CHAPTER-IX

POST SCRIPT

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The BODO ACCORD signed on 20th February 1993 rang the curtain over the six-year long Bodoland Movement spearheaded by All Bodo Students’ Union (ABSU) and the Bodo People’s Action Committee (BPAC). This event of signing the historic Bodo Accord resulted in the culmination of a long but turbulent mass-movement and a return to normalcy in the Bodo dominated areas within and outside the demanded Bodoland area.

The signing of the Bodo Accord resulted in the surrender by the activists of the Bodo Volunteers Force (BVF). A total about 1500 BVF activists surrendered before the authorities under the initiatives of the ABSU and BPAC – parties to the Accord. Mr. Prem Singh Brahma, the C-in-C of the erstwhile BVF took the lead of occasions of such surrender. Surrender by Bodo activists paved the way for return of peace and normalcy in the proposed Bodoland area.

The Government in return of surrender, assured the surrendered Bodo activists for suitable rehabilitation. The State Government arranged for providing Rupees 2,00,000 (Two Lacs) only each of the Surrenderee with a view of enabling them to adopt means of livelihood. It was expected that such a measure on the part of Government would help them back to mainstream of society. The people of the demanded Bodoland area heaved a sigh of relief with the expectation that the process of surrender and rehabilitation would lead to return of peace and normalcy in the area.
The Bodo activists, on their part, shun the violence and made a humble effort to return to mainstream life. Though lately, they received the assured rehabilitation package and took to warpath for own earning and simple living. Majority of them got mini-delux canter buses in the group of three surrenderees while a few of them took up grocery and small trades. Most of them seemed to have benefited from the benevolent scheme of rehabilitation provided by the State Government and all hoped that everything will go well.

The ABSU and BPAC, having shorn of the limelight of leading a mass-movement, began to search for a few ground of their political standing. They undertook the initiatives for formation of a United Political Platform, which could provide them with a scope to lead the public affairs. Consequently, through a public convention at Kajalgaon near Bongaigaon on 2nd & 3rd July 1993 the Bodoland People’s Party (BPP) was formed. The new Bodo party embibed with nascent nationalism and rudimentary political idea took the path of vigorous mass activities with high ambition.

Almost all of the Bodoland Movement leaders who came to limelight during the course of the mass-movement got a birth in the new party structure. Mr. Sansuma Khunggur Bwiswmuhtiyari, the outgoing ABSU President became the Chairman of the new political party while Mr. Premising Brahma, C-in-C of the erstwhile BVF was made its General Secretary. The Chairman of the BPAC, Mr. Subhas Basumatary became the Vice-Chairman. Very interestingly, though the Women Wing the All Assam Tribal Women Welfare Federation (AATWWF) under the Presidentship of Mrs. Pramila Rani Brahma took a leading part in the vigorous Bodoland Mass-Movement, got no representation in the new party. There was no initiative so as to accommodate single woman.
portfolio-holder in the 12-Member Central Executive Committee of the party and a strong demand was made for that by the women delegates present there, the same was not conceded with lame excuse. Thus, it was evident that resentment remained a section of movement leaders in respect of representation in the newly created power structure.

Even before the creation of new power structure as above, the State Government after a long delay, constituted the Interim Bodoland Autonomous Council with 18 Members. With a view of respecting the “One Man One Post” Principle, those who got berth in the Interim BAC were left out from the party structure. But an exception was made in respect of Mr. Bwiswmuthiary, who became party Chairman both. Same was the case with Mr. Premsing Brahma, who became party General Secretary and IBEC Deputy Chairman both.

The Interim Bodoland Autonomous Council first started functioning in the old District Court building of Kokrajhar. Later on, the BAC Head Quarter was shifted to nearby DRDA building. Thus, Kokrajhar, the nerve-centre of the Bodoland Movement became the Head Quarter of the newly created political arrangement for the agitating Bodos – the Bodoland Autonomous Council (BAC). The making of Kokrajhar the BAC Head Quarter seemed not have been a right choice, at least geographically, as it is situated in the western tip of the Council area.

GROWTH OF BODO MILITANCY:

A feature of all modern democratic movement elsewhere in the developing third world countries, which have been newly liberated from the talk of the foreign European rule, is that violent method of agitation alongside the non-violent movement. Almost all modern mass movements are carried with the label of democratic non-violent peaceful mass-
movement. But behind the garb of democratic and non-violent method of carrying out a mass movement violent method is adopted side by side of the so called peaceful mass movements. The declared method of democratic non-violent peaceful method is just a means to deceive the outward eye of the common people and save themselves from government repressession by branding it as armed rebellion. On the other hand, violent method is adopted by the organisation with democratic nomenclature so as to advance the peace of the movement by way of awakening the government machinery from indifference towards the cause cited for remedy. This is the basic reason behind the accompaniment of violent mass-movements of modern times.

In submission to the above iron-law in respect of modern mass-movement, there was a semblance of violent method in the mass-movements carried out by different Bodo-Tribal organisations since late 1960s. The All Bodo Students Union (ABSU), which took up the task of initiating mass-movement advancing the cause of a separate Tribal homeland, may well be said the pioneer of violent method in the first instance so as to make mainstream Congress leaders and workers mainly among the Bodos submit to the newly found nationalist cause. Surely enough, many a Bodo Congress leaders turned meak in the face of volunteers of the movement for a separate Tribal Homeland.

