam Lushai Hills District (Acquisition of Chiefs' Rights Act) was enacted and the rights and responsibilities of 259 Mizo Chiefs and 50 Pawi Lakher Chiefs were vested in Government. The administration of land was transferred to the District and Regional Councils from the Chiefs. With the passing of these Acts, traditional leadership pattern and the elite structure yielded place to a new order. The former Chief's party UMFO lost its hold. They formed another party, Eastern India Tribal Union (EITU). The Assam Government decided to introduce Assamese as the State Language, the tribes of Mizo District as also other hill areas of Assam "were scared of losing their linguistic identity and minority rights". They were also dissatisfied at the way the money given for tribal welfare was used by the Government of Assam, without much apparent benefit to the Mizo Hills. The economic condition of the Mizo Hills was precarious in the mid 1960's after the famine which lasted a few years. This led to the movement for the formation of hill state in 1961, initiated by All Party Hill Leaders Conference (APHLC), which include both EITU and Mizo Union. The movement rapidly gained popularity. At the same time, a third political force, which later led to the Mizo insurgency

emerged on 22nd November 1961, a political party, called the Mizo National Front (MNF) was established under the leadership of Laldenga. By 1964, the demand for separate Statehood for the Mizo Hills had gained momentum and when this was not conceded, the MNF stated its insurgent activities on 28 February 1966.'

It is necessary to examine atomisation as a solution to tribal problems. The North East has already been divided into seven units with the North Eastern Council acting as an arbiter of interests. The proposed 'Udayachal' would still leave 50% of the total tribal population in Assam outside. According to Parag Kumar Das, Udayachal would comprize of 8,25,462 out of total of 16,06,648 scheduled tribe population of Assam. The schedule tribe population of the five districts from out of which Udayachal is sought to be carved out comes to a little over eleven lakhs. This means that the proposed state of Udayachal had left almost one fourth of the tribal population of these districts outside its purview. The proposed Bodo Mising Bhumi comprized of a scheduled tribe population of about eight lakhs. This means that although there was some overlapping in area and population, still a section was left out.

In the wake of the demands of a separate state Parag Kumar Das interviewed six tribal leaders of Assam.⁽³⁴⁾ The only politician among them, the secretary of the PTCA supported the demand for 'Udayachal'. The other five were opposed to further division of Assam and creation of 'Udayachal' on different grounds. The Bodo population of Assam is so dispersed and so intermixed with the non-Bodo population that it is impossible to create a separate Bodo State without eliminating a large segment of the Bodo population or uprooting them from their traditional homes. In either case the viability of such a state would be doubtful.

The leaders of the Bodo Movement were torn between different loyalties. While their ethnic loyalty impelled them to set up a separate Bodo Movement, the awareness that tribal problems can only be solved in a larger perspective made them demand for 'Udayachal' or 'Bodo Mising Bhumi'. While their anger against the attitude of dominance of the Assamese and the examples of the neighbouring tribals prodded them to opt for Roman script, the same anger but their refusal to be dubbed as anti-Indian made them accept the Devnagari Script. The Bodo elite which occupies higher position in the socio-economic life of Assam is aware of the need of the cohesion but at the same time aware of the socio-economic and cultural deprivation of not only the Bodos but also of other tribal people of the region. The Bodo Movement has multicausal motivation. The historical importance of the Bodos contrasted with the current political neglect, the threat of atrophy of Bodo culture and death of the Bodo language, the political ambition of the newly emerging elites, the economic pressure due to the invasion of the Bangladeshis are some of the reasons for the movement. In conclusion it may be said that over and above the reasons cited above, it is the shortsightedness of the academic and political leaders of Assam that aggravated the feelings of the Bodos and lighted the fuse that ignited the Bodo movement.

Medium of Instruction

Closely connected to the language problem of Assam is the problem of medium of instruction in the Colleges and Universities. While responding positively to the demand made by the Assamese people to introduce Assamese language as the medium of instruction at the level of higher education the Assam Legislative Assembly unanimously resolved on 24th September 1972 that the medium of instruction at the University level in Gauhati and Dibrugarh University should be Assamese. And English should be continued as an alternative medium of instruction. While supporting the resolution Charan Nazari of PTCA political party said that Assam is a multilingual state. Here all must

respect each others language. There would be no question of imposing or subjugating any language. He insisted that English should be allowed to continue as an alternative medium in addition to Assamese in Gauhati and Dibrugarh University. ⁽³⁵⁾

The General Secretary of All Assam Students' Union Late Prasanna Narayan Choudhury, has issued a statement in connection with the medium of instruction in the Colleges and Universities. The statement pointed out that the resolution of the Assam Legislative Assembly of 23rd September 1972, failed to give due recognition to Assamese as the only regional language.