The subsequent sequence of the Tribal Movement for a separate State had shown a slow but steady growth of violent method applied in advancing the causes of the movement. It saw a steep rise 1978 and after when Plains Tribal Council of Assam (Progressive) faction was formed by youthful leaders, breaking away from the parent organisation – the PTCA. The ABSU leadership then sided with
breakaway faction and made an effort for a stride in the pace of the movement. There was a constant effort on their part to frighten away the grassroot political workers and make them join PTCA (P). But the truth remained that such a novel method did not bear fruit as the parent organisation of PTCA still remained as strong as to meet the challenges posed by the PTCA (P)- ABSU duo.

The 1983 by-election to Assembly saw pick hour of AASU militancy while the organisation appealed for boycott of the poll and made an all-out effort to prevent the same. The AASU activists terrified the Assamese mass with a view to deter them from casting their vote. In the same way, they prevented the leaders of national and State Parties from filling nomination for that election. When all these did not show any prospect of yielding any result they adopted violent means. As a consequence, we have the history of Gohpur, Neily etc. killing during that poll period.

It is to be noted with interest that such an all-out effort by the AASU even could not deter the ABSU from sponsoring candidates from PTCA (P). The ABSU applied all methods available to frighten PTCA supporters and divert their vote towards their candidates. Of course, the outcome of the poll was very depressive for the PTCA (P)- ABSU due as just one candidate could be returned to the Assembly who happened to be a setting MLA. Their candidates boasted of aggressive ABSU support had to bite dust in that occasion.

The following period shows that the ABSU had copied the AASU way in advancing its cause. When the AASU came out almost successful through the 1985 Assam accord, the ABSU tried to follow suit. It snatched away the Tribal leadership in the way AASU did, that is, to make submit
all other existing organisation to its suzerainty and go by its will. From March, 1987 the ABSU started a ‘democratic, non-violent, peaceful mass movement” on the demand for a separate Union Territory of the Bodos and other plains Tribals of Assam on the North bank of Brahmaputtra, on the foot-hills of Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh, extending from river Sankosh in the west to Sadiya in the east.

The initial stage of the Bodoland Movement, as can be noticed, was peaceful one. It was in tune with the ABSU’s declared way — democratic, non-violent peaceful mass-movement. There were democratic agitational programmes like hunger strike, demonstrations, peace processions mass rallies, bandhs, religious prayers, oath taking, mass crying in front of Government offices etc. The programmes could attract Bodo masses and consequently these all could see mass participation. Such a huge mass participations could draw attention of the Government, which became too restive to nip the movement at its bud.

But the prohibitive actions on the part of the Government could not stop the mass enthusiasm on the part of Bodo people, rather the Bodo agitators turned more emboldened and restive. The result was arbitrary action on the part of Government to crush down the movement. There were violent police actions upon the agitating Bodo masses. The Government adopted a harsh attitude towards the Bodoland Movement. It vowed to maintain territorial unity and integrity of Assam and accepted the challenge posed by the ABSU with a bold step. It ordered for day and night village raids, arbitrary arrests, inhuman torture on Bodo villagers, poisoning the food-stuff and drinking wells. These arbitrary actions were later compounded by barbaric criminal acts like physical
molestation and gang-rape of Bodo women. Apprehending imminent arrest and inhuman torture, the malefolk had to flee away from home and take shelter in jungles.

Such an arbitrary action on the part of Government and inhuman barbaric acts of Assam Police turned the Bodo youths restive and in turn instigated them to take up arms so as to resist such police actions. The youthfolk began to manufacture country-made arms and later began to procure sophisticated arms from foreign smugglers. In this way, it was found that the Bodo youths were on warpath so as to save their persons and chastity of their mothers and sisters. This humble yet illegal way adopted by the Bodo youths ultimately led to the growth of Bodo militancy.

In the following period, the ABSU could mobilise these agitated youths and formed the Bodo Volunteers Force (BVF) with view to speed up the pace of the Bodoland Movement. The ABSU thus got a major thrust from new found BVF so as to carry out its tactical war with the Assam Government. It utilised the service of BVF cadres in furthering the agitational activities through militant works, which in the ultimate analysis led to growth of Bodo Militancy.

In the meantime, agitated Bodo youths hailing originally from Darrang district formed the Young Bodo Nationalists Association in 1986. When the Bodoland Movement started and BVF formed, it converted into Bodo Security Force (Bd.S.F.) and demanded secession from India and formation of a sovereign Borobhadot. It began to further its cause and widen its support base. It began to spread its activity throughout the Bodo areas of the State. It was found to be able to create a strong support base of Darrang district of Upper Assam.
In this way, two militant organisations grew among the Bodos during the 1980s. Both of them ran their activities parallely among the Bodos without any direct confrontation. The common Bodo masses just knew it for certain that the BSF demanded for secession and sovereignty while the BVF worked for a Separate Bodo State under the Indian Union itself.

In the pick period of the Bodoland Movement, the BVF grew much strong via ABSU and began to suppress the BSF activities. In the district of Darrang, the commander-in-chief of the outfit was axed to death by public agitated on instigation by ABSU alleging mass torture by BSF cadres. Many other leaders and cadres of the outfit were beaten to death on instigation by the ABSU. As a result, the outfit became very weak due to lose in leaders and cadres and soon began to lose its mass-base due to excesses it used to inflict upon the mass people many a time on small pretext. Yet the outfit strived hard to subsist in the milieu of reality.

As soon as the Bodo Accord was signed on 20th February 1993, there were many upheavals in the ABSU rank and file. As the result of the creation of new political party choosing leaders from and among the vanguards of the ABSU, the new leadership became quite incapable of controlling the new power centers in the Bodo Politics. The ‘grand oldman’ leaders turned into politics while the younger generation came at the helms of affairs of the ABSU. Due to creation of new power centers within the existing the Bodo leadership, these all could ot move together agreeing on the same line. Instead, the various wings of the Bodo Organisations were very enthusiastic about adopting deviant policies and programmes as per their own suitability. This became inevitable for numerous Bodo Organisational Wings and their leaders to adopt own programmes so as to help assert themselves and prove their existence.
Without this they had to sit idle, which made them look like "political drones" in the eyes of the common public.

Such assertions by the new power centers of Bodo politics through adoption of divergent policy and programme so as to suit the existence of the wing-leaders created a mess in the arena of Bodo politics. The ABSU leadership become quite incapable of controlling all wing-leaders in respect of maintaining integrity of Bodo leadership. Moreover, the young ABSU leadership could not frame a long-term plain and police for uplift of Bodo community through the service of newly created Bodoland Autonomous Council arrangement impose the same upon the Bodo organisations for action.

Such a tumult and turbulence in the ABSU umbrella organisations, the BdSF outfit found an ample scope to reassert itself. In the meantime, during the Bodoland Movement the outfit was banned by the Central Government and declared unlawful in 1992. Then the outfit rechristened itself as the "National Democratic Front of Boroland (NDFB)". The act of the Central Government banning the organisation rather focussed the organisation in the eye of the common public and it began to strive hard to regain its lost base among the public. Eventually it came to confront with the ABSU leadership which was then in mass disarray and feeble one.

The surrender by Bodo volunteers followings the Bodo Accord turned them easy target of NDFB militants. The NDFB criticized the Bodo Accord very severely and termed the event as a "historic blunder". It branded the ABSU and surrendered BVF volunteers as betrayer of Bodo causes and opposed the Bodo Accord a "blank cheque" paper. It vowed to carry on its struggle for a "Soverign Borohadot" appealed to
Eventually the ABSU took concrete step to check the advance of the NDFB through own arrangement. It enthused the erstwhile Bodo volunteer Force cadres to come round and organise themselves into an extremist organisation. As a result, on 18th June, 1996 the Bodo Liberation Tiger Force (BLTF) got its birth. The cadres of this outfit were popular as ‘Tigers’ and their outfit also came popularly known to be as BLT. The members of the new extremist outfit took oath before his Almighty to carry on armed struggle for creation of separate Bodoland State within Indian Union and work for emancipation of Bodos from the domination by other races of the land. Mr. Hagrama Basumatary alias Thebla Basumatary, a BVF cadre apprehended at Shillong for infamous Guwahati Paltan Bazar bomb killed, became its Chairman cum Commander-in-Chief. In this way, the second extremist outfit got its birth among the Bodos.

Conforming to the political demands of the ABSU, the BLT adopted as ideology of creating a separate state remaining within the sovereignty of India. Truely speaking, this organisation sprang up from the background of the 6 year Bodoland mass movement. The formation of extremist organisations eas a reaction against the repressive policy of the government, which denied the Bodos their democratic way of movement terming it a law and order problem. A section of Bodo youths considered extremism as a right counterpoise to the police atrocities as well as a means for the end.

CLASH BETWEEN THE NDFB AND BLT:-

Right after its birth, the BLT tried to expand its mass base among the Bodo population. Already, by virtue of their works among the Bodo
people during the Bodoland Movement period as BVF cadres, the BLT cadres had firm hold among the Bodo population. When the reappeared among the Bodo population as extremist cadres with a vow to meet unfulfilled dream for a separate Bodoland, they met with more welcome then before. The common Bodos provided them food and shelter, helped them with money and labour.

There was another reason for easy acceptance of BLT by the Bodo population. The once powerful NDFB later turned oppressive among the common Bodo folk. The NDFB cadres carried out all types of expedition, extortion and attack upon the Government forces and the common Bodos had to bear the burnt of excesses by the armed forces. Also, many a time, the outfit inflicted capital punishment on common Bodofolk with a suspect for informer and for not abiding by their whim and caprice. On occasions, the outfit imposed physical torture on commonfolk for denying food and shelter to them. For such reasons the common Bodofolk had become disgruntled over excesses committed by NDFB militants and they now savior in the erstwhile BVF cadres who reappeared before them as BLT cadres.

The birth and consequent growth of BLTF among the Bodos caused a major concern for the NDFB. The up coming of BLT cadres came to direct confrontation with the NDFB organisation. The growth of a rival group among the Bodos in the from of an extremist organisation became a matter of headach for the NDFB. It posed a direct challenge to existence of the organisation. Itself. Thus, there was an imminent chance for clash among the two rival extremist organisations among the Bodos-NDFB and BLT.

The Birth of BLT and it rapid growth caused a direct confrontation
between the NDFB and BLT. There grew an unhealthy competition between the two rival groups. The two outfits began to crave for more influence and domination among the Bodos. Consequently, the two rival organisations began to clash for own area of influence and domination among the Bodo population.

COMMUNAL CLASHES IN THE BAC AREA AND THEIR ROLE: -

In 1994, a great riot broke out in the Barpeta district of Assam. The truth was that menace of Muslim settlers in the area grew day by day. Their number swelled up day by day and at a time very much powerful in the area. They were too sensitive and much assertive in their thought and action. They were too aggressive and on a small pretext inflicted physical and mental torture upon the Bodo people in the locality. Later on they did not even hesitated to snatch away land produces, which they forcibly reaped and took away home. Many a time, they stole away cattle and goats in the field and sometimes forcibly. Lastly, they even dared too gallop with Bodo women and indulge in sexual offences.