The conference of the student delegates from different parts of the state held at the Assam Engineering College on 22nd to 24th September 1972 observed that the Legislators had no scope for discussion with their electorate on the issue. They were simply guided by the party discipline and enforced loyalty to leadership. The Chief Minister was in a hurry to find out a compromise formula in order to avoid legal intricacies.

The students decided to take up the issue in the best interest of Assamese language and culture. The AASU unanimously resolved that (a) Assamese shall be the only medium of instruction in higher education within the geographical territory of the state; (b) for the benefit of the students not having Assamese as mother tounge the Gauhati University Academic Coucils decision to provide English as an alternatives for the interim period of ten years will be valid, and (c) the state Government shall take necessary steps to enable the Universities to implement Assamese as the only medium after the expiry of the interim period.⁽³⁶⁾

The Academic Council of Gauhati University has modified its earlier decision took on 12th June 1972 and adopted that --

- “(i) Assamese shall be the medium of instruction in all colleges under the jurisdiction of Gauhati University.
- (ii) English shall continue as an alternative medium of instruction till such time, not exceeding ten years as may be considered necessary by the Academic Council.
- (iii) Students shall have the option to answer either in Assamese or English in the Universities examinations.”⁽³⁷⁾

A Brief Summary of the Issues

Influx of illegal immigrants into Assam from the neighbouring countries particularly from Bangladesh is posing as a serious threat to the unity, integrity and the security of the country. Everybody has to realise this situation provided he or she is a conscious citizen of India. Further inclusion of these illegal immigrants in the list of voters may cause serious political problems to the legislators in the decision making process.

Realising the serious consequences of the inclusion of these foreigners in the list of votes the Government of Assam during the Janata Party rule explicitly expressed the need of correction of the list at the time of by-election to the Lok Sabha due to the death of Hiralal Patowary who represented the Mangaldai constituency in the Parliament. The voter list of Mangaldoi Parliamentary constituency was revised and in the process a large number of foreigners' names were deleted, objection were raised against 70,000 men and of these 45,000 were declared as foreigners by competent authority.

The All Assam Students' Union under the leadership of Prafulla Kumar Mahanta, presently Chief Minister of Assam and Bhriagu Kumar Phukan, ex-Home Minister, Assam as President and General Secretary respectively started a movement against foreign nationals. The movement lasted for six years with the

massive support and cooperation from all the sections of people of Assam. The movement claimed several hundred lives of the people of Assam and caused heavy loss of materials. Ultimately, signing of the Assam Accord at the early hours on 15 August 1985 put an end to the movement (see Appendix 11). The significant turning point in the political history of Assam is the formation of the Asom Gana Parishad Party at the behest of AASU. This party came to power by winning election on the foreigner's issue. To the utter surprise of all the people of Assam the attitude of the newly elected political leaders who lead the Assam Movement against foreigners had undergone a radical change aggravating the socio-political situation of Assam from bad to worse.

It is at the persistent efforts of AASU the Election Commission of India initiated the task of deletion of the names of the doubtful voters from the list. Due to AASU's demand as per Assam Accord the Government agrees in principle to reserve the seats of Parliament, Assembly and Local bodies for the indigenous Assamese people. It will be in addition to the reservation of seats for STs and SCs. The illegal foreigner will not be able to contest in the election. AASU is demanding of IMDT Act, which protects the interest of the foreigners. The legislators have yet to play their due role to save the country from the foreign nationals.

Now I must refer to the problem of unemployment which may be considered as one of the biggest problem in todays Assam. It is a major factor responsible for the acts of violence, looting, killing and violation of Human Rights in all forms. Further unemployment of youth causes wastage of youth power. Therefore, no legislator should ignore the youth power while making policies for the development of the state.

Coming to the language issue one may notice that Assam is facing the language problem since 1874 when it was constituted as the Chief

Commissioner's Province. In recent years specially since 1960s multiplicity of languages has been felt by the people as well as the policy makers of Assam. Adoption of English or Devanagri script for different tribal languages, medium of instruction in the educational institutions and official language are the important aspects of the language problem. A close look into the language problem also shows a big gap between policy formulation and policy implementation. It is, again the leadership role of the representatives of the people to be called upon to minimise the gap between the two.

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