So long the Bodos were patient enough to bear all brunt with a heavy heart. They hoped that good sense will prevail some day and the Muslim settlers will do away with all those evil acts by rectifying themselves. It was a basically because the Bodos are peace-loving and they do not like any type of acrimony between the neighbours. Nor the Local Bodos could ever think about coming into direct conflict with the Muslim immigrants who had been migrators from neighbouring char areas and Bangladesh with tacit support from the State Government.

But good sense never prevailed in the mind of Muslim immigrant settlers. Rather their aggressive activities went on increasing day by day. Such a pass reached a certain point the local Bodos could no longer
tolerate the excessive of the immigrant Muslim settlers. In July they rose into action and inflicted a dreaded attack upon the Muslim immigrant settlers. The Bodo inmates penetrated into the Muslim villages and torched the house of the Muslim dwellers. The Muslim settlers had to concede defeat and flee away. Those Muslim dwellers who could not flee away in time of the attack were killed by the Bodo attackers. Thousands of house of Muslim settlers were thus gutted by fire set by Bodo attackers and the inmates had to flee to safe places and later take shelter in the relative’s house.

It many places of riot area, pockets where the Muslim settlers had majority and enough strength to throw challenge to Bodo attackers organised themselves and resorted to counter attack upon the Bodo villages. They organised themselves into large hoards and resorted to arsoning and killing. In most cases they indulged into looting and rapes. In this way, many Bodo villages fell into the hands of Muslim rioteers and were destroyed completely. The Bodo villagers too, had to flee away and take shelter in the safer places.

In the last analysis, it was found that the Muslim settlers had suffered lesser losses, at least in terms of money and property. It was basically because the Muslim shelters were comparatively newcomer and thus got little time and scope to gather wealth and create property. Moreover, they accompanied very little principal to enable to help earn subsistence only. As most of them have migrated from comparatively least prosperous char area of the State and some of them from neighbouring Bangladesh through porous border, one can easily imagine how pauper and wretched they might have been during their coming to northern valley of the State.

On the other hand, the Bodo villagers are indigenous people of the
region and they had been living in the district since time immemorial. Hence they have enough principal and scope to gather much wealth and create huge movable and immovable property. Over and above, their toil and hard labour help them to earn a lot and invest them in erecting stable household properties. Thus, when the villages of Muslim shelters and Bodo villagers got gutted and destroyed, the Bodo villagers had to suffer most whereas the comparatively less prosperous Muslim shelters had suffered very less, in the terms of money and property.

The communal riot of 1994 raised the eyebrow of many, thinking over the ferocity and cruelty which the Bodos can take up an issue for solution by themselves, especially when the administration take backside of their urge for long standing problems. The horror of the riot side left a deep-rooted impression about the Bodo temperament when it boils up, left neglected and unheard. The Non-Bodos in the State could well realize the hidden potentiality in the Bodo Physique and Psyche. The intellectual circle in Assam began to read the writings in the wall and could foresee repetition of such event in case their problems are kept unheard any longer.

The media nationwide and the Assamese intellectual in particular tried to give communal colour to the event and began to term it as a step of “Ethnic Cleansing”. They built up the theory that as the demand for Separate Bodoland State has been refused by the Government on the ground that the Bodos do not form majority in the demanded Bodoland area, the Bodo agitators particularly the extremist elements in them, has resorted to such a step of “ethnic Cleansing” so as to drive out the Non-Bodos from the demanded Bodoland area and help them achieve majority.

In the first half of June, 1996 when the new Asom Gana Parishad
(AGP) Government took the reign from outgoing Congress Government, there appeared a communal clash between the Santal Adivasis and the Bodos. A severe communal riot sparked off in the western frontier of Assam. On June 8 of the year, dead bodies of three Bodo women were recovered in a jungle of Kachugaon area of Kokrajhar District. At that time, skirmishes between Bodo and Santal inmates of the area had already begun on petty issues in small pretext. Then, it was firmly believed that Santal miscreants had gang-raped the three Bodo and had hidden in the dense jungle so as to avoid knowledge of the Bodos. The Bodos, who formed majority in the area, took it as a direct challenge to their existence and thought about direct action for retaliation. From 15th June' the Bodo villagers took upon Santal people of the area by destroying a number of Santal Villages. In return, the Santals too, took this action by local Bodos as a direct threat to their very existence and set on work for due retaliation. The santal villagers also attacked a number of neighboring Bodo villages. This angered the Bodos more, as if oil was poured upon burning fire. The Bodo again took upon Santal villages, which met retaliation from Santal Adivasis. At last this itself turned into a big communal riot in the area.

The news of attacks and counter attacks between the Bodos and Santals spread like wild fire throughout the district. The news created an apprehension in the mind of the people of two communities where they have been living since long. There were similar actions in the pockets of the State where Bodos and Santals co-habited as neighbouring villagers. The Bodo and Santal areas of far-flung areas tried their best to maintain peace and amity to the extent possible. But extremist elements of both the sides came in the pockets where their people formed majority and
instigated them for communal action. The villagers who did not want to go by their words were threatened by the extremist elements and were at last compelled to join the campaigns against the opposite community. In this way, the communal riots broke out and spread like wild fire in the districts in parts. Ultimately, the riot also spread to tea-tribe majority areas of Darrang district.

The consequence of the novel riot in the area proved very catastrophic for the western part of the State. It was reported that thousand of inmates from both the sides lost their lives in the hand of rival community. Lakes of people from both the communities turned homeless and had to move to safe places in far way areas. Properties worth of crores of rupees were destroyed in this riot as most of the households and granaries got burned or destroyed during the attacks. Thousand of granaries and livestocks lost their lives and many of them turned without owner. The extremist elements as well as adjoining villagers took the chance and looted properties worth of crores. Many livestocks and household properties were transferred to own home of the attackers and sold later on. Not quite a few vagabond tried to visit the deserted villagers and to lift the left out livestocks for extravagantia and sometime even fell prey of the guarding villagers.

The news media of the State and outside remained almost indifferent towards the problem of communal riot in the western tip of Lower Assam. For a few days following the beakout of the communal riot, the print as well as electric media maintained tacit silent. By the time the print media took up the job, the riot had already reached a point of no return. When they began, the reporting and non-committal as they were exaggerated the fact blowing it to out of proportion which instigated the people of
the affected side to think about due retaliatory action. The news reporting just focused the happenings, at many a times exaggerating them. The news items were devoid of any hints for solution of the communal problem. It was found that rather the news reporting encouraged retaliatory actions and counteractions from the both the sides of the Bodo and Santal villages.

The Government took no immediate action to stop the worst ever communal riot. The district administration received the news late and acted very late. Of course, the newly elected AGP Government then took the reign on 16th June only, just a day after the breakout of the riot. The district administration found utter helpless to whom to turn for help. By the time new government swung into action, almost everything was over. A lapse on the part of the administration caused innumerable lose of human lives and properties. Rumours spread out that head cut bodies were thrown out in the Gongia River flowing through the Kachugaon area, about which by joke it used to be told that the fishes sold in markets used to smell as Santals. Many a Santals and Bodo villagers alike gave up taking fish believing this rumour.

Even if the new AGP Government was successful about quelling up the riot, the tension however, continued to prevail in the area. It took months together to see the affected inmates get due rehabilitation from the end of the Government. The district administration took necessary steps for sheltering the riot affected people in the relief camps and provide foot and clothings to them, though lately.

From the end of the State Government it was already that the communal clash was a product of the NDFB policy for “ethnic cleansing” from the proposed Borohadot area, which it intend to turn into a sovereign
State of the Bodos. The Santals and others non-Bodo communities also had firm belief about it. The print media also published news in the same line. The NDFB then became the main target of attack, both of the Government as well as the media along with the common public. This very fact projected the NDFB as a force to reckon with, enough to challenge the government and pose a serious threat to the State administration.

But the insiders in the Bodo circles had the firm belief that in the foreign Bodo-Santal riot, NDFB and BLT extremists acted together, in the greater interest of the Bodos. It was said that the Bodo patriots felt at right time about the growing power of the Santal Adivasis. They felt that unless some appropriate measure was undertaken, there is every fear of Bodos being subdued by the growing influence of the Adivasis. So they felt the urgency for some kind of practical action on their part so as to check upon the growing power of Santal Adivasis.

By the time of the breakout of the riot, the menace of Santal communalism had grown to a great extent. It was said that the Santal villagers in and around Kachugaon and Gossaigaon area had open talks about rebellion against the Bodos. While going to market, they will divide the properties of the neighbouring Bodo villagers. Very innocently yet boldly one will say, “Hwy, Rajen Masters mati ami nibore, khub bhal kheti hoy” (Hey, I will take the land of the Rajen master, it yields very good).” The other will say. “Bulao mahajoner tin ghorta ami neibore, tui Magur Mahajonerta nibi” (I will take the house of Bulao mahajan, you take that of the Magur Mahajan). When one found Bengga, the servant removing the weeds from jute plantation, he was told rather jokingly, “Thumbra Kheno kosto korse bra, oitato amarsene hobo” (why
are you doing so much labour in vain, after all the land will be ours).

In the above way, the menace of Santal Adivasis upon the Bodo localities increased day by day. They became bolder every passing day and were restless about inflicting an attack upon the local Bodo people. The truth remains that the extremist elements from Santals outside the State penetrated among the comparatively simple and innocent Santal Adivasis and imbibed them with the dream of occupying the whole land in the area by defeating the locals Bodos. They instigated the Santal commoners to attack the Bodo population and acquire the land belonging to them the dream for vast area of land presently under the occupation of Bodos turned the Santal Adivasis almost restless. Thus the Santal Adivasis in the lower Assam were waiting for a ripe moment for inflicting a crushing defeat upon the local Bodos and for that they were looking for a valid excuse.

When the dead bodies of three Bodo women were discovered from the jungle in Santal dominated area and the anguished Bodo locals attacked a Santal village nearby, the Santal Adivasis in the area found a valid excuse of jumping upon their long cherished prey. They attacked the Bodo villagers in the area day and night and destroyed them with an avowed aim of occupying these villages.

The repetition of communal clashes in the demanded Bodoland area raised a fearpsychosis in the mind of Non-Bodo populations in the State. They believed that their theory of “Ethnic Cleansing” by the Bodos with an avowed aim for securing majority in the demanded Bodoland area has been vindicated. Moreover, they thought it rightly confirmed the apprehension of media and Assamese intellectuals of repetition of such communal clash in near future.
When these communal clashes calmed down, there came operation by the NDFB for protecting forest resources within the Bodoland area, which it demanded as comprising the sovereign Bodoland when their struggle for the same is realised. Initially, it gave a strict warning to those all who indulge into illegal felling of tree and smuggling of timber from Bodoland to outside. It warned of dire consequences in case any one violates its dictate and preached death as the ultimate punishment.

This unauthorized step by an outlawed underground organisation could least deter the determined band of smugglers of timber deep-rooted in the Bodoland area. Even before the government department could not take any legal action upon them as the criminal elements had already made inroad to the smugglers and they turned into fearless nuisance posing direct threat to anyone who stood in their way. Many sincere forest officials had to pay heavy price for trying to prevent them for smuggling timbers from reserved forests. Ultimately, the forest officials had to surrender before the smugglers while most of forest department officers preferred to collude with the smugglers in order to make money. As a consequence, the reserved forest falling under the demanded Bodoland area met with utter destruction and later these blank areas were later encroached upon by the immigrants from the outside. Only then the NDFB felt it duty bound for it to protect the forest resources within the demanded area of its sovereign Bodoland.

Later, as the event show it, the smuggler did not pay heed to the warning of the NDFB and rather continued their activity of illegal felling of tree and smuggling these outside. The smuggler belonging to the majority community entered the forests posing themselves as if they are going to collect log. But when they find entry they committed the criminal
activities of felling tree and smuggling to outside. Such elements continued to fell before bullets of NDFB Cadres, which in turn raised hue and cry in media blaming the Bodos for such measures dubbing it as steps of Ethnic Cleansing. In many cases, the smugglers belonging to minority community entered the reserved forests in hoards in a challenging mood and fell prey of NDFB bullets. In most of the cases, such incidents tended to provoke communal clashes in the area.

DEMAND TO SCRAP THE BODO ACCORD AND REJECTION OF B.A.C.: 

The new ABSU leadership found the Bodo scenario in the Post-Accord realm very puzzling one. Nowhere it could see any solution to vexed ethnic problem, rather it felt that the problem is increasing and becoming more complicated with passing time. The new leadership of ABSU could not find the arrangement of B.A.C. to be able to give any solution to the longstanding problems of the Bodos. The newly envisaged arrangement could not fulfill the long time political aspirations of the Bodos. Rather it put a fullstop in the long chain of the Bodo struggle for fulfilling their long cherished political aspiration through the achievement of Separate Bodoland State.

The tenure of the first interim Executive Council headed by Mr. Sansuma Khunggur Bwiswmuthiary could not witness any major achievement during its long six-month period. A hard effort was made for demarcation of the boundary of Bodoland Autonomous Council. But the State Government and the Executive Council could not agree on the boundary of B.A.C., as what the State Government proposed to give fell far less what the agitating Bodo Organisations sought for. Given that the demand of the Bodo Bodies of their envisaged map, it will en-gulf one-
third of the total land area of Assam, which the Assam Government noway wanted. Whatever it proposed to give formed just a fraction what the agitating Bodo Bodies envisaged about their Bodoland in dream.

Despite of this, some preliminary yet major beginning was made during the tenure of S.K. Bwiswmuthiary. At least the newly created Bodoland Autonomous Council has made a beginning and started its function. The basic infrastructure necessary for the newly created Autonomous Council was arranged in a systematic manner. The accommodation required for functioning of the newly created Bodoland Autonomous Council was requisitioned from the Assam Government and first it sat in the old court building. Little later, the Government allocated the newly built D.R.D.A. Building nearby. A golden touch was given in the developmental works for the envisaged autonomous area.

The first Executive Council of B.A.C. was under constant pressure for demarcation of the new found Autonomous Council area and for rehabilitation of the surrendered militants. The Executive Council began to mount pressure upon the State for the same but to no avail. The State Government used delaying tactics and began to postpone the demarcation on none pretext and another. On the other hand, the surrendered militants also could not be rehabilitated properly. When its cry fell into deaf ear of the State Government, the Chief of the Bodoland Executive Council, Mr. Sansuma Khunggur Bwiswmuthiary resigned on 16th November'1993 in protest against the inaction of the State Government even before the expiry of the stipulate six-months period of the interim B.A.C.

There was another factor contributing to the resignation by Mr. Sansuma Khunggur Bwiswmuthiary as Chief of the B.A.C. After the
Bodo Accord was signed, the agitating Bodo organisation sat into a political convention Kajalgaon near Bongaigaon under the patronship of All Bodo Students’ Union. The convention arrived at an agreement and formed the “Bodoland People’s Party” (BPP) as the lone political party for the Bodos. Mr. Sansuma Khunggur Bwiswmuthiary was elected as the Chairman of this Party and Mr. Premsing Brahma was elected as the General Secretary. After Mr. Bwiswmuthiary sat in the B.A.C. as Chief, Mr. Brahma began to aspire for the post of Chief and began to trouble him. Soon after, the Party met with an untimely split with S.K. Bwiswmuthiary remaining as Chairman of the Original Party, while Mr. Brahma formed his own faction - BPP(P) through Tamulpur Convention and became its Chairman. This unfortunate event weakened Mr. Bwiswmuthiary politically very much.

The State Government under Late Hiteswar Saikia was thus able to mount pressure upon Mr. Bwiswmuthiary to bow out and step down owing incapacity. He already began to contact Mr. Premsing Brahma, Deputy Chief of B.A.C. for toppling hardliner Mr. Bwiswmuthiary and give reign to more lenient Mr. Brahma. As pre-planned the State Government nominated Mr. Premsing Brahma as the Chief of the Bodoland Executive Council. But the Executive Council refused to accept Mr. Brahma as their leader and began to put pressure upon the State Government to reinstate Mr. Bwiswmuthiary as the Chief. When their pressure did not yield any result, majority of the Members of the Executive Council who were staunch supporters of Mr. Bwiswmuthiary choose to resign instead of accepting Premsing Brahma as their leader. And the State Government lost no time in filling up the resultant vacancies by nominating staunch supporters of Mr. Brahma.
The tenure of Mr. Premsing Brahma was far strong and vigorous in comparison to that of Mr. Bwiswmuthiary as he had the blessing of Chief Minister Late Hiteswar Saikia. The State Government gave full backing to the Bodoland Executive Council led by Mr. Brahma. The State Government, which did not bother to release a single-paise from the State Exchequer for functioning of the newly formed B.A.C. during the tenure of S.K. Bwiswmuthiary, began to pour out fund to Premsing Brahma led to B.A.C. The objectives of the State Government was evidently to make S.K. Bwiswmuthiary look weaker and less efficient than Mr. Premsing Brahma, whom it would like to project as the new leader of the Bodo Masses, with an ulterior motive to weaken the growing Bodo leadership.

As desired and pre-planned by the Saikia Government, Mr. Premsing Brahma could give a major thrust to the developmental works within the B.A.C. area. Almost everything went well under the control of the State Government from behind and enormous amount of the fund could be released and disbursed for carrying out developmental activities within the proposed B.A.C. area. Many new roads, school buildings, auditoriums, institutions were built and repaired by the grant allocated from the end of B.A.C. Social Organisations, Public Institutions, Youth Clubs, Public Committees could secure liberal grants from the end of the B.A.C. and utilise them for their welfare. Thus everything went well superficially, but inside the real picture was very devastating and horrible one. The basic nature of the Bodo people and the very core of Bodo foundation met with a deadly blow a the Bodos now began to run after easy money and the vista upon which the Bodo Nationality rest became shaky one.

The All Bodo Students’ Union (ABSU), which spearheaded the
The six-year long Bodoland Movement found a new ally in the leadership of Mr. Premsing Brahma in the B.A.C. Its President Late Swmbla Basumatary began to share platform with the BAC Chief and began to support him openly. The ABSU also got close to Assam Government under Hiteswar Saikia via Premsing Brahma. There were many formal and informal talks between the ABSU and Assam Government on the core issues relating to boundary of B.A.C. and the development of proposed area. But the Assam Government was clever enough to pour out money in the name of development of the B.A.C. areas and divert the main issue of boundary demarcation.

Despite the shortcomings mentioned above, a few laudable steps were taken by the B.A.C. under the leadership of Premsing Brahma. The first of such steps was decision to use Bodo Language in Roman Script for official purposes and the second was to put before the Central Government the issue of representation of Bodos in the main bodies like N.E.C. and APSC. Over and above, he was able to persuade the State Government to demarcate the boundary of Bodoland Autonomous Council, which comprised 2570 revenue villages. The Chief of B.A.C. was in haste to welcome the declared boundary of the B.A.C. through a formal Press Release. Mrs. Supriya rani Brahma, the President of All Assam Tribal Women’s Welfare Federation (AATWWF) who happened to be wife of Mr. Brahma, joined her husband in welcoming the announced boundary of B.A.C., allegedly without consulting the Executive Body. But as the declared boundary was with a contiguous gap of 10 (Ten) Kilometers belt alongwith the Indo-Bhutan border, was denounced by all other Bodo organisations including the All Bodo Students’ Union (ABSU), signatory of the Bodo Accord. It was primarily
because the declared boundary made the Bodoland Autonomous Council looks like an isolated island, floating within the Assam touching Inter-State or International Boundary. It was so also because the villages in the Srirampur area touching Assam - West Bengal border was very cleverly excluded from the jurisdiction of B.A.C. The first purpose behind this act of the State Government was to make it an isolated island type landscape surrounded by Assam land, clearly to make it impossible to turn to a Separate State in near future. The second aim was the B.A.C.'s jurisdiction was huge revenue in this Inter-State entry gate. With the same ulterior motive, many tea gardens falling within the B.A.C. area was excluded from the jurisdiction of the Autonomous Council.

When Mr. Hiteswar Saikia expired in 1996 and the Congress lost power to Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) in the Assembly Election that followed, the new Government nominated Mr. Kanakeswar Narzary as the new Chief of B.A.C. He constituted a 23-Member General Council of Executive Bodoland Council including 9 (Nine) Executive Members. He, in the first instance, was able to sit with full strength in the B.A.C. Head Quarter at Kokrajhar and to run in the full swing of developmental activities within the B.A.C. area. Mr. Narzary, a seasoned politician with revolutionary experience made it look at least everything was going right.

The people's Democratic Front (PDF), the political party which sponsored Mr. Kanakeswar Narzary to be the chief of B.A.C. met with a vertical split in 1999 and he revived the United Bodo Nationalist Liberation Front (UBNLF) of which he was the chairman. For this political split, Mr. Narzary turned very weak politically towards the later part of his tenure. The Bodo Liberation Tiger (BLT), the underground outfit in ceasefire with the central Government contributed to his
weakening by compelling all Executive Member belonging to Bodo community to part away from Bodoland autonomous Council and the Executive Council led by him. All E.M. and General council Members except Mr. Narzary himself and Mr. Nowaz Basumatari, his deputy obliged to submit their resignation. Along with two non-Bodo Members, the total 38 subjects allocated to the B.A.C. together with other ancilliary subjects when divided among the E.M.s, fall enormous numbers in each E.M.’s part.

Later on, there was a rift between the AGP-led Assam Government and the B.A.C. under the Kanakeswar Narzary and that had alienated latter from the Assam Government. Following this, personal rift aws reported between Mr. Narzary and Mrs. Rekha Rani Das Boro, Minister of Welfare of Plain Tribals & Backward Classes and department in charge of the B.A.C. Consequently, Mr. Narzary lost sympathy of the State Government and the Minister in-charge both. For this, despite many plan and policies adopted and allocations made to various departments, he was unable to get funds allocated to various departments of B.A.C. under budgetary head released by the State Government. As a result, the pace of developmental works within the B.A.C. area slowed down. The people living within the B.A.C. area very soon lost confidence on the B.A.C. and could hope nothing useful from it.

Despite the above facts, it must be admitted that a few but marvelous achievement has been achieved by the B.A.C. led by Mr. Kanakeswar Narzary. He was able to make the State Government, which has been under constant pressure to finilise the boundary of the B.A.C., to notify a new boundary of B.A.C. incorporating 10 (Ten) Kilometers belt in the Indo-Bhutan Border. As the newly notified boundary excluded many
revenue villages falling in the southern tract of the B.A.C. boundary notified in 1995, this has again been denounced by all Bodo organisations. Though Mr. Narzary hosted a party at Dispur congratulating the State Government for making this new notification, later he took a way round by filing a writ petition in the Supreme Court urging for an order for restoration of revenue villages earlier included in the B.A.C. Secondly, though not fall within the given jurisdiction of the B.A.C., Mr. Narzary published the Bodoland (A.C.) Gazette and got it duly recognised by the R.N.I., New Delhi.

The above facts led to dissolution of the interim Bodoland Executive Council under Chairmanship of Mr. Kanakeswar Narzaryon 16th April'2000. Mr. Narzary approached the Gauhati High Court through a writ petition and thus challenged the validity of the dissolution order of the State Government. The High Court quashed the State Government's order dissolving the existing interim of the B.A.C. and ordered that the existing Executive Council of B.A.C. be reinstated and it shall continue in office till it is replaced by an Elected Council. By virtue of this order of the High Court Mr. Narzary took charge again on 5th June’2001. And this Executive Council is continuing till date and counting down time for its fall as by now Congress Party has wrested power from the AGP in Assam. There has been personal grudge between the Chief and Principal Secretary of the B.A.C., which have resulted in the difficulty in working between the political and executive levels.

At present the Bodoland Executive Council is in the lowest ebb in respect of developmental activities. There has been personal rift between the Chief of B.A.C. and Principal Secretary of B.A.C. and it has been reported that important files are not sent to the Chief for political approval.
The B.A.C. Secretariat is in no position to pay Salaries to its Staff Members. The B.A.C. has not been able to secure release of fund for developmental works. Whatever meager fund could be released from State Government, it is alleged are being misappropriated and misused by the B.A.C. And the new Congress Government in the State has ensured that whatever fund be released under non-plan head be used in paying Salary to the Secretariat Staff and in the maintenance of the Secretariat establishment. For this reason, even if the Executive Council had worked out list of beneficiaries for sanction of grant from WPT and Social Welfare Funds, the same could not be disbursed because of this restriction imposed by the Sate Government through and order dated 25th May 2001.

Anyway, the present Bodoland Executive Council is very weak and is in a hapless condition. This Executive Body under the Chairmanship of Mr. Kanakeswar Narzary and earlier been alienated by the AGP Government of Mr. Prafulla Kumar Mahanta, which tried to dissolved it but failed. And now the Congress Government in the State under Mr. Tarun Gogoi learnt to be trying to dissolve the existing B.A.C. and bring forth some Congress leaders in the B.A.C. But looking at the previous experience during the AGP Rule and the existing High Court Order the new Congress Government in the State is taking a very cautious step to dissolve the existing BEC and install a new one.

ONGOING TALKS BETWEEN THE BLT AND CENTRAL GOVERNMENT:

The Bodo Liberation Tiger (BLT) gradually felt tired of the onslaught inflicted upon it by the Rival Group, the National Democratic Front of the Bodoland (NDFB), which on account of having earlier birth and experience could maintain a dominant base among the Bodos. Besides
this, it was established by the Government Intelligence Agencies that the NDFB had an understanding and collaboration with the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), which was fighting against the Union Government of India demanding cession from India so as to liberate the State of Assam from "Colonial Rule by the Indian Government". It tended to create confusion among the people of Assam as to the demands of both the organisations because the land inhabited by the Bodos, which the NDFB wanted to form sovereign Bodoland formed an inseparable part of Assam the land, which the ULFA intended to liberate from the clutches of Indian Rule. And when, despite this, the two organisations began to work in tandem with each other suspicion grew more among the enlightened section of people in the State. People had doubt on the sincerity and integrity of avowed aims and objectives of these two underground organisations.

Weary of the onslaught inflicted upon it by the NDFB, the Bodo Liberation Tiger (BLT) began to think about ways and means to defeat the NDFB. It thought about collaboration with the Union Government and thus weakening the strength of the NDFB. Besides, the BLT wanted to take an advantage of starting a dialogue with the Centre.

NOTES AND REFERENCES: