After the signing of the Accord, many in the State had believed that Assam’s days of agony were almost over, but that was not to be. Signing of the Accord was one thing, its implementation was another.

Post-Accord Scenario:

The post-Accord week was not without a drama. On August 17, 1985, Chief Minister Hiteswar Saikia resigned. On August 18, 1985, a 13-member ministry was sworn in. The move was vehemently opposed by the AASU-AAGSP leaders who were still in Delhi. But Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi assuaged their scepticism saying that the Ministry was just a temporary measure.

On August 21, 1985, the AASU-AAGSP leaders arrived in Guwahati and addressed a mammoth public meeting at the Judges’ Field. AASU president Prafulla Kumar Mahanta, while congratulating the people of Assam for their support, asked them to get ready to face the challenges ahead for a prosperous Assam. He also set the tone of future struggle by saying that if real homage was to be paid to the martyrs of the Assam movement, a prosperous Assam must be a reality.

The Memorandum of Settlement signed by the Centre and the movement leaders paved the way for fresh Assembly and parliamentary polls. The State Legislature which had been constituted on the basis of the 1983 elections was prematurely dissolved. While the Government of Assam was keen for early polls, the AASU wanted polls to be delayed for sometime on the ground that the voters’ list be fully corrected leaving no scope for complaints.

Regionalism Takes Root:

In the October 12-14, 1985, Golaghat political convention of the AASU, a new political party—Asom Gana Parishad—was formed to give full play to the
provisions of the Accord. The AASU had in fact spoken of a long-term economic planning way back on May 11, 1981. It had then, through a press release, stated that political and economic power must rest with the indigenous populace of Assam. The AASU, being apolitical in character as per its constitution, was to refrain from inheriting economic and political power. The Jorhat convention in January 1984 was an extension of the desire to vest a regional party with power.

Meanwhile, a new set of leaders had taken over the reign of the AASU at its Lakhimpur convention held from October 7-9, 1985. Kartik Hazarika became the new AASU president and Sashadhar Kakati became its new general secretary to carry forward the momentum generated by the previous AASU presidents and general secretaries.

In the Assembly elections held in December, 1985 the newly-floated AGP came to power by securing a simple majority of 64 seats in the 126-member Assam Legislative Assembly. Prafulla Kumar Mahanta took oath as the new Chief Minister of Assam on December 24, 1985.

In January 1986, an AASU delegation met State Chief Minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta and Home Minister Bhrigu Kumar Phukan to know about the progress of the Assam Accord. On January 21, 1986 the AGP Government ordered the creation of an Assam Accord Implementation Department.

**Assam Accord Hangs Fire:**

Late in February, 1986 the AASU accused Oil India Limited of violating the terms of the Accord by not reinstating the Assamese officers victimized in connection with the Assam agitation. In March, 1986 the AASU demanded release of salaries for the locked Ashok Paper Mill workers. In a telegraphic message to Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, the AASU also demanded immediate amendment to the IM (DT) Act, 1983, in the session of Parliament. They also demanded a Central University in Tezpur as had been stated in a memorandum to the Prime Minister in September, 1985.

On April 2, 1986, Union Minister of State for Internal Security, Arun Nehru, informed the Lok Sabha that the Centre had prepared a comprehensive scheme for
prevention of infiltration from across the border. He said that survey work for roads inside Indian territory would be undertaken after a discussion with Bangladesh.

Immediately after, the AASU, in a memorandum to the Union Home Secretary, Mr. R. D. Pradhan accused the Centre of delaying the implementation of the Assam Accord, and in maintaining the status quo of the IM (DT) Act, 1983. It also decried the delay in erecting physical barriers along the Assam-Bangladesh border, and demanded to expedite the establishment of the proposed national-level educational institutions in science and technology as per the Accord. It also demanded the reinstatement of Central Government employees victimized for taking part in the Assam movement.

On the other hand, the AGP Government in the State gave an ex-gratia of Rs. 30,000 each to the next kin of martyrs’ families on April 14, 1986.

AASU adviser Dr Arun Sarma, while sounding a warning to the Centre, said that it would review the whole issue of implementation of the Accord in the correct perspective, and take appropriate steps if the situation so demanded after August 15, 1986—when a year of signing of the Accord would be completed.1


On May 24, 1986, the AASU, in a letter to the Chief Minister and the Home Minister, asked them to respond in seven days stating the steps they had taken on the implementation of the Accord.

On June 1, 1986, in a press release, the AASU threatened to go for an agitation if the Governments at Delhi and Dispur did not take satisfactory steps within August 15, 1986 on the implementation of the Accord. The decision was taken after an AASU executive meeting on May 31, 1986 at its headquarters in Gauhati University. The meeting also demanded withdrawal of all types of cases against students, individuals and employees for their involvement in the Assam agitation within a month. The students’ body also warned the Government of starting a stir if the
process of construction of the border fence, amendment to IM (DT) Act, 1983 and identification of foreigners were not started by August 15, 1986.  

On June 7, 1986 the AGP Government’s Assam Accord Implementation Committee constituted a sub-committee for drafting of three sets of resolutions within 15 days for onward transmission to Centre on matters related to Clause 6 of the Accord. The AASU general secretary was also in the sub-committee.

On June 10, 1986, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi said that the Centre was committed to implement the Assam Accord. On June 16, 1986 the State Government decided to appoint enumerators to examine the 1966 and 1971 Assam electoral rolls for assisting the police to detect illegal migrants in the State. The decision was taken in a high-level meeting to review the progress of the Accord implementation.

On July 15, 1986, the AASU reiterated its threat of “renewed agitation at the Centre failed to amend the IM (DT) Act, 1983, in the session of Parliament that was ahead.” AASU general secretary Sasadhar Kakoti said in Sivasagar that the Centre had violated the Assam Accord by amending the Indian Citizenship Act to confer all rights, barring the right to vote, upon foreigners who had came to the State between 1966 and 1971.  

On July 16, 1986, a meeting on Clause 6 of the Accord was held in Dispur. On July 24, 1986 Gulam Nabi Azad, the Minister of State for Home said that substantial progress had been achieved on the implementation of the Assam Accord. On August 4, 1986, an AASU delegation met Union Home Minister Buta Singh in New Delhi to discuss about progress of the Accord. He assured the AASU delegation that the Centre was committed to implement the Accord in toto. The AASU also submitted a memorandum to the Home Minister expressing its concern over the delay in the implementation of the Accord. In a press conference in Delhi on August 6, 1986, the AASU criticized the AGP Government for its failure to check influx into the State. The AASU delegation consisted of its president Kartik Hazarika, general secretary Sasadhar Kakati and its two advisers—Dhruba Prasad Baishya and Dr. Arun Sarma. Prof. Basanta Deka was also in the delegation as an interpreter. On August 14, 1986, on the eve of the first anniversary of the Assam Accord, the AASU announced...
renewal of its agitation programme from August 18, 1986, against the Centre's delaying tactics in implementation of the Accord. The AASU decided that all its district and subdivisional units would send a memorandum to the Prime Minister urging him to implement the Accord, besides resorting to wall writings and a poster campaign.

On August 14, 1986, an AASU delegation in Delhi, led by its president Kartik Hazarika and general secretary Sasadhar Kakati, said that the Centre was not serious on the Accord. They said that there was no attempt on the part of New Delhi to implement the Accord even after the completion of a year of its signing. The AASU said, "There is a growing feeling that the Centre formulated the Accord only to defuse the situation in the State". The AASU delegation also met the Home Minister, the Information and Broadcasting Minister, the Industry Minister and officials in the Petroleum Ministry to discuss speedy economic development of Assam. On November 11, 1986, the Lok Sabha passed the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 1986 after a categorical assurance from Minister of State for Home P. Chidambaram that the Bill would not affect the Assam Accord. The Bill states that a person born will be a citizen of India if either of his/her parents is a citizen of India. It sought to prevent automatic acquisition of citizenship by birth.

**AASU, New Delhi, Dispur and the Accord**

The month of November 1986, was characterized by a number of AASU dharnas at the Boat Club in Delhi against the delay in implementation of Assam Accord. November was also the month when the AASU reviewed the 15 months of performance of the Centre and the State Governments. In its publication on the review of the Accord, the AASU was very critical of the Centre's attitude towards the Accord implementation. The AASU was of the opinion that with the signing of the Accord and the coming to power of the AGP comprising many former AASU leaders, the general feeling that henceforth the AASU would have little role to play regarding the Accord, had pervaded the people of the State. But it was not to be. And after 15 months, the AASU was forced to take the issue to the people again creating a confusion among them. The AASU said that it admitted the fact that the entire Accord could not be implemented within a span of few months. But some clause-
in the Accord “demand their applicability as early as possible, the delay of which will be at the peril of the Assamese society.” The AASU was also of the view that had the Centre acted on important clauses of the Accord, people in Assam would have realized the sincerity and purposefulness of the Union Government. The AASU lamented the lack of sense of urgency regarding the Accord implementation on the part of New Delhi. It was critical of the Centre’s role on the status quo of the IM (DT) Act, 1983, which, it felt, should have been amended at the earliest opportunity after the signing of the Accord to expedite the process of detection and deportation of foreign nationals. The AASU said that a political design was clearly visible at the snail’s pace of the Centre in amending the Act.

On the Centre’s apathy towards reinstatement of victimized employees, the AASU said, the people were very frustrated. It was peeved at the progress made in sealing the international border to stop infiltration. It said that the Centre was abdicating its responsibility in constructing border roads, erecting fences and walls and in creating a no-man’s land as had been envisaged in the Accord. Recollecting its meeting with the Home Minister on August 6, 1986, the AASU said that Mr. Bute Singh had then said that the survey work on the border would start after the rains season, which was indeed very shocking. It said that if the survey work took more than a year, then it would take the Centre crack of a doom to complete the actual work. It said, “We find it difficult to understand as to why the Union Government cannot respond to the situation positively and in a fitting manner”. The State Government too was at the receiving end of the AASU’s fury on the progress of the Accord. The AASU said, “measures like regularization of migrants up to 1966, maintenance of birth and death registers, expediting detection of post-1966 migrants and evicting encroachers from tribal blocks and belts and other government lands should have been executed at a much faster speed”. The AASU made it very clear to the Central and State Governments that accelerated pace of implementation of the Accord would only satisfy AASU’s level of expectation.

The AASU expressed its scepticism over the fate of the detailed proposals it had sent to the Prime Minister on August 14, 1986, regarding Clause 6 of the Accord. On Clause 7, the AASU said that the schemes and projects for economic development of Assam which it had submitted to the Prime Minister in September...
1985, seemed to have been gathering dust reflecting the callous attitude of the Centre regarding the Act. The AASU warned the Centre that any deviation from the spirit of the Accord would be an encouragement to undemocratic and divisive forces and it demanded the Prime Minister to honour his commitment to the nation by honouring the Accord. It said, “Mere signing of an Accord does not solve a problem nor does it end a movement”. The persistent AASU pressure forced the State Government to release press advertisements clarifying its position on the Assam Accord implementation after the Centre had clarified its own position on the issue. The next day, it also called a statewide bandh on the Centre’s non-implementation of the Accord.

On the eve of the 10th annual convention of the AASU at Nowgong, beginning February 21, 1987, the AASU warned the Centre and the State Government that if Dispur continued to show lack of initiative and the Centre its conspiratorial attitude in the implementation of the Accord, the AASU would be compelled to mobilize public opinion against them. The AASU also said that it would always remain vigilant to safeguard the interest of Assam. The Nowgong convention elected Kesha Mahanta and Atul Bora as new AASU president and general secretary respectively. The new AASU president, in his capacity as the editor of the AASU souvenir, made a note with disappointment that even after competition of 18 months of the Accord, no satisfactory arrangements had been made to implement the Accord, which forced the AASU to mull the path of agitation. The AASU said: “It is free for all in the Assam-Bangladesh border which is still wide open.” Castigating the Centre and the State Government on all vital issues of the Accord, the AASU said that Dispur let down the people as far as the completion of a National Register of Citizens steps for economic development, establishment of national-level educational institutions, births and deaths registers, detection of foreigners and their deportation were concerned.

On March 3, 1987, Chief Minister Prafulla Mahanta and Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi discussed for the first time the Assam Accord in Delhi. On March 5, 1987, the Centre constituted a technical committee under the Planning Commission for drawing up proposals for Assam’s all-round development.
The newly-elected AASU state executive committee met for the first time on March 19, 1987 and demanded withdrawal of all the pending cases connected with the Assam Movement within 15 days. An AASU delegation also met State Government officials on March 31, 1987, demanding disposal of such cases by April 7, 1987. On April 7, 1987, they met the Home Commissioner expressing concern at the non-withdrawal of those cases. They also demanded the rehabilitation of martyrs’ families. They took the opportunity for expressing their fear regarding the Bangladesh border which was still wide open.

On April 15, 1987, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, during his visit to Assam, said that the Assam Accord would be implemented in letter and spirit. He also inaugurated the Kolia Bhomora Bridge at Tezpur. The AASU submitted a memorandum to the Prime Minister demanding two more bridges.

On April 24, 1987, an AASU delegation met the Chief Minister and conveyed to him that detection of foreigners would not be perfect till a register of true Indian citizens was prepared. In a warning, the AASU, through a press release, said that the faulty process of detection of foreigners was detrimental to the integrity of the State.

On May 2, 1987, in a press conference in Guwahati, the AASU decided to go back to the path of agitation. Peeved at the Centre’s ‘deceit’ on the Assam Accord, the AASU called a State bandh on June 5, 1987.

On August 4, 1987, State Industry Minister Digen Bora and the Union Minister of State for Petroleum and Natural Gas, Mr Brahm Dutt finalized a deal on a three-million-tonne oil refinery as per the Assam Accord. On August 9, 1987, the AASU said that since the signing of the Accord, there had been seven Parliament sessions but practically nothing was done on the IM (DT) Act, 1983 and Parliament was yet to introduce a Bill to amend it. It also expressed its concern that the victimized Central Government employees were yet to be reinstated. On August 20, 1987, the AASU submitted a memorandum to the Prime Minister on the Assam Accord and complained of its tardy progress.

On August 22, 1987, the AASU and the Centre reached an agreement on the IM (DT) Act amendments, stating that legislative action would be initiated soon.
AASU also rejected the proposed amendment on the issue of burden of proof in the Act. Soon after on August 26, 1987, the Consultative Committee meeting of the Home Ministry said that amendment to the IM (DT) Act, 1983, would be made through an Ordinance after the session of Parliament. On September 24, 1987, after a three-day delegates' conference in Dibrugarh, the AASU said "...at the present rate, it will take another 20 years to deport foreigners". It decided to launch an agitation from middle of October against the Centre and the State Government for their failure on the Accord. It also said that measures on Clause 6 of the Accord on constitutional safeguards were yet to be taken. It demanded general amnesty for all those who had taken part in the movement. It slammed the AGP Government for its failure in the implementation of the Accord.

On September 29, 1987, talks between the Centre and the State Government on IM (DT) Act, 1983, ended on a positive note. The application fee was reduced from Rs. 25 to Rs. 10. Both the Governments discussed draft on all proposals except the onus of proof issue and decided that judges would be the final authority on the onus of proof issue. On October 12, 1987, the State Government said that 9,699 foreigners had been deported since the AGP came to power on December 24, 1985, out of which 2,956 were Bangladeshis and 6,743 were Nepalis. On October 25, 1987, the AASU said that most clauses of the Accord were yet to be implemented. Students under the AASU picketed Central Government and public sector undertaking offices on October 28, 1987, against the Centre's indifference. The AASU also slammed the State Government for not being determined to force the Centre to implement the Accord. On November 26, 1987, the Bill for amendment to the IM (DT) Act, 1983, was introduced in the Lok Sabha. The statement for object and reasons read, "The Bill provides for relaxation of residence restriction in case of private complaints from the present radius of three kilometres. A person can complain against another if both reside under the same police station. The strength of tribunal is to be reduced from three to two. The fee to be deposited along with the complaint to be reduced from Rs. 25 to Rs. 10."8

On November 29, 1987, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi assured Assam Chief Minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta on the Accord, on the reopening of the Ashok Paper Mill and another oil refinery in the State.
On January 2, 1988 the AASU picketed the Janata Bhawan, administrative headquarters of the Assam Government against the failure of the State Government to implement the Accord. No minister was allowed to enter the Janata Bhawan. It also picketed for four days, the N. F. Railway headquarters at Maligaon for its failure to withdraw punitive action, including dismissal of some staff from service, for taking part in the Assam Movement. On February 1, 1988, the AASU announced, in a press conference, its decision to launch an agitation in phases for non-implementation of the Accord. It said that the three-day delegates meeting held in Baihata Chariali had given mandate to the AASU state executive committee to do the needful on the Accord.

AASU Resumes Stir:

On February 2, 1988, the foundation stone of the Sankardeva Kalakshetra was laid by the Assam Governor Bhisma Narayan Singh. On February 17, 1988, the AASU resumed its stir against non-implementation of the Assam Accord in letter and spirit. It said, in a mass rally at the Judges’ Field in Guwahati, that not a single foreigner had been deported so far. The AASU also charged the AGP with merely circulating figures on deportation. It announced a three-day oil blockade from February 27, 1988 against the slow progress of the Accord implementation and Centre’s indifference to Assam. It also announced its intention of picketing Oil India Limited’s pumping station, and in the process rejected requests from Chief Minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta and his Cabinet colleagues, for a dialogue forcing the Chief Minister to ask in vain the Union Home Minister Buta Singh to intervene.

The three-day AASU oil-blockade completely paralysed the flow of crude oil at all the six pumping stations of the OIL pipeline. On March 15, 1988, the Centre rejected AASU and AGP’s plea for a special status to Assam under Clause 6. On March 18, 1988, Chief Minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta asked the Prime Minister for tripartite talks in Delhi on the Accord. The AASU too expressed resentment on the fate of Accord, and demanded tripartite meeting while talking to the media in New Delhi.9

On March 29, 1988, in a shot in the arm for the AASU, the Lok Sabha passed the IM (DT) Amendment Bill amid an Opposition (except the AGP) walkout. The
Bill sought to confer powers to appellate tribunals to exercise superintendence over all the determination tribunals in a particular State. It also sought to empower superintendents of police to bind a person against whom a case has been filed. On March 30, 1988, the Rajya Sabha also approved the IM (DT) Amendment Bill.

On April 2, 1988, in Guwahati, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi said in a public rally that the Centre had nothing more to do on the Accord after the IM (DT) Amendment Bill had been passed. He said, “the onus now lies on the ruling AGP to prove how many foreigners are there in Assam.” Chief Minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta then issued a press statement on April 3, 1988, expressing his displeasure over the remarks of the Prime Minister. On April 5, 1988, the AGP Government constituted task force submitted its report which said that despite four decades of planning, Assam was in the process of deceleration. On the same day, the State Government reiterated that the Assam Accord was a document of faith to it. The AASU had earlier sent a memorandum to the President of India on April 2, 1988, on the remarks of the Prime Minister on Centre’s role in Accord implementation.

**Government Report on Assam Accord Implementation:**

On May 13, 1988, the first official report of the Government of Assam on the implementation of the Assam Accord was published. The fact that it was published almost after three years of signing of the historic document was a pointer towards the growing lethargy among those very leaders who had once signed the Accord, and were now not ready to take the responsibility in ensuring its successful implementation.

Assam Chief Minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta in his forward note to the Government publication on the progress of the implementation of the Assam Accord wrote, “The Government of Assam is fully aware that the destiny of the people of Assam rests solely on the implementation of the Assam Accord in its letter and spirit.” The Government, on the issue of the detection and deportation of infiltrators, had the following two tables to show as its performance.
### Table - I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District State</th>
<th>IM (DT) Act, 83</th>
<th>As on 31-3-88</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Progressive</td>
<td>During</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total upto 1985</td>
<td>the year 1986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. No. of enquiries initiated</td>
<td>8,311</td>
<td>41,753</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. No. of enquiries completed</td>
<td>1,475</td>
<td>24,715</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. No. of enquiries referred to the S/C.</td>
<td>1,475</td>
<td>24,715</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. No. of cases referred to the Tribunal.</td>
<td>373</td>
<td>4,212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. No. of cases disposed off</td>
<td>304</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. No. of persons declared illegal migrants</td>
<td>423</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. No. of such persons served with expulsion order.</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. No. of such persons expelled</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. No. of fresh/reinfiltrants pushed back.</td>
<td>1,121 (in 1985)</td>
<td>1,579</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. No. of Nepali nationals pushed back</td>
<td>702 (in 1985)</td>
<td>3,970</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table - II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District State</th>
<th>Foreigners' Act</th>
<th>As on 31-3-88</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Progressive</td>
<td>During</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total upto 1986</td>
<td>the month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>March/1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. No. of enquiry initiated</td>
<td>246,080</td>
<td>120,977</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. No. of enquiries completed</td>
<td>47,330</td>
<td>177,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. No. of cases referred to Foreigners Tribunal.</td>
<td>7,362</td>
<td>11,891</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. No. of cases disposed off</td>
<td>762</td>
<td>2,717</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. No. of persons declared foreigners.</td>
<td>509</td>
<td>2,136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. No. of persons registered with F. R. O.</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>861</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. No. of persons whose names have been sent for deletion from Electoral Rolls.</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The State Government’s report on Clause 5.2 said that the Union Government had amended the Citizenship Act, 1955 and relevant rules. On Clause 5.3 inquiry in respect of the foreigners who came to Assam after 1.1.1966 up to March 24, 1971 were taken up since the AGP Government coming to power and 417,452 inquiry were initiated, investigations had been completed in respect of 273,746 cases out of which 23,469 cases had been referred to the tribunals. The tribunals in turn had disposed off 5,100 cases and declared 4,717 persons as foreigners. As per Clause 5.4 922 foreigners had registered themselves with the Foreigners’ Registration Office.

The Union Government, heeding to the State Government’s request, had okayed the posting of 10 Registration Officers to expedite the registration of identified foreign nationals of the ’66-’71 stream as per Clause 5.5. On Clause 5.8 the preceding table on the IM (DT) Act, 1983, reflected the State Government’s performance.

The State Government had also raised the number of Illegal Migrants Tribunals from 4 to 18 and Foreigners’ Tribunals from 12 to 18 as per Clause 5.9. On the amendment to the IM (DT) Act, 1983; the State Government noted with satisfaction that following its constant persuasion, the Centre had got an amendment to the Act passed by Parliament incorporating a few of the draft proposals to some extent. The State Government also said that it had created 500 investigating teams comprising one sub-inspector, one head constable and two constables each besides 32 supervising officers of the rank of inspectors, 32 Deputy Superintendents of Police, 18 Additional SPs and two SPs.

On Clause 9.1, the State Government said that since the international border had to be exclusively taken care of by the Union Government, it had nothing more to do but to plead to the Centre to take urgent and effective measure as stipulated in the Clause.

On Clause 9.2, the State Government said that it had already completed necessary survey work and was making considerable progress in the matter of preparations for the actual construction.
On Clause 10, the Government said that steps had been taken in accordance with Revenue Acts and other rules to free Government land and tribal block and belts of any unauthorized occupation. Instructions were also issued by it to resume eviction operations which were under suspension due to rains and floods. Adequate steps including suitable directives in respect of Clause 11 were also issued. The State Government also decided to start a new working system all over the State under the Department of Health and Family Welfare as per Clause 12.

On Clause 6, the Government said that it had formulated a number of proposals and special provisions to safeguard Assam's identity and had sent those to the Union Government in October 1986, and on Centre's request, was also gathering additional information as required by the latter.

On Clause 7, the State Government said that it had constituted in May 1986 a task force to formulate schemes for the State's all-round economic progress and its report, submitted in April 1988 was being studied.

On the oil refinery, the State Government had asked Engineers India Ltd. to prepare a preliminary feasibility report, and said that proposals had already been submitted to the Centre for expansion of the existing refineries of Digboi and Bongaigaon. On the Silghat Cooperative Jute Mill, grants and exemptions in Sales Tax and Import Duty were said to have been provided to the Mill. On the Indian Institute of Technology, Dispur said that a site near Misa in Nagaon had been selected and the Deputy Commissioner had been directed to arrange the land. On Clause 14 (a), the State Government said that it had withdrawn all punitive measures taken against employees in connection with the Assam Movement.

On Clause 14 (b), Dispur said that it had already sanctioned initial payment of Rs. 30,000 to the next of kin of each martyr of the movement in accordance with a scheme for non-recurring assistance of Rs. 50,000 to the martyrs' families.

The State Government had also issued instructions for general relaxation of upper age limit up to six years from August 15, 1985 for employment in public services in Assam. The Central Government relaxed it for five years as per Clause 14 (c).
On Clause 14 (d), concerned authorities at the district level had been authorized to exercise necessary powers to examine and withdraw cases against those charged with criminal offences in connection with the Assam Movement. The Government said till the writing of the report 91 of the 20,625 identified cases were left to be withdrawn. On Clause 14 (e), Dispur said that the State Government had withdrawn all prohibitory orders and notifications which had been in force.

On May 14, the AASU submitted a memorandum to Vice-President R Venkatraman in Guwahati on the Accord wherein it rapped the Union Home Minister of meddling in the State police machinery.

**Delhi fails, Dispur not far behind:**

On June 25, 1988, Chief Minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta met leaders of the AASU and 15 other organizations on the Assam Accord implementation in Guwahati. On June 27, 1988, in a press communiqué, the AASU warned the Centre that it would solely be held responsible, if the people of Assam were compelled to launch another movement for implementation of the Assam Accord. The AASU said that not even a single clause had been implemented in the true spirit of the Accord. It said that even the simplest of clauses which envisage the withdrawal of victimization of the Central Government employees had not been implemented. It also voiced its displeasure at the way the IM (DT) Act, 1983 had been amended. The release said that without the revision of voters' list, the implementation of the Assam Accord would be meaningless. The AASU expressed the concern over the fact that the Indo-Bangladesh border was still wide open. The release demanded a clear policy from the State Government on steps taken by it for the rehabilitation of movement victims and withdrawal of cases in connection with the movement.

The AASU on July 7, 1988, met the Union Home Minister Buta Singh in Guwahati and submitted a memorandum to him at the State Guest House. The next day, it demanded that a tripartite Assam Accord review meeting should be held in July and subsequently once in every two months. The AASU, in the memorandum, warned the Centre that the State might slide back to violence over growing resentment on the treatment meted out to the Accord. The AASU warned of
alternative measures, if the Centre did not change its attitude towards the Accord. The AASU expressed dismay over the double standard adopted by the Centre towards its international border. It said whereas the Punjab-Pakistan border had been completely sealed, the Assam-Bangladesh border was wide open since Independence. The AASU made it clear that it would not allow elections to be held in Assam without scrutinizing the voters’ list.

On August 1, 1988, a news report in *The Sentinel* quoted Government statistics that hitherto 161 foreigners had been expelled under the IM (DT) Act, 1983. On August 16, 1988, after the completion of three years of the signing of the Assam Accord, the AASU asked the State Government and the Centre to fix a deadline for the implementation of the Assam Accord. The AASU alleged that the Centre was playing politics with the Accord, whereas the State Government was meek in not raising its voice on the issue. The AASU voiced its grievances by saying that foreigners had not been identified so far, border fencing was yet to be constructed, no steps had been taken to protect tribal blocks, the question of constitutional safeguards to the Assamese people had been put into the back burner, even rehabilitation of repressed employees and disabled activists of the movement were yet to be completed. The AASU said that even the Union Home Minister Buta Singh was not clear as to which clauses had been implemented. The tripartite talks issue was yet to be given importance, similarly no steps were taken to constitute the ‘monitoring committee’ with representatives of the Centre, the AASU and the State Government as had been suggested by it and accepted by Home Minister earlier. The AASU castigated the AGP for diluting the Accord by joining the National Front, it said that it was a matter of surprise that a regional party that owed its existence to the Assam Accord was not discussing the issue threadbare.

On October 29, 1988, Minister, Implementation of Assam Accord, Zou Nath Sarma said that the State Government had constituted a state-level advisory committee for advising the Government on effective implementation of the Assam Accord. The State Government also constituted an official-level implementation committee to monitor and review the implementation of the Accord. The decision to this effect was taken in a Cabinet meeting on October 28, 1988. The committee
comprised a chairman, who was to be the Minister, Assam Accord Implementation: president, general secretary and two advisers of the AASU, the president and general secretary of the AJYCP, the president and the general secretary of Asom Sahitya Sabha, the president and the general secretary of the Asom Yuba Samaj and office-bearers from other organizations, totalling 20. The Minister said that the Department of Assam Accord Implementation was also examining measures to monitor facilities for rehabilitation of the next kin of martyrs of the Assam movement and also those who were injured. The AASU rejected the Government’s offer of joining the Assam Accord Implementation advisory committee. In a letter to Mr Zoii Nath Sarma, the AASU wrote that it would maintain its apolitical character, yet it would cooperate fully on the implementation of the Accord, which, it said, was a question of life and death for the people of Assam. It urged the Government to take immediate action on the suggestions presented by it since the signing of the Accord.

On November 29, 1988, the AASU called for holding an early tripartite discussion. An AASU delegation met the State Minister for Accord Implementation and expressed its resentment at the Union Home Minister’s failure to hold tripartite talks on the Accord. In the Jorhat convention of the AASU on December 6, 1988, its president Keshab Mahanta expressed serious doubts over the sincerity of the Centre and the State Government on the implementation of the Accord. He, while addressing the AASU delegates, said that the AGP was not sincere on the Accord, an issue on which the party had come to power. He said that the Centre had failed to provide constitutional safeguard to Assamese language and culture as per Clause 6 of the Accord. He blamed the Government’s short-sighted policy on the tribals for which illegal foreigners had succeeded in driving the former out of their land.

On December 23, 1988, the AASU presented a memorandum to the President R. Venkatraman during his visit to Assam complaining that the Centre had failed to implement the Accord even after three-years of its signing. It said that employees who had been victimized during the six-year-long Assam Movement were not reinstated. Construction work on fencing, proposed on the border, was yet to be started. The AASU also said that constitutional safeguards promised to the people of Assam were yet to be discussed with it. The CEC too, was, hesitating to carry out

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his constitutional duties. It also said that amendments to the IM (DT) Act, 1983 had not been carried out. It warned the Centre that it would neither cooperate nor allow holding of any elections in the State with the defective electoral rolls. It pleaded to the President to direct the Government of India to implement the Accord.

On February 24, 1989, AASU general secretary Atul Bora said in Sivasagar that the Government was evading the Assam Accord for mysterious reasons. He said that Dispur could not hoodwink the people by such gimmicks. He accused the AGP Government of lacking sincerity and political will. He said that it was a matter of shame that only 140 foreigners could be detected in three years and there was no sign of an NRC despite promise. On February 25, 1989, the AASU opposed the Central Government move to accept a Central University in Cachar, saying that the Centre and Congress (I) were bent on sacrificing the interest of indigenous Assamese. Meanwhile, Chief Minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta met Home Minister Buta Singh on March 14, 1989, and conveyed the Centre’s decision of a 2-million tonnes refinery. They also decided on the setting up of an official panel to formulate schemes to implement Clause 6 of the Accord. On March 30, 1989, the Centre said that it had identified five projects and schemes for expeditious action after consideration of the recommendations of the technical working group set up by the Government of Assam in pursuance of Clause 7 of the Accord. These projects were: rail-cum-road bridge over the Brahmaputra at Jogighop; gas utilization, gas pipeline, and gas thermal project, including the one at Kathalguri, establishment of an IDP improvement and modernization of selected specialities in medical and health institutions, reactivation of the Brahmaputra Flood Control Board and its flood control activities. This was disclosed by the Union Home Minister Buta Singh in the Rajya Sabha on a question by Ms Bijoya Chakravarti, an MP from Assam.

On August 21, 1989, the AASU opposed the August 9 directive of the CEC, contradicting its May 17 guidelines. The directive restricted the Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) to the materials made available to them. The AASU argued that the directive violated a Supreme Court judgement directing the EROs to take steps out of their own if doubt arose regarding the citizenship of a person. On October 6, 1989, the AASU picketed all offices related to the electoral revision and disrupted the publication of rolls in all major districts of the State. On October 23, 1989.
1989, it urged the AGP Government to declare within 72 hours its stand on the procedure for the preparation of the draft electoral rolls. The next day, State Law Minister S. N. Medhi met AASU leaders on irregularities on rolls. On October 16, 1989, the AASU walked out of a meeting with the State Government protesting that not a single clause of the four-year-old Accord had been implemented by the Centre or the State Government. It said that the State Government had also failed miserably on implementation of those clauses for which it was responsible. In a missive to the Chief Secretary, the AASU accused the Centre of resorting to false propaganda on Accord implementation and asked the State Government to pressurize New Delhi for tripartite talks at the earliest. On October 20, 1989, the AASU called for a successful Assam bandh in protest against the failure of the State Government to rehabilitate the families of martyrs of Assam Movement, and the reinstatement of the State and Central Government employees who had been victimized for taking part in the Assam agitation. In a major decision on October 21, 1989, the Centre agreed to nationalize the Ashok Paper Mill as a first step towards revival and rehabilitation of the unit. On the same day, the AASU, in a press release, alleged that bogus documents had been accepted in support of citizenship status all over the State during the revision of electoral rolls. It blamed the ruling AGP Government as well as the Election Commission for preparing defective rolls. It said that names of 4,021,608 persons had no direct linkage with the 1966 rolls, yet they were included in the draft electoral rolls. It said that there had been a 65 per cent increase in voters between 1966 and 1989 which was by no means normal. It said that it was then for the Government to act because all figures pertaining to defects and abnormal increase in voters rolls had been sent to the Chief Minister through a memorandum on October 17, 1989.

On October 23, 1989, the Assam Government withdrew 20,615 criminal cases pertaining to Assam agitation. Later, on November 18, 1989, it withdrew one more and said that 9 cases were still pending. The AASU reiterated on October 23 that 54 constituencies had seen abnormal increase of voters. It also suspended an indefinite non-cooperation with AGP Ministers and MLAs which had began on October 21, 1989, in view of the tripartite talks on Accord supposed to begin in Delhi from October 30, 1989.
A seven-member AASU delegation went to Delhi but came empty handed as the tripartite talks were postponed. The AASU accused the Centre of an indifferent attitude on Accord and announced an oil blockade programme on November 14 and 15. Chief Minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta said that the AASU decision on oil blockade was due to Centre's letting them down on the proposed talks. In a hard-hitting press statement, the AASU said that it was committed to give a fitting reply on the dubious role played by Congress (I) Government at the Centre for undermining the implementation of the Accord, and for its anti-Assam attitude. It also flayed the State Government for its failure to demand the tripartite talks. The AASU clarified that it had earlier rejected the Centre's proposal on holding talks on the Accord at the Chief Secretary-level as it would have undervalued the talks. The AASU said that had the October 30 talks taken place, it would have exposed the Centre and the State Government on the Accord. It accused Delhi and Dispur of having spent the last 50-odd months since the signing of the Accord in mudslinging.

On November 4, 1989, an AASU delegation met the CEC in New Delhi and demanded proper scrutiny of the electoral rolls. On November 5, the Centre said that a fourth refinery in Assam would be set up at Golaghat. It would also be called as Assam Accord refinery as this would be set up as per terms of the Assam Accord. The Secretary, Petroleum & Natural Gas, Mr H. K. Khan said this in Duliajan. The AASU, once again, announced boycott of AGP ministers and MLAs for their indifference in implementing the Assam Accord.

On November 14 and 15, 1989, an AASU picketing paralysed the flow of oil. On November 22, it withdrew the non-cooperation against AGP ministers and MLAs after a written assurance from the State Government to complete the rehabilitation of the families of the martyrs of the Assam movement within a specific time-frame. On November 22, 1989, the Election Commission directed the Chief Electoral Officer to publish the final revised electoral rolls by December 11, 1989. On November 27, 1989, the United Minorities Front demanded the scrapping of the Accord saying that the Accord had become an accord of discontent without bringing about 'reconciliation and harmonious understanding'. On December 4, 1989, Assam Accord Implementation Minister Zoii Nath Sarma said that 27,435 foreigners had
been expelled from Assam till October, 1989. On December 18, 1989, the Centre announced that tripartite talks on Assam Accord would begin on December 29, 1989. On the same day, the AASU reiterated that it would oppose polls with the incorrect voters list. It said that there had been flagrant violations of EC guidelines in the voters’ list. On December 23, 1989, the final electoral rolls were published.

**AASU, Delhi, Dispur and Tripartite Talks:**

The first tripartite talks between the AASU, the Centre and the State Government began on December 29, 1989, but only after a new Government led by Vishwanath Pratap Singh came to power. Union Home Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed represented the Centre, State Chief Minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta along with three of his Cabinet colleagues—Home Minister Bhrigu Kumar Phukan, Law Minister S. N. Medhi and Zoii Nath Sarma, Accord Implementation Minister represented the State Government, besides a host of top-level officials.

The AASU was represented by its president Atul Bora, general secretary Samujjal Bhattacharjya, and three of its advisers—Keshab Mahanta, Kartik Hazarika and Dr. Arun Sarma.

The AASU demanded a time-bound implementation of the Accord and discussion on the progress of implementation of each clause to which the Centre agreed to be taken up at an official-level meeting scheduled for the next day. On a proposal by the AASU, it was agreed in principle that the provisions of the Accord should be implemented within a specified time-limit. In the official-level meeting on December 30, 1989, a clause-wise discussion on the Assam Accord was taken up.

On Clause 5.2, the AASU wanted a list of all persons who had come to Assam before 1966 and had been regularized and given the status of Indian citizens. Assam Chief Secretary A. P. Sarwan informed the participants that no such lists existed and that all persons listed in the 1966 electoral rolls had been treated as Indian citizens. On AASU’s insistence for such a list, the State Government cited practical difficulties and finally it was agreed that a list or register should be prepared, and the AASU was entrusted to formulate the mechanisms and modalities for the preparation. The AASU would provide it to the State Government, which in turn would send a proposal for consideration to the Centre.
On Clause 5.3, the AASU wanted a time limit for detection of all the foreigners between 1.1.1966 and 24.3.1971. The State Government said that the fixation of time limit was not possible as detection could be done at any point of time. Of the 11,693 persons of the 1966-1971 stream detected, the AASU wanted the names of all such persons so that a comparison with the latest voters’ list could be made. Under Clause 5.8, the AASU and the State Government were unanimous in their denouncing of the IM (DT) Act, 1983. The AASU, while denouncing the role of the BSF in the expulsion of foreigners, suggested that infiltrators should formally be handed over to the Bangladesh authorities. The AASU and the State Government also insisted that constitutional amendments as proposed by them under Clause 6 of the Accord should be carried out. The Home Ministry deferred the discussion on the issue to its next meeting proposed to be held on January 22, 1990.

The AASU pointed out that the five projects identified by the Planning Commission and other projects and schemes taken up for implementation by Central and State Government departments, though important in themselves, were not enough to raise the standard of living of the Assamese people. Finally, it was agreed that a committee would be set up which would take into account the proposals sent by the AASU and the State Government, the State Plan, the Plan of the NEC, plans of Central Government departments and ministries and suggest a plan within a period of three months.

The AASU expressed its disappointment at the progress of the gas cracker complex, the Brahmaputra Board and the proposed Central University. On Clause 8, the AASU wanted a list of all the Indian Citizenship Certificates issued by different States. Though the Centre said that it was a difficult exercise for the pre-1985 period, it was decided that the feasibility of notifying Indian Citizenship Certificates granted henceforth should be examined. The Government of Assam agreed that a list of certificates in respect of Assam would be prepared.

The AASU, on Clause 9, said that infiltration was continuing into Assam in large numbers. It suggested that the network of BSF posts and observations towers needed to be strengthened. It also said that a second line of defence in the bordering villages by appointment of additional staff under the State Government should be
created, and that persons attempting to cross the border should be shot at sight and
the project of constructing border roads and fence should be speeded up. Under
Clause 14 of the Accord, the AASU demanded the reinstatement of Abala Kanta
Sharma, an OIL executive and Mr Hiranya Bhattacharya, the sacked DIG, and urged
the withdrawal of the murder case of Mr Parthasarathy, former Commissioner of
Upper Assam. The AASU also pointed out that the Central Government employees
involved in the Assam agitation had been discriminated against in the sense that their
period of absence during the agitation had not been treated as duty except in the case
of the Railways. The AASU also wanted a sum of Rs. 1 lakh each to be given to the
dependents of persons who were killed during the agitation. The Centre explained
that it had already enhanced the sum to be given to the dependents of those killed
during the movement from Rs. 5,000 to Rs. 25,000 and had asked the State
Government for a list of all those persons killed in the movement, which the latter
failed to provide.

A top-level AASU delegation, including its president Atul Bora, general
secretary Samujjal Bhattacharya, and its advisers Dr. Arun Sarma, Kartik Hazarika,
and Keshab Mahanta, Arup Bordoloi, Indrajit Barua and Devakanta Kakati met the
Union Home Secretary and top-level bureaucrats of the Centre and State
Governments on January 23 and 24, 1990 on the implementation of the Assam
Accord. The Union Home Secretary acknowledged that separate memoranda had
been received from State Government and the AASU on Clause 6 of the Accord
which had been considered and examined by the Centre. He said that the
constitutional amendments as proposed were not relevant for the protection of the
Assamese cultural, social or linguistic identity and heritage.

The AASU suggested that only on an assurance by the Union Government that
adequate constitutional safeguards would be provided to the indigenous Assamese
it had accepted foreigners who came to Assam before March 24, 1971. The AASU
also said that the number of such foreigners was around 54 lakh out of a total
population of two crore in the State. It made it clear that these foreigners, even
though they had been given citizenship, must be distinguished from those living in
the State since 1951. The AASU called for a broader interpretation of Clause 6 of
the Assam Accord. It also wanted that the Union Government should provide for
dual citizenship in the Constitution to tackle problems of inter-State movement of people. For this, it wanted a national consensus to be built, during which time special provisions and other constitutional amendments suggested by it should be incorporated for the State of Assam.

The meeting discussed threadbare each item of the AASU memorandum of October 14, 1986. On the issue of dual citizenship, the Centre agreed for a meeting in February/March of the same year where representatives of other States like J & K, Andhra Pradesh, Sikkim, etc., were to be invited. The AASU was given the responsibility of a comprehensive background paper to be prepared and sent to the Home Ministry.

On the applicability of certain constitutional provisions—Article 3, 249, 258 (A) and 34 of the Constitution—the AASU said that this should have effect in so far as Assam is concerned only with the express concurrence and approval of the majority of the members of the State Assembly voting, and by two-thirds majority thereof. The Home Secretary observed that the proposed amendments would be examined again in the context of the Centre-State relations, despite being rejected earlier.

The AASU proposed that Article 30 of the Constitution should not be available in Assam to the foreigners who became Indian citizens in terms of the Assam Accord. The AASU delegation also stated that Article 170 of the Constitution which imposes restriction on delimitation of constituencies up to the year 2000, should be waived off in respect of Assam. The AASU also wanted that the amendment to Section (3) of the Indian Citizenship Act, 1955; carried out in 1985 be applicable with retrospective effect. The AASU also wanted that the north-eastern zone be treated as a separate zone just as Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta, Madras have been written as unofficial headquarters of the Northern, Western, Eastern and Southern zones respectively.

The meeting discussed the issue of proper utilization of water resources, optimum utilization of oil and natural gas, income from tea gardens, transport subsidy and special incentives on economic development. Most importantly, a long-pending demand of the AASU regarding the drawing up of a time-frame for action...
related to the implementation of the Assam Accord was discussed and a time-
schedule was drawn up.

A decision to set up a special task force with Mr. L. C. Jain, a Planning
Commission member as its chairman was also taken in the meeting. The
Commission was asked to formulate a comprehensive package for all-round
economic development of Assam in accordance with Clause 7 of the Accord. The
task force was to be asked to submit an action plan by April-end, and the Centre was
to take a decision within two months of the submission of the report.

On February 17, 1990, Assam Home Minister Bhrigu Phukan said on the floor
of the Assam Assembly that since the signing of the Accord, on August 15, 1985 to
January 31, 1990; 27,943 infiltrators had been deported out of which 17,730 were
Nepalis.

On March 18, 1990, the task force headed by L. C. Jain met the AASU on the
concluding day of its three-day visit of Assam. On May 2, 1990, a 27-member
AASU delegation met the Chief Election Commissioner, and insisted on special
revision of voters' list published on December 23, 1989. The AASU said that the
voters list had failed to establish a proper linkage with the voters' list of 1969.

On May 7, 1990, the AASU state executive committee decided to launch a fast
unto-death from May 8, after being disappointed, both by the Centre and the State
Government on the issue of rehabilitation of the families of martyrs of the Assam
Movement. The number of AASU activists taking to fast swelled by the hours. It
included AASU advisers Kartik Hazarika and Keshab Mahanta. When the AGP
Government saw the situation getting out of hand, it gave a written assurance to the
AASU of action within seven days. On May 13, 1990, the AASU, in a memorandum
to Prime Minister V. P. Singh, urged him for an early approval of setting up a gas
cracker plant with a time-bound action-plan. The AASU's effort got a fillip when
Tata Tea decided to back it in setting up the gas cracker project in Assam.

On May 31, 1990, the AASU and other organizations, which had participated
in the Assam Movement, met to discuss revision of voters' list, issue of oil diversions.
On June 25, 1990, addressing a rally at the Judges' Field, Guwahati, former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi said that the Assam Accord enabled lakhs to obtain citizenship. On the same day, the AASU rejected an invitation from the Centre for tripartite talks on Assam Accord on July 3, 1990, saying that the proposed talks would be successful only if steps were taken to implement the time-bound action programme for implementation of the Assam Accord. On August 9, 1990, hardening its stand, the AASU announced a seven-day oil blockade from August 15 against non-implementation of the Assam Accord. The oil blockade crippled the flow of crude oil. On August 17, 1990, the AASU issued advertisements in newspapers asking the Prime Minister and the Assam Chief Minister about their promises on the time-bound implementation of the Accord. Two days later, Prime Minister V. P. Singh, bowing to the AASU demand, said that no excess crude oil from Assam would be taken out. He said this in a meeting with Assam Chief Minister Prafulla Mahanta. On August 20, 1990, Mr. Mahanta announced that the Centre had agreed to treat the period of victimization of Central Government employees for taking part in the Assam Movement as 'on leave'. That, he said, would be applicable only to those against whom there were no specific charges. The blockade drama, meanwhile, continued. Though the AASU extended the blockade till August 24, 1990, it gave a partial waiver to the Digboi refinery after getting reports that power and tea sectors had been hit hard by the blockade. The blockade issue also figured in Parliament on August 22, 1990. The next day, Union Petroleum Minister M. S. Gurupad Swamy urged the AASU to lift the oil blockade, but the AASU, in an act of defiance, extended the blockade to August 27, 1990, instead. On August 25, 1990, the AASU warned the Centre of grave consequences for its role in a systematic attempt to burn the implementation of the Assam Accord. It accused the Home Minister Mulay Mohammad Sayeed of trying to wriggle out of the time-frame set for the action plan.

On August 26, 1990, Union Law Minister Dinesh Goswami said that the IM (DT) Act would not be repealed. The AASU, in a press release, accused him of hiding behind his failure on the IM (DT) Act. On September 5, 1990, a 28-member...
AASU delegation staged a dharna in Boat Club in New Delhi demanding proper implementation of the Assam Accord. On September 8, 1990, the AASU president and the general secretary told a press conference in New Delhi that the AASU would resist polls in the State if it was not satisfied with the revision of rolls. It also wanted the Election Commission to publish revised electoral rolls, saying that 'foreigners cannot decide Assam's fate'. The AASU also submitted a memorandum to the Prime Minister demanding repeal of the IM (DT) Act, failing which, it warned of a renewed agitation. In a separate memorandum, it urged the Prime Minister to begin the construction of the fourth bridge over the Brahmaputra connecting Bogibeel and Karengchapari.

On September 20, 1990, the Union Home Minister, the Assam Chief Minister and the AASU met in New Delhi for a fresh round of tripartite talks wherein the progress of implementation of the provisions of Assam Accord was reviewed and following decisions were taken:

1) Work relating to border roads and border fence would go together for which necessary funds had been allocated by the Central Government. The State Government would make arrangements for regular review of the progress along with review taking place at the Centre.

2) Instructions to the Border Security Force and other agencies would be issued to strengthen vigilance at the border for taking more effective measures and checking of infiltration from across the border.

3) The State Government would prepare detailed modalities about updating the National Register of Citizens and formulating a proposal for discussion with the Central Government, funds for which would be provided by the Government of India.

4) The AASU and the State Government's demand for repeal of the IM (DT) Act would require consultation with other political parties before arriving at a decision.

5) Multi-purpose identity cards would be issued in the border areas. For this purpose, a meeting of the Chief Ministers of the concerned north-eastern States would be convened at an early date. A decision on reviewing the remaining
cases of victimization of employees of Central Government undertakings would be taken and they would be treated as on duty in line with the circular issued by the Railways.

6) Regarding Clause 6 of the Accord, a discussion between the Centre, State Government, the AASU and other political parties would be held in the middle of October, 1990.

7) The recommendations of the L C Jain Committee were being considered by the Planning Commission.

8) It was also decided that two non-affiliating Central Universities—one at Tezpur and the other at Silchar—would be set up.

The tripartite talks decided that a team of the Centre, the State Government and the AASU would visit the Indo-Bangladesh border.

On September 22, 1990, an AASU delegation met joint secretaries of the Election Commission, Mr. C. L. Rose and Mr. Saha at Guwahati and apprised them of the AASU’s stand that rectification of rolls was a must before the elections in the State.

On October 9, 1990, Assam Home Minister Bhrigu Kumar Phukan told the Assam Assembly that from 1986 to August 1990; 31,095 foreigners had been expelled out of which 19,834 were Nepali infiltrators, 10,777 were infiltrators who had been pushed back earlier and 484 were illegal migrants.

On October 12, 1990, a joint meeting of the AASU and ten other organizations failed to arrive at a consensus regarding acceptability of the final electoral rolls. Meanwhile, the final electoral rolls published on October 11, 1990, stated that there were 11,840,931 voters in Assam.

In the meantime, the discussion on Clause 6, as decided in the September 1990 tripartite talks, began in Delhi. The Centre was represented by the Minister of State for Home, Subodh Kant Sahay. The meeting agreed to set up a cultural centre at Guwahati to enable the further flowering of Assamese culture and the rich tradition.
of Assamese people. The meeting also asked the BSF to strengthen vigilance along the Indo-Bangladesh border and called for expedition of construction along the border.

The AASU's unhappiness over the October 11, 1990, final rolls persisted. Its meeting on November 2 with 10 other non-political organizations failed to break the impasse. However, a national convention convened by the AASU on November 4, 1990, accepted the electoral rolls, while terming them as incorrect. The AASU later said that the electoral rolls of 1990 should not be considered as a draft roll for any future revision of electoral rolls in the State. The convention also constituted a 10-member committee to assist the AASU to take future steps on the issue.

Some Progress on Accord Front:

Meanwhile, President's rule was imposed in Assam due to deteriorating law-and-order scene. The baton of governance passed on to the Governor and his set of advisers. On December 2, 1990, P. P. Srivastava, one of the advisers to the Governor, reviewed the implementation of the Assam Accord with the concerned commissioners and head of the departments. The meeting decided that the site for an IIT would be decided by a committee of Commissioner and Secretary of Education Department, Director of Technical Education and the Kamrup Deputy Commissioner. The committee was also asked to report within a month. Mr. Srivastava clarified on AASU queries and said that the Assam Accord would be accorded top priority. On December 21, 1990, the site for an IIT in Guwahati was finalized in New Delhi and the IIT Selection Committee was invited for a spot inspection and formal approval. The meeting also took major decisions on the Jyoti Chitraban and the Sankardeva Kalakshetra.

On December 31, 1990, the Union Cabinet cleared the Accord Refinery on the eve of Prime Minister V. P. Singh's visit to Assam. On January 1, 1991, the AASU released a press statement expressing the hope that the IM (DT) Act would be scrapped soon so that the process of Assam Accord Implementation could gain momentum. Prime Minister V. P. Singh announced a Rs. 66-crore revival plan for Ashok Paper Mill and said that the Assam Accord Refinery would be set up at Numaligarh. The next day, Union Home Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed urged
the AASU to give up the path of confrontation and sought its cooperation in implementing development projects in Assam. In a rally at the Judges' Field, he said that the new National Front Government had already decided upon a time-bound programme to implement the Assam Accord.

On January 3, 1991, the AASU presented a memorandum to the Prime Minister and expressed its hope that his visit would remove the sense of alienation, deeply rooted in the minds of the youth following neglect and apathy over the decades. It also expressed its anguish over the failure of the Congress Government at the Centre in implementing the Assam Accord. It said that the AASU signed the Accord despite knowing that it was taking the burden of lakhs of infiltrators. The AASU suggested in its memorandum that implementation of the Accord is the surest way of winning the heart of Assam’s people. On January 11, 1991, the Central Government cleared the Assam Gas Cracker project to be built with an investment of Rs. 2,500 crore.

Meanwhile, a new Congress (I) Government came to power in Assam after the June, 1991 polls. Before taking charge as Chief Minister, Mr. Hiteswar Saikia urged the Centre for an early execution of the Accord.

On September 26, 1991, the Citizenship Act was amended in accordance with the terms of the Assam Accord. The Centre approved Rs. 67.08 crore for the revival of the Ashok Paper Mill and released Rs. 10.69 crore towards it. The Centre also released Rs. 2.4 crore for the Silghat Jute Mill. The approval for an IIT and the fourth refinery in Assam was also achieved. On October 3, 1991, Chief Minister Hiteswar Saikia disclosed that Central projects committed to Assam had not been implemented because of opposition from the concerned Central Ministries. He expressed his displeasure in a press meet after his visit to Delhi. On October 29, 1991, the Centre cleared several projects in a high-level meeting convened by Prime Minister P. V. Narasimha Rao. The meeting was also attended by Assam Chief Minister Hiteswar Saikia. Among the projects cleared included the establishment of an IIT on 708 acres of land, upgrading of an inland container depot at Amingaon, extension of broad gauge lines to other areas of Assam and the fourth oil refinery.

On March 2, 1992, in a major decision, the Assam Government’s share in the Accord refinery was reduced to 10 per cent from the earlier agreed 26 per cent while the Indo-Burmese Petroleum (IBP)’s stake continued to stand at 51 per cent.
April 2, 1992, an AASU delegation met Union Home Minister S. B. Chavan over non-implementation of the Assam Accord. The AASU told Mr. Chavan that people of Assam were feeling with justification that justice for Assamese would remain outside Centre's consideration. It said that detection, deletion and deportation of the infiltrators under the Assam Accord had remained unimplemented. On April 3, 1992 a three-member AASU delegation comprising its president Sarbananda Sonowal, general secretary Samujjai Bhattacharya and adviser Atul Bora met the Prime Minister and urged him to implement the Accord in toto. They submitted a memorandum enlisting clauses of the Accord which were yet to be implemented. They requested the Prime Minister to seal the Indo-Bangladesh border and to repeal the IM (DT) Act, 1983.

On July 2, 1992, the AASU, in an open letter to the Prime Minister during his visit to Assam, appealed to him for firm and bold steps for implementation of the Assam Accord. The AASU also stated that universities and refineries were not the beginning and end of the Accord. There were other clauses which the Centre was yet to fulfil. The next day i.e. on July 3, Prime Minister P. V. Narashimha Rao laid the foundation stone of the Numaligarh Refinery, also known as the Accord Refinery. He also admitted during his speech that influx to Assam from neighbouring Bangladesh was a national problem. He also laid the foundation of a broad-gauge extension from Guwahati to Dibrugarh on the same day. On July 4, he laid the foundation of HT (G) at Raj Bhavan in Guwahati by unveiling a plaque.

**IM (DT), Electoral Rolls and Accord Refinery:**

On July 6, 1992, Chief Minister Hiteswar Saikia, while addressing a public rally, ruled out the scrapping of the IM (DT) Act. On August 15, 1992, the AASU organized a hunger strike in protest against the non-implementation of the Assam Accord. They also demanded that the State's share in the Numaligarh Refinery Limited be raised to 26 per cent. On September 14, 1992, the AASU submitted a memorandum to the Chief Election Commissioner, Mr T N Seshan. It sought a permanent solution to the revision of electoral rolls in Assam. It said that the revision made in Assam had failed to check the inclusion of a large number of foreigners. The memorandum stated that there had been a massive increase, ranging from 80-100 per cent, in voters in some constituencies in the districts of Goalpara, Kamrup, Karbi...
Anglong and Nagaon. The AASU alleged that many foreigners' names appeared in the 1966 rolls. "The names had been entered at the time of enumeration", it said.

On September 22, 1992, State BJP leader and former DIG, Assam Police, Hiranya Kumar Bhattacharjee filed a petition before the Gauhati High Court challenging the constitutional validity of the IM (DT) Act, 1983. The petition filed under Article 226 of the Constitution said that the operation of the provisions of the IM (DT) Act, 1983 undermined the integrity and sovereignty of the Republic. The Act was discriminatory and that the State of Assam had been singled out for unequal treatment on the question of detection and deportation of foreign nationals entering Assam. On the same day, the AASU warned of a fresh movement to safeguard the future of the people of Assam if the Government failed to take steps to check infiltration and deport illegal aliens, besides adopting realistic steps to implement the Accord. The AASU regretted in a press release that the Centre had woken up to the problem of illegal Bangladeshis only when they had reached Delhi. It said that throughout the Assam Movement, the Centre in general and the Congress (I) in particular branded the movement as secessionist and the AASU as "agents of foreign power". The AASU said that the validity of the six-year-long movement had been vindicated, because the Centre had decided to discuss the problem in a discussion of chief ministers of several States on September 28, 1992.

On October 9, 1992, a meeting of Opposition parties held under the auspices of the AASU alleged that the Congress (I) Government had violated the guidelines given by the Election Commission for revision of electoral rolls. The AASU submitted a memorandum to the State Chief Election Officer demanding correct electoral rolls devoid of foreign nationals. The AASU, in a press statement the next day, demanded scrapping of the memorandum of understanding between the IBP and State Government saying that the Chief Minister had betrayed the State's interest by keeping Assam Government's share in the equity of the Accord refinery at 20 per cent. The AASU said that it had also met the Chief Minister on July 31, 1992 on the necessity of 26 per cent State's share in the refinery. It also questioned the rational behind the memorandum of understanding being kept a closely-guarded secret.

On October 22, 1992, the AASU sent a telegram to the Chief Election Commissioner seeking his interference in the revision of rolls. It staged a dharna...
throughout the State on the issue. The AASU also upped the tempo on the issue of preparation of rolls by enlisting the support of the Opposition parties and demanded the Governor’s intervention in preparation of the electoral rolls. On November 7, 1992, the Chief Election Officer, Assam said that rolls revision in the State would take place as per EC guidelines. The next day, the AASU announced a stir against the State Government’s response to proper revision of electoral rolls and the implementation of the Assam Accord, which also included a sit-in demonstration in front of all colleges in the State on November 13. The AASU also organized a two-day national-level seminar on amendment of the Constitution to promulgate a truly federal structure of administration in the country, on November 14 and 15, 1992 in New Delhi, which were followed by a sit-in strike at Boat Club demanding proper revision of electoral rolls and the implementation of the Assam Accord. On February 2, 1993, an AASU delegation met the Chief Election Officer, Assam and demanded revision of electoral rolls on the basis of the Accord.

On March 24, 1993, the Assam Accord Implementation Minister, Dr Bhumidhar Barman said in the House in a written reply to Hitesh Deka (NAGP) that the barbed wire fence and border road along the Assam-Bangladesh border was expected to be completed by 1995. He said that hitherto the Centre had released Rs 44.60 crore for the construction of 83.98 kilometres of road and 54.45 kilometres of barbed wire fencing. He also told the House that 359 border check posts had been erected.

On May 18, 1993, the CEC issued a new order in which Clause 7.4 stated the CEC’s resolve to prevent the inclusion of names of foreigners in the voters’ list. On the next day, the AASU, while welcoming the new CEC order, sent a memorandum to the All Cachar District Students’ Union regarding enumeration of illegal Bangladeshis in the district. On July 10, 1993, the AASU demanded immediate steps by the Centre to implement the primary clauses of the Assam Accord and the directives of the Election Commission on revision of electoral rolls. AASU president Sarbananda Sonowal and general secretary Samujjal Bhattacharya met the Union Minister of State for Home, Mr Rajesh Pilot, and submitted a memorandum to him calling for resumption of tripartite talks. They alleged that the Centre was ignoring the time-frame for implementation of the Assam Accord. They lamented that the international border was still wide open and economic package particularly those suggested by the L C Jain Committee was yet to be implemented.
On August 27, 1993, the AASU released a press statement protesting the State Government's move to issue identity cards to people in border areas without proper verification of their citizenship status. It said that such I-cards should only be issued after compilation of the National Register of Citizens.

On September 24, 1993, the Union Minister of State for Home, Mr Rajesh Pilot, assured the AASU that the Centre would take all necessary steps for implementing the Assam Accord. He also promised the AASU that dates for resumption of tripartite talk would be announced by the middle of October, 1993.

The AASU delegation, after meeting him, however, expressed concern on a time-bound implementation of all the clauses of the Assam Accord. On September 30, 1993, the Supreme Court stayed the Gauhati High Court decision of September 24, 1993, restraining the EC from publishing draft electoral rolls for all Assembly constituencies in Assam. As a result of the verdict, the draft electoral rolls for the State were published on October 5, 1993.

On October 6, 1993, the Assam Accord Implementation Minister Dr Bhumidhar Barman told the Assam Assembly that 20 proposals had been submitted to the Centre under Assam Accord, including amendment to Article 3 of the Constitution, regarding prior approval of the State Legislature for introduction of any Bill affecting the boundaries of the State in Parliament (Under Clause 6). On October 28, 1993 an AASU delegation went to Delhi to take up the issue of political irregularity with the CEC.

On October 29, 1993, the AASU and the Sikh Students' Federation called for restructuring of the Constitution after their joint meeting at the Press Club of India in Delhi. On October 30, 1993 the AASU said that the National Committee on Federation, set up in 1992 at the AASU national seminar on federalism in New Delhi under Justice (retd.) V. R. Krishna Iyer, had decided to prepare the draft proposals on restructuring the Constitution of India on federal lines, after a meeting of the national executives of the committee. The national executive committee also decided to review the proposals framed by the AASU on evolving a federal structure in the country. The AASU delegation also met Union Home Minister S. B. Chavan, who informed the delegation that he had directed the Assam Government to implement
the Assam Accord and to solve the foreigners problem in Assam. The AASU submitted a memorandum to him stating that the Centre must take necessary constitutional measures against the State Government which was working like an agent of the Bangladeshi Government.

The Assam Chief Minister, Mr. Hiteswar Saikia on November 7, 1993 said that the alien issue should be made a closed chapter for the greater interest of Assam. He also revealed that the AGP Government, when in power in the State, did not submit any proposal to the Centre to repeal the IM (DT) Act even though its own party man Dinesh Goswami was the Union Law Minister. On November 13, 1993, reiterating its stand on the foreigners issue, the AASU accused the Saikia Government of whipping up communal passion among the people to foil the ongoing rolls revision process in the State. It also decried the transfer of deputy commissioners and SDOs during the process of rolls revision. It renewed its appeal to the EC on rolls revision. It rejected, on November 24, 1993, the voters’ list with names of foreigners.

On January 21, 1994, Prime Minister Narashima Rao opened the two Central Universities at Tezpur and Silchar. On January 28, 1994, the final electoral rolls on 86 Assembly Constituencies were published as a draft electoral rolls for summary revision taking January 1, 1994, as the qualifying date. On March 4, 1994, an AASU delegation met Mr Rajesh Pilot, the Minister of State for Home at the Centre, demanding speedy implementation of the Assam Accord, and demanded that the two Central Universities at Tezpur and Silchar be non-affiliating ones. On May 13, 1994, the IIT (G) Bill was passed by the Lok Sabha, after it had been approved by the Rajya Sabha. On May 20, 1994, the Assam Government signed a memorandum of understanding with Reliance Industries on a gas cracker project worth Rs. 3,000 crore. On May 31, 1994, the AASU reiterated its stand that the post-1971 aliens must go back. It alleged that the State Government was favouring the ISI. It also charged the State Government of an ill-conceived land policy while distributing land pattas. It said that pattas had been given to Bangladeshis without verifying their nationality. The AASU, in its press release, also said that the recent incidence of violence was the result of the Government’s defective land distribution policy. The AASU also chided the AGP of maintaining an eerie silence on the issue, fearing loss of votes.
On August 3, 1994, the Union Home Minister S. B. Chavan informed the Rajya Sabha that since 1983, 1219 illegal immigrants had been deported under the IM (DT) Act. He said that out of 2.88 lakh cases, 25,445 cases were referred to the tribunals set up under the Act for detection and appropriate action. The tribunals originally identified 8,871 cases, but only 1,219 were deported.

On September 1, 1994, the Gauhati High Court admitted a writ petition filed by advocate R. P. Sarmah challenging the validity of the IM (DT) Act, and issued notices to the Attorney General of India and the State Government. The petitioner described the Act as discriminatory and anti-national. On September 2, 1994, the AASU, in a press release, expressed doubt over the sincerity of IBP in implementing the Numaligarh Oil Refinery project and threatened a stir if the company failed to state publicly their estimated expenditure, product and share pattern, downstream projects and the expected date of completion of the project. On September 7, 1994, an AASU delegation met the Election Commission Secretary during his visit to Assam and urged him to stop the process of issuing identity cards to the voters without identifying the foreigners. On September 14, 1994, the State Government clamped a night curfew along the Assam-Bangladesh border to check influx. It also trifurcated the State's international border with Bangladesh into Dhubri, Karimganj and Guwahati to check influx and put them under the charge of a Superintendent of Police. On September 14, 1994, the Assam Accord Implementation Minister Bhumidhar Barman informed the State Assembly that during the tenure of the Congress Ministry in the State from July 1, 1991 till August 31, 1994; 424 foreigners had been deported under the IM (DT) Act, and 2,455 foreigners had been deported under the Foreigners Act. He also said that 5,886 Bangladeshis and 8,436 fresh Nepalis infiltrators were detected, but no deportation was made. He said that 16 IM (DT) tribunals were functioning in the State. He also informed the Assembly that 280,791 cases had been registered since 1986 in respect of which inquiries had been completed. Out of this, 25,173 cases sent to the 16 tribunals, hearing in 12,298 cases had been completed, 8,477 were declared as foreigners and 5,078 were ordered to be expelled and 1,237 were actually deported. He said that 11 foreigners tribunals were functioning to handle complaints under the Foreigners Act.
On October 28, 1994, an AASU delegation met the Union Minister of State for Home Rajesh Pilot in New Delhi. Mr Pilot regretted the delay in implementation of Assam Accord but called for a meeting with the AASU in the first week of December, 1994. The AASU informed Mr Pilot that all the chief ministers of the north-eastern States except the Assam Chief Minister, Hiteswar Saikia, were demanding detection and deportation of foreigners.18

On November 9, the State Government allotted 1,000 bighas of land at Tengakhat in Dibrugarh district for the gas cracker project to be set up by Reliance. It also earmarked 1,000 bighas at Rani near Guwahati for the same project. On December 8, 1994, the CEC ordered further revision of Assam rolls in all 126 constituencies with reference to January 1, 1995, as the qualifying date. The EC also scheduled the publication of final rolls as September 30, 1996. The AASU lauded the decision terming it a step in the right direction. On December 13, 1994, an AASU delegation left for Delhi to press their demand for the implementation of Assam Accord and repeal of the IM (DT) Act. It also decided to distribute a booklet AASU’s Appeal in Delhi.

On January 11, 1995, the AASU along with other organizations filed an intervention petition in the Gauhati High Court on the issue of intensive roll revision ordered by the Election Commission which was challenged by the State Government on the plea that by ordering an intensive revision of electoral rolls in the State, the EC had abused its powers. The State Government also said that expense to be incurred on intensive rolls revision would be an added burden on the State, whose fiscal situation was not healthy anyway. The HC reserved its judgement on rolls revision but not before the AASU counsel pleaded the court that it should not ignore the historical perspective evident in the heavy infiltration of aliens to the State. The AASU advocate also said that finance could not be the reason to compromise on State’s security and sovereignty.

On January 20, 1995 the AASU, in a press release, rapped the Opposition parties in general and the AGP in particular, on their failure to play the desired role on the issue of electoral rolls and voters’ identity card. The AASU also accused the AGP of not dealing properly the aliens issue. The AASU announced that it wanted 1966 as the cut-off year for revision of rolls.
On March 6, 1995, the AASU asked the Chief Secretary of Assam, through a memorandum, to implement the Assam Accord. An AASU press release of March 10 disclosed that 19 eminent personalities of the State had jointly filed a petition in the Gauhati High Court seeking the repeal of the IM (DT) Act.

On March 22, 1995, the Assam Accord Implementation Minister Dr. Bhumidhar Barman, in a written reply to a question in the State Assembly, said that the Congress (I) Government in the State had detected 2,604 aliens under the Foreigners Act but had not deported anybody. He also informed the House that under the IM (DT) Act, his Government had succeeded in detecting 1,281 foreigners and deporting 553 of them. He informed the House that during the period of the present Government, 6,864 fresh Bangladeshis were detected and all were deported. He also reiterated his Government's stand that it had no plan to repeal or amend the IM (DT) Act, 1983. He said that since 1980 to January 31, 1995; 19,162 fresh Bangladeshis infiltrators were identified and deported. In the same period, he said that, 70,643 Nepali infiltrators were also deported.

On March 29, 1995, he gave a year-wise break up of detection and deportation under the IM (DT) Act and Foreigners' Act since 1985.

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255
Mr. Barman informed the House that up to January, 1995, 18,347 names were asked to be deleted from the electoral rolls. He also said that up to January 1995, 96.96 kilometres of roads had been constructed as per provision of Assam Accord.

On March 30, 1995, an AASU delegation met Union Home Minister S. Bhavan and Minister of State for Home Rajesh Pilot, and demanded the immediate implementation of the Assam Accord. On that day, the Kamrup district administration earmarked 3,000 bighas of land in Rani near Guwahati for the Assam Gas Cracker project. However, on June 26, 1995, the Chief Minister said that the project would be set up at Tengakhat while Rani could become the marketing centre. On April 13, 1995, Chief Minister Hiteswar Saikia agreed that infiltration was going on in the State but said that the Government was taking steps to prevent it.

On May 23, during his visit to Guwahati, Chief Election Commissioner P. N. Seshan said that the 1994 rolls were legal, valid and binding and were the best available option in the situation. On July 20, the AASU warned the Election Commission against issuing identity cards to voters on the basis of 1994-electoral rolls. On September 10, 1995, Assam Chief Minister Hiteswar Saikia alleged that the AASU was not cooperating with the Government in locating the foreign nationals in the State. In a press release, the next day, the AASU vehemently denied the charges and explained that there were laws and tribunals to identify foreign nationals.

On October 16, 1995, Union Minister for Railways Suresh Kalmadi said in a press conference in Guwahati that a Railway divisional headquarters would be set up.

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at Rangia. On October 24, 1995, the AASU, through a press release, warned the AGP on Accord Implementation saying that the AGP had once come to power riding on the crest of the agitation but subsequent events had made people exasperated. The AASU asked the party to give the people of the State their reward. The AASU, in another press release on October 26, 1995, called upon its organizational units to oppose photo identity cards (PIC) scheme through non-violent means. The AASU said that although it supported the PIC scheme in principle, it was opposed to it on the basis of 1994 rolls.

On October 29, 1995, prominent citizens of the country participated in an AASU-and Citizens for Democracy-sponsored national seminar on the subject 'Foreigners Problem with Special Reference to Assam Accord and Electoral Roll' wherein they felt that identification of foreigners should be vested with the Election Commission. Participants included former Governor of Assam Bhshima Natarayan Singh, Mr. Jagmohan, MP Rajya Sabha and former Governor, Jammu & Kashmir, Justice V. R. Krishna Iyer, Mr Rabi Ray, former Lok Sabha Speaker, Mr. D. N. Bezboruah, Editor, The Sentinel, a Guwahati-based English daily, Mr. Syed Yusuf, Editor, Radiance News Weekly, Justice Rajinder Sachhar, ex-Chief Justice, Delhi High Court and Mr. Kuldip Nayar, eminent journalist and former Indian High Commissioner to the United Kingdom.

PIC Controversy:

Meanwhile, there was massive resentment on the procedure adopted to issue photo identity cards, during their distribution. On November 2, 1995, the AASU announced a series of agitational programmes on the issue. An AASU delegation met the two Election Commissioners—Mr. Krishnamurthy and Mr. M. S. Gill—on the PIC and pleaded with them to stop it. On November 9, 1995, an AASU-sponsored procession in Guwahati was taken out. The AASU, in a press conference, said that the PIC was a Government conspiracy to legalize lakhs of voters. The AASU also declared an Assam bandh on November 13, 1995, and asked the people for total non-cooperation on the PIC issue. It also launched a scathing attack on all political parties on the PIC, on November 14, 1995, while it thanked the Asom Sahitya Sabha, the AJYCP, PLP, ABSU, etc., for opposing PIC. Almost at the same Prime Minister...
P. V. Narashimha Rao, during his visit to the State, laid the foundation stone of the gas cracker project at Wilton near Tengakhat in Dibrugarh district. A long-pending AASU demand of a UGC office in Guwahati was also fulfilled when on November 25, a UGC office was inaugurated in Guwahati.

On December 4, 1995, the Gauhati High Court upheld an EC decision on intensive revision of rolls dismissing petitions which had termed this decision of EC as arbitrary because revision had already been done in 1994. The AASU, on the same day, met Election Commissioner G. V. G. Krishnamurthy on his visit to Guwahati and reiterated its demands on the PIC.

However, the AASU began a 100-hour hunger strike on January 2, 1996, protesting against non-fulfilment of its demands and non-implementation of the Assam Accord. The AASU also declared a month-long stir on preparation of a correct voters’ list beginning January 17, 1996. On February 2, 1996, the AASU started a two-day satyagraha throughout the State demanding a correct voters list as per the Assam Accord. Just a week later, the AASU called for a national convention to seek people’s opinion on future course of action on the implementation of Assam Accord and the voters’ list issue. The AASU said in a press conference that even after 16 years of the foreigners’ issue, the problem remained unsolved. On March 19, 1996, the Election Commission announced that elections in Assam would be held on April 27, 1996, and said that intensive rolls revision in Assam would take place after the polls. An AASU delegation left for Delhi and met the two Election Commissioners—M. S. Gill and G. V. G. Krishnamurthy—to express their displeasure. They also met the CEC T. N. Seshan, who declared that an extensive revision of the electoral rolls taking January 1, 1997 as the cut-off date would be announced soon. On April 2, 1996, the AASU, in a press release, asked all political parties in the State to make their stand clear on the electoral rolls. It also asked politicians in the State to learn a lesson from their Arunachal Pradesh counterparts on the same issue. The AASU expressed its surprise on what it said was a “calculated silence” of the political parties on the subject. It regretted that the EC did not respect the wishes of the people by holding elections on the basis of defective electoral rolls. The AASU, however, clarified that it had only agreed for polls after the CEC assured it to revise the electoral rolls by taking January 1, 1997 as the cut-off date.
In the general elections, a United Front Government headed by Mr. H. D. Gowda came to power at the Centre. The Common Minimum Programme of the United Front Government accorded top priority to the influx issue. It also assured the solution of the infiltration problem through the Assam Accord. Meanwhile, in the State, the AGP came to power heading a coalition Government.

On June 6, 1996, the AASU called for implementation of the Assam Accord within a definite time-frame. It also called for repeal of the IM (DT) Act, the revision of electoral rolls before holding of the by-polls in the State. In a memorandum to the new Government at Dispur, it said that it would not allow holding of by-polls if correct voters’ list was not prepared. In a press conference on the same day, it asked the State Government for revision of electoral rolls as assured by the EC. On June 11, 1996, an AASU delegation met the Prime Minister in New Delhi and reiterated its resolve of not allowing any polls in Assam without an intensive revision of rolls. They also demanded the implementation of Assam Accord and the repeal of the IM (DT) Act, by saying that the Act was acting as a barrier in the implementation of the Accord. The AASU delegation consisting of its president Sarbananda Sonowal, its general secretary Samujjal Bhattacharya, and its adviser Satyabrata Kalita presented a memorandum to the Prime Minister demanding a fixed time-frame for Assam Accord implementation. The memorandum said that a refinery here and a university there was not what the Accord was all about. But detection, detention and deportation was primal to the Accord in which hardly any progress had been achieved. It said that Clause 6 and 7 were a quid pro quo for taking the burden of Bangladeshi migrants who came before 1966, but the Centre had failed miserably on its part on this score.

On June 18, 1996, in a press release, the AASU accused the political parties in the State of down playing the sensitive foreigners issue. It also said that the AGP stand on the issue was weak and confusing. On July 5, 1996, the AASU, in a press release, demanded the scrapping of the IM (DT) Act and asked all State Members of Parliament to do the needful. In a letter to Chief Minister Prafulla Mahanta, the AASU asked Dispur to clarify its stand on IM (DT) Act. On July 21, 1996, the AASU, the ASS and several ethnic students’ bodies staged a four-hour sit-in demonstration in Delhi demanding the repeal of the IM (DT) Act, implementation of the Assam Accord and introduction of the Inner-Line Permit.
On August 5, 1996, the State Government constituted a high-powered committee comprising five Cabinet ministers headed by the Chief Minister to constantly review and monitor the implementation of Assam Accord. Simultaneously, it also constituted another high-level committee of senior bureaucrats headed by the Chief Secretary. The committee was to oversee the implementation of different provisions of the Accord. Soon after, in a high-level meeting to review the implementation of Assam Accord, the Chief Minister pulled the Assam Accord Implementation Department for going slow on the Accord. He said that the Government was in favour of setting a time-frame on the Accord. The Chief Minister directed the Public Works Department to complete all construction work connected with the erection of border fencing and construction of border roads within 1998. He said that the Assam Accord Implementation Committee would be activated to enable it to function as a nodal department for monitoring and coordinating the activities of the concerned departments. The committee included Minister for Municipal Administration Department Biraj Sarma, Irrigation Minister Abdul Muhib Mazumdar, Flood Control Minister Pramode Gogoi, Industries Minister Gunin Hazarika, Revenue Minister Zoii Nath Sarma and PWD Minister Atul Bora. The bureaucratic-level committee included Additional Chief Secretary, Additional Chief Secretary (Home & Political), Planning & Development Commissioner, PWD Commissioner, Commissioner, Election Department, Director General of Police, an IGP, Secretary, Revenue Department and Commissioner Assam Accord Department. On August 19, 1996, the AGP-led Government urged the Centre to implement the Assam Accord. It asked the Centre to set in motion an effective plan to detect and deport foreigners immediately.

On August 25, 1996, an AASU press release said that it was firm on a new voters list before holding of any by-polls in the State. On September 9, 1996, the AASU faxed a letter each to the Prime Minister and the Election Commission demanding postponement of by-election till a correct voters list was prepared. Sensing turmoil, the Chief Minister invited the AASU for talks on the rolls revision issue. On September 11, 1996, Election Commissioner GVG Krishnamurthy, during a visit to Guwahati, said that the EC was committed to holding an intensive revision of rolls throughout the country and said that not much should be read into the EC decision of October 11 by-polls as the announced date was the statutory limit for
conduct by-polls within six months. After a successful Assam bandh call, the AASU met Chief Minister Prafulla Mahanta on the rolls revision issue but the talks failed to achieve any breakthrough. In a press conference later, the AASU said that it would oppose the October 11, 1996, by-polls with all its might. It also disclosed that the State Government had proposed to work on the revision process in tandem with the AASU which it rejected. It accused the Government of failing to give a concrete proposal for solution to the foreigners' problem. On October 5, 1996, the AASU, in a mass rally in Guwahati, announced the continuation of stir till all its demand on the Assam Accord were met. It also attacked the AGP for failing to fulfill the aspirations of the people.

On October 7, 1996, the EC ordered an intensive revision of rolls in Assam by taking January 1, 1997 as the qualifying date. It said that final rolls would be published in October 1997. An elated AASU termed it as moral victory for the people and withdrew its decision of opposing the by-polls. In a press conference, the AASU intensified its invectives against the AGP saying that the party was afraid of losing the Bangladeshi vote bank if it sought the detection, deletion and deportation of the infiltrators and the repeal of the IM (DT) Act. The AASU decided to set up vigilant committees to ensure that names of foreigners were not included in the revision of rolls. It, however, began a 32-hour fast on October 14, 1996, against non-fulfillment of various demands of the Assam Accord, especially the repeal of the IM (DT) Act. On October 26, 1996, in a press conference, the AASU threatened to review the cut-off year if the Centre failed to fulfil assurances on the IM (DT) Act. The AASU said that time and again, the Centre had renegaded on its promise of repealing the Act, and said that the cut-off year was agreed on humanitarian ground. The AASU said, "We may be compelled to go back to 1951" as had been done by the All Manipuri Students' Union, which inked a pact with the Manipur Government to deport all who had come to the State after 1951. A 16-member AASU team also called on the Prime Minister during his visit to Guwahati and urged him to convene tripartite talks.

In a press conference on October 27, 1996, the Prime Minister said that the IM (DT) Act would be repealed in the next session of Parliament. But exactly a month later, in a sudden reversal, the Prime Minister announced that the IM (DT) Act would
not be repealed in near future. The next day, the AASU asked the Prime Minister to fulfil his promise on the Act. An AASU delegation led by its president and general secretary left for Delhi, and on November 30, 1996, it slammed the UF Government and reiterated that no compromise would be made on the IM (DT) issue. It rejected the reported moves of the Centre to amend certain clauses of the Act to make it more palatable. The AASU team met political leaders of different parties to garner support for the repeal of the Act. On December 18, 1996, the Union Minister of State for Home, Maqbul Dar, while replying to a question by Assam MP B. B. Dutta in the Rajya Sabha, said that the Centre was examining proposals to repeal IM (DT) Act.

On December 31, 1996, the AASU announced a 100-hour hunger strike starting January 2, 1997 in protest against the EC's directive for summary revision of voters' list in Assam and to press for a speedy implementation of the Assam Accord in letter and spirit. In a press conference, the AASU alleged that there were 6.7 lakh foreigners in the voters' list.

On January 7, 1997, the AASU warned the State Government to make its stand clear on the basic issue facing the indigenous people of the State. The AASU submitted a memorandum to the Chief Minister on IM (DT) repeal, revision of voters' list, ethnic problems in the State and deployment of Army, etc. The AASU said that if the Government did not respond by January 19, "we shall be compelled to take up the path of agitation". It also feared that introduction of free trade, as was being discussed, between India and Bangladesh, will encourage influx. On January 17, 1997, the AASU alleged that the Home Minister at the Centre, Indrajit Gupta, was acting as a hurdle in the repeal of the IM (DT) Act. The AASU said that Mr. Gupta was not showing any administrative or political will towards scrapping of the Act. It alleged that CPM leader Jyoti Basu had advised Prime Minister Deva Gowda against scrapping of the Act. The AASU also termed Santosh Mohan Dev as anti-Assamese and lashed out at the AGP Government for 'betrayal' and inefficiency vis-a-vis the IM (DT) Act.21

On January 22, 1997, Prime Minister Deva Gowda laid the foundation stone of the Bogibeel Bridge, a 4.3-kilometre road-cum-rail bridge at Kulajjan in Dhemigan. On January 31, 1997, the AASU said that even Chakmas had entered the State and the Government was not taking any steps. On February 15, the EC said that intensive...
revision of rolls to be carried out in Assam would be guided by the Supreme Court and High Court judgements. Election Commissioner G.V.G. Krishnamurthy, during his visit to Guwahati, said that the guidelines laid down by the CEC would determine the intensive revision of rolls. He said that there were 12,587,659 voters as per the electoral rolls of the State on January 1, 1996.

On February 17, 1997, the AASU expressed concern at the EC's remarks that children of illegal migrants born in India would be considered for citizenship and asserted that any provision adopted in violation of the Accord and Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 1985, would not be acceptable to it. Talking to newsmen in Gauhati University—the AASU headquarters—it asked the EC to discuss guidelines by announcing the guidelines formally. The Chief Election Commissioner, Mr. M.S. Gill, however, said in Delhi that the EC would strive for perfect rolls in Assam.

On February 18, 1997, Chief Minister Prafulla Mahanta said that implementation of the Assam Accord was the only solution to the problems of Assam, while on a visit to New Delhi to attend a steering committee meet of the United Front. On February 22, 1997, in a press release, the AASU asserted that it was against any move to keep foreigners in the State, coming after 1971, as it would violate the Assam Accord. On March 11, 1997, the AASU demanded tripartite talks when its delegation visited Delhi. The Home Minister, Mr. Indrajit Gupta assured the AASU that the Government was considering tripartite meet 'very soon'. The AASU also submitted a memorandum to Home Minister stating that failure to implement the Accord had fanned the sense of alienation among the Assamese people. It also said that the IM (DT) Act was a prime hindrance in the implementation of the Accord. The AASU delegation consisted of its president, its secretary and AGP MP Dr Arun Sarma and Dr Probin Sharma.

On March 12, 1997, an AASU delegation met Chief Minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta and demanded expeditious measures for the implementation of Assam Accord and holding of tripartite talks involving the Centre, the State Government and the AASU.

On May 15, 1997, the High Court assured a delegation of the Forum for Justice that the writ petition filed five years ago in 1992 on the legal validity of the IM (DT)
Act, 1983 would be heard soon. The AASU also staged satyagrahas in all the districts and the subdivisional headquarters demanding implementation of the Assam Accord, revision of the voters’ list and repeal of the IM (DT) Act.

On May 19, 1997, new Prime Minister Indra Kumar Gujral inaugurated a broad gauge line connecting Dibrugarh to Delhi during his visit to Assam. He said that the Centre was keen to scrap the IM (DT) Act. The AASU called on him and demanded implementation of the Assam Accord, a correct voters’ list and resumption of tripartite talks. On June 23, 1997, the AASU warned of a deep-rooted Bangladeshi political ploy to infiltrate the North-east with its citizens. In a press release, it said that political parties in the State were insouciant to the danger posed to Assamese society. It said that development in the State had been turned upside down by infiltration. It asked the people to rise above partisan politics to check the Bangladeshi design. The AASU also submitted memoranda to DCs, SDOs on implementation of Assam Accord, repeal of IM (DT) Act, the withdrawal of the ‘black laws’, a correct voters’ list and solution of problems of the ethnic communities. It also decided to take up vital issues with all political parties. Another AASU press release on June 28, 1997, expressed apprehensions that a conspiracy was on to include the names of all illegal foreigners in the State in the draft rolls under preparations. The AASU said that they would be compelled to oppose the entire electoral rolls revision process if the names of illegal foreigners were not deleted under the provisions of the Accord. The AASU acknowledged that the foreigners’ problem in Assam was getting more complex than what it was during the days of agitation.

On July 2, 1997, Chief Minister Prafulla Mahanta assured an AASU delegation that the State Government would recommend the Centre to hold tripartite talks soon. He also apprised the AASU on steps taken by Dispur on the 31-point charter of demands submitted by the AASU to the State Government on June 6, 1996. The AASU also appealed to the Chief Election Commissioner to formulate a special mechanism to delete the names of the foreign nationals before publication of draft rolls. The next day, the AASU warned that it would be forced to launch an agitation if dates for tripartite talks were not declared by July 10 and also demanded repeal of the IM (DT) Act. It alleged that the Centre was provoking Assam youths to take up arms by not implementing the Accord. Meanwhile, the AASU called a successful
On July 21, 1997, the AASU called a 36-hour Assam bandh against the Centre’s failure on all issues, including solution to the aliens’ issue. This was the first 36-hour bandh since 1993. On July 23, 1997, it sent telegrams to the President, the Prime Minister and the Home Minister demanding scrapping of the IM (DT) Act. It also asked the State CPI to put pressure on Home Minister Indrajit Gupta, a senior CPI leader, to scrap the IM (DT) Act. On July 26, 1997, an AASU press release, while reacting to a new EC directives which provided that Indian-born descendants of post-71 aliens would be treated as Indian citizens, said, “Assam will again be in flames.” It set a deadline of August 5, 1997, to the State Government urging it to spell out how Dispur proposes to tackle the issue.

On July 29, 1997, the CEC, while rejecting AASU’s demand, said that rolls revision in the State had been prepared as per Supreme Court guidelines. He disclosed that the Home Minister was pressurized by the EC to amend certain rules, including the setting up of the screening committee. The CEC justified that the Citizenship Amendment Act, 1986 (5 I of 1986) and applicable throughout the country with effect from July 1, 1987, provides that ‘persons who are born in India or before’ July 1, 1987, irrespective whether their parents are citizens of India or not, vide Section 3 of the Act, 1955 are to be treated as Indian citizens, and have therefore, been included in the electoral rolls for the State. On the same day, Chief Minister Prafulla Mahanta announced that the long-awaited tripartite talks would be held in Delhi on August 11, 1997. The AASU, meanwhile, rejected the CEC’s contention on revision of electoral rolls and its guidelines and said clauses in Assam Accord had been incorporated in the Constitution, hence the CEC’s explanation did not hold water. On the proposed tripartite talks scheduled for August 11, the AASU, on August 2, 1997, asked the Centre to spell out action plan on Assam Accord implementation, and the mechanisms to be adopted to implement the Accord. It said that if the above two were not done, there was little justification in going for the tripartite talks.22

In a major fillip to the AASU, the EC stayed its Clause on descendants and said that it would review guidelines on the subject. On August 10, before the tripartite talks, the AASU demanded the Centre to give desired result of the agitation to the people of Assam if the former really considered Assam to be a part of the country.
Resumption of Tripartite Talks:

On August 11, 1997, the tripartite talks began after a gap of almost seven years. It was presided over by Union Home Minister Indrajit Gupta, who represented the Centre, besides Biren Baishya, the Union Minister for Steel. The State delegation was headed by Chief Minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta while a 20-member AASU team was led by its president Sarbananda Sonowal and general secretary Samujjal Bhattacharya.

The Home Minister said that there had been substantial compliance with all the provisions of the Accord except detection and deportation of foreigners. He also admitted that despite necessary administrative and organizational framework being put into place, the results had been extremely poor. He invited AASU suggestions to achieve the objectives outlined in the Accord regarding deportation of foreigners. He also called for a time-limit for the completion of projects announced hitherto and asked the AASU to launch a peace offensive against mindless violence of militant groups like ULFA. The AASU demanded a commitment from the Centre regarding the implementation of the Accord within a time-frame. The AASU said that a decision to repeal the IM (DT) Act, 1983 was taken when former Prime Minister Deve Gowda had visited Assam in October 1996, and demanded a time-frame for implementation of the decision on the Act. The Union Home Secretary said that out of 510,441 cases taken up for enquiry under Foreigners' Act, 33,620 cases were referred by the State Government to Foreigners Tribunals. In case of the IM (DT) Act, he pointed out that out of the 291,576 enquiries initiated, 26,913 cases were referred by the State Government to the IMD Tribunals. He said that mere repeal of the IM (DT) Act would not solve the problems.

The AASU objected to the recent guidelines of the Election Commission of India and objected to the fact that the children of illegal migrants born in India between March 25, 1971 and July 1, 1987 are Indian citizens and are to be included in the electoral rolls. The tripartite talks decided that there would be consultation with all political parties to evolve a consensus on the repeal of IM (DT) Act.

On August 14, 1997, in a press conference, the AASU called for a consensus among all political parties on the repeal of the IM (DT) Act. A fresh round of talks...
was held at the State Guest House No. 1 in Guwahati between the Centre represented by the Special Secretary to the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), Ashok Kumar, the AASU and the State Government. Mr Kumar said that the Centre was keen to implement the Assam Accord. He reiterated that New Delhi would give full assistance to the Assam Government in implementing the Assam Accord. The AASU demanded formulation of a time-bound strategy for implementing the Accord and scrapping of the IM (DT) Act. The Special Secretary to the MHA also said that the Centre would take up Clause 6 of the Accord. The Government of Assam said that from 1986-1993, 287,625 inquiries had been initiated out of which 287,412 cases had been inquired into, while 284,647 were referred to screening committees, which in turn had referred 25,051 cases to the tribunals which had disposed off 1,405 cases declaring 8,694 persons as illegal entrants serving expulsion notices were served on 5,033 people and 1,190 of them were expelled.

On October 24, 1997, the AASU alleged that there was a nexus between Centre, the Home Ministry, the Election Commission, the State Government and all political parties to ensure the failure of the Assam Accord. On October 28, 1997 it met the CEC in New Delhi on the guidelines issued by the EC regarding citizenship of aliens on the basis of birth. The AASU urged the Centre to constitute an expert committee of all implementing agencies, including the Home Ministry, the Election Commission and the State Government for the speedy implementation of the Assam Accord. On the same day, in a press conference in Delhi, the AASU accused the AGP Government in Assam of not being serious to expel the foreigners from the State. It said that there were 15 lakh educated unemployed youths in Assam but the Mahanta Government was not bothered about them.

On November 18, 1997, the AASU urged the State Government as well as the Centre to reopen the Ashok Paper Mill. It said that the Mill was once reopened in 1996, only to be closed in September 1997. The AASU said that the closure of the Mill was a violation of the Accord. On November 20, 1997, the AASU warned the EC of mass agitation if the latter planned to publish draft rolls on December 9, 1997. The AASU team in Delhi alleged that no names had been deleted, and descendants of post-1986 foreigners had all been included in the rolls. The AASU also warned the AGP-led Government on the publication of draft rolls. It gave an ultimatum to
the State Government to intervene in the publication of an incorrect rolls within 48 hours by December 4, 1997, failing which the AASU warned of a Assam bandh on December 9, 1997, the day the EC had planned to published draft rolls. On December 5, 1997, when the AGP-led Government failed to respond to AASU ultimatum, the AASU called for a 24-hour Assam bandh as scheduled protesting against the inclusion of foreigners' names in the State electoral rolls. It said that the State Government was championing the cause of aliens and not of aborigines. On December 9, 1997, the State Election authorities simultaneously released the electoral rolls of 124 Assembly constituencies in their district headquarters leaving out rolls of the 28 Gossaigaon LAC and 29 Kokrajhar West constituencies, which, it said, would be published on December 18, 1997. On December 11, 199, the AASU said that it would not accept the voters’ list. On December 24, 1997, the EC said that necessary instructions on doubtful Assam voters, euphemistically called the ‘D’ voters totalling 3.7 lakh, would be given soon. On January 2, 1998, the AASU submitted a memorandum to the Chief Minister saying that the recently-published draft rolls won’t be accepted. It said that faulty electoral rolls would not be able to protect the interest of the indigenous people of the State. In a significant decision, the EC, on January 5, 1998, debarred the 3.7 lakh ‘D’ citizens from voting in the Lok Sabha elections to be held in Assam. The AASU, while welcoming the EC decision, said that steps must be taken to delete the names of all the foreigners from the voters list.

In a two-day national convention in January 1998, on infiltration in Guwahati, the AASU said that a fresh approach needed to be adopted to tackle the problem. Rajinder Sachar, former Chief Justice, Delhi High Court called for a united effort by all concerned for the problems in the State. AASU president Sarbananda Sonowal stated unequivocally that political power must stay with the indigenous people. Speakers in the convention asked the AASU-AJYCP to form an alternative political party. 25 organizations, including the All Assam Minority Students' Union participated in the convention. On January 10, 1998, in a press conference, the AASU disclosed that a group of eminent citizens would be sent to Delhi for taking up the issue of draft electoral rolls for the State. The AASU revealed that the convention had also decided to form a non-political platform, "Asom Jnanam Sabha", with representation from all like-minded organizations and individuals.
convention also authorized the AASU to take initiative on various issues to prepare a common programme with the Unnati Sabha, for e.g. preparation of SRC, economic development, recognition of aboriginals' right to political and economic power, more power to the State under a federal set-up, provision for a second chamber in the State for equal opportunity to each and every ethnic group in the State administration.

On January 16, 1998, the AASU sent a telegram to the EC to publish the electoral rolls with a correct voters' list. On January 20, 1998, the Ashok Paper Mill was reopened. In a press conference on January 30, 1998, the AASU gave an ultimatum to all political parties to make their stand clear on the Assam Accord, IM (DT) Act, and electoral rolls by February 4, 1998. The AASU called an Assam bandh on February 6, 1998, protesting elections in the State with 'defective' electoral rolls.

It said on February 15, 1998, after a 29-hour hunger strike, that elections would not serve Assam's interest.

On April 1, 1998, an AASU delegation met new Home Minister L. K. Advani in New Delhi and demanded implementation of the Assam Accord. It also expressed displeasure over the non-inclusion of IM (DT) Act repeal and the Accord in the national agenda of the Government. It requested the Home Minister not to forget the election promises. AASU president Sarbananda Sonowal and secretary Samujjwal Bhattacharya placed before the Home Minister a formal demand to solve the burning economic and social issues facing the State. Mr Advani assured the AASU that his party would not go back on its promises.

AASU president Sarbananda Sonowal disclosed in a press conference that the Union Home Minister had convened a tripartite talks starting April 6, 1998. The talks began with Mr. Ashok Kumar, Special Secretary to the Ministry of Home Affairs representing the Centre and Mr. M. S. Pangtey, Additional Chief Secretary representing Assam besides other senior bureaucrats of the State. The AASU delegation consisted of its president, general secretary, Prof. Basanta Deka, Prof. R. C. Borpatra Gohain and Prof. Azimuddin Saikia. When the AASU demanded the repeal of the IM (DT) Act, the Centre assured that a proposal to repeal the Act would be put up to the new Government for decision. The AASU also stated that the
amendments to the Citizenship Act carried out in 1987 were against the spirit of Assam Accord, and should be repealed. The Assam Government felt that the provision of the Citizenship Act which entitles children of foreigners born in India to get an Indian citizenship would only apply to foreigners who entered India legally and not to illegal immigrants. The Centre assured the AASU and the State Government that on legal arguments from them, the Union Government would re-examine the issue and seek legal opinion.

The three parties agreed that urgent steps needed to be taken by the State Government to ensure compliance of the "Births and Deaths Registration Act" so that persons born in Assam were registered, as also deaths in the State. The AASU suggested amendments to the Gaon Burah Act so that the Gaon Burah is required to report to the police, the presence of any outsiders noticed in the area, failure of which should invite punitive action. It was also agreed that a committee on border management would be set up at the State level with representatives of the State Government, the State police and the BSF to review coordination and the steps being taken on the border to prevent illegal infiltration. The schedule of works of border fencing and roads would be reviewed and all steps taken to complete the sanctioned work. It was agreed that a team comprising representatives of the Home Ministry, the State Government, the AASU and the BSF would visit the border areas of Assam in May 1998 to review the situation and the steps taken to prevent infiltration. A time frame to implement the Accord was also proposed to be drawn up and agreed for in the next official meet for finalization.

On April 11, the AASU urged the HRD Minister Murali Manohar Joshi to set up a national vocational training institute in the State as promised under Clause 7 of the Accord. On April 12, Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee assured an AASU delegation in New Delhi that the Centre was firm on scrapping IM (DT) Act. On May 4, Chief Minister Prafulla Mahanta said that the proposal to scrap the IM (DT) Act had been sent to the Centre. He also said a separate proposal had been sent to the Centre to amend the Constitution to give constitutional safeguards to the Assamese people under Clause 6 of the Accord. The AASU, meanwhile, called for a joint and coordinated efforts to all political parties to scrap the IM (DT) Act while chiding the two-year AGP rule for failing to solve any of the State's problems.
July 1, 1998, a joint team of the Centre, the State Government and the AASU unveiled the Indo-Bangladesh border in Dhubri and reported that 80 per cent fencing work had been completed.

Home Minister L. K. Advani visited Guwahati on September 8 and said that it was 'hard to understand why the IM (DT) was still in vogue'. The next day, he said that the issue of infiltration and deportation was a closed chapter. He said that now foreigners would be identified and issued identity cards to check influx. He also said an NRC as well as register of non-citizens would be compiled. The AASU, protesting the new formula, said that deportation of foreigners was a must as per the Assam Accord.

The next round of tripartite talks began on September 23, 1998, in Delhi where Additional Secretary in the Ministry of Home Affairs, Dr. P. D. Shenoy chaired the meeting. Mr G. K. Pillai, Joint Secretary (NE), MHA represented the Centre along with other bureaucrats while Assam Chief Secretary P. K. Bora headed the Assam delegation. The AASU president Sarbananda Sonowal and general secretary Samujjal Bhattacharya led the AASU delegation which also included AASU adviser Satyabrata Kalita and Prof. R. C. Borpatragohain. The meeting reviewed the clause wise implementation of Assam Accord. A time schedule was also fixed to November for implementing these clauses. Following decisions were also arrived at the meeting:

1) The Assam Government agreed that 546 cases of foreigners of the 1966-197 stream pending with the State police shall be disposed off within three months.

2) It was also agreed that 10,051 cases pending before the Foreigners Tribunals need to be disposed off expeditiously by December 2000.

3) The State Government agreed to fill up vacancies of members to make 13 tribunals under IM (DT) Act, 1983 functional by December 31, 1998. Disput also agreed that vacancies of 16 tribunals will be filled up by March 31, 1999.

4) The State Government agreed to send proposals for additional posts of BRROs by October 1998.
5) The tripartite meeting decided to constitute a 10-man sub-committee with four representatives from the Government of India, three each from the AASU and the Government of Assam to examine the proposals submitted by the Government of Assam and the AASU under Clause 6 of the Assam Accord. The sub-committee shall be chaired by a representative of the Government of India. The meeting decided that the sub-committee shall be constituted within 15 days of receiving names from the AASU and the Government of Assam and shall give its recommendations to the tripartite committee by April 30, 1999. The Central Government also assured the AASU and the Assam Government that the repeal of IM (DT) Act, 1983, was under its active consideration. The meeting also reviewed projects under implementation for the economic development of Assam.26

On October 9, 1998, AASU president Sarbananda Sonowal blamed the State Government for delay in the gas cracker project. He said that the Government was not showing any sense of urgency in implementing the project.

On November 9, 1998, President K. R. Narayanan inaugurated the Srimanta Sankardeva Kalakshetra, a grand exposition of the life and culture of the people of Assam and its many ethnic groups and tribes, the people who had made the cultural mosaic that is Assam. The cultural complex was conceived by the Cultural Advisory Committee under Clause 6 of the Accord. On November 15, 1998, in a press release, the AASU decided to launch an agitation against the EC’s decision to hold by-elections to Bhawanipur and Udarband Assembly constituencies. It decided to hold a nine-hour hunger strike in both the places on November 24, 1998. On November 22, 1998, India and Bangladesh agreed to enforce the 1991 agreement between the two countries which stipulated that any person declared to be Bangladeshi national by the court and illegally staying in India would be sent back. This was agreed in a meeting between the Home Secretaries of both the countries in a meeting in Dhaka.

On December 2, 1998, Home Minister L. K. Advani said that deportation of illegal migrants would take place under the IM (DT) Act, 1983. He also said that the multi-purpose 1-Cards had been finalized. He said that since the Act coming into force in 1983; 9,599 persons had been declared as illegal till June 1998, while 1,454
of them had been deported. The AASU, on the same day, warned the Centre that they were knocking at New Delhi’s door for the last time on the foreigners’ problem and would be forced to act on its own if the Central Government continued to show apathy towards the problem of influx in Assam. On December 5, 1998, in an AASU-sponsored seminar, the AASU gave an ultimatum to the Centre to implement the Accord within a year. In the seminar on ‘Foreigners’ Problem, Economy and Flood of Assam’, representatives of all major political parties participated, and sought the repeal of the IM (DT) Act. On December 8, 1998, Home Minister L. K. Advan told the Lok Sabha that the Centre would ensure detection of aliens. He also said that the minorities would not be harassed under the pretext of detection, deletion and deportation of illegal migrants. He said that the dimension of the problem of influx demanded strengthening of law.

On December 9, 1998, the Centre took two major steps to implement the Assam Accord. It constituted a sub-committee to examine Clause 6 of the Accord and fixed a deadline for completion of border roads and fencing along the Indo-Bangladesh border by March, 2001. A 10-member group headed by Joint Secretary (NE) G. K. Pillay was constituted and asked to submit report by April 30, 1999. The Centre also approved Rs. 1,045.75 crore for the border fencing project.

On January 2, 1999, an AASU delegation met Assam Governor Lt. Gen. S. K. Sinha at Raj Bhawan and urged him to press the Centre to apply Article 370 of the Constitution to protect Assam’s interest and that of the indigenous people of the State. It asked the Governor to impress upon the Centre to implement the Assam Accord within a time-frame.

On January 25, 1999, the Centre decided to erect 71.5 kilometres of additional fencing along the Indo-Bangladesh border in Assam sector, out of which 33 kilometres along the Kushiara river, 30 kilometres along the Surama river and 6.8 kilometres from Dibehar to Sisumara in Dhubri district. The decision came following a recommendation by the Technical Committee of the Union Home Ministry (Border). A Central report also said that till March 31, 1998; 137 kilometres of fencing was completed out of the 262 kilometres along the Assam-Bangladesh border on which work started in 1986.
After taking over charge on February 14, 1999, new AASU president Prabin Boro and general secretary Amiyo Bhuyan, in a press release, said that light to ensure implementation of the Assam Accord would continue. The AASU also reiterated the scrapping of the IM (DT) Act and preparation of an NRC.

On February 23, 1999, President K. R. Narayanan during his customary address to the joint session of Parliament said that the Centre was considering repeal of the IM (DT) Act.

On March 18, 1999, a fresh round of tripartite talks began in New Delhi. Dr. P. D. Shenoy, Additional Secretary in the Ministry of Home Affairs led the Central team whereas the AASU was led by its president Prabin Boro and general secretary Amiya Bhuyan. It also had Sarbananda Sonowal and Sammujal Bhattacharjya in its team as advisers. The State Government was represented by the Home Secretary and a few top officials. The meeting reviewed the action taken on discussion of the meeting held on September 23, 1998. The State Government informed the Centre and the AASU that out of 546 cases of foreigners’ of 1966-1971 stream pending with the State police till September 1998, 545 cases had been disposed of. The State Government also said that it had written to the Foreigners’ Tribunals to dispose of the 10,051 remaining cases expeditiously. The State Government, while stating that seven out of 11 Tribunals were functioning, assured the Centre and the AASU that vacancies in the four tribunals would be filled up by June, 1999. On the IM (DT) Tribunals, the State Home Secretary said that nine Tribunals out of the 10 were functioning. In view of the financial crunch, the Centre and the State Government agreed to release funds directly to the Tribunals. The State Government also agreed to take steps to improve the functioning of PIF/MTF by stationing at least 2,000 inspectors and lower ranked personnel as a back-up force to the BSF by June, 1999.

The AASU demanded that the IM (DT) Act, 1983, be repealed and that a National Register of Citizens should be maintained and updated. The AASU also demanded amendment to the Citizenship Act so that the children of Bangladeshi migrants who had come during 1971-1986 were denied Indian citizenship. The Centre reiterated that repeal of the IM (DT) Act was under its active consideration. The Centre also told the AASU and the State Government that steps were being taken to seal the border. It said that 192 kilometres of road and 158 kilometres of fencing had already
been sanctioned in Assam at a cost of Rs. 115 crore. It said that work would be completed by December, 2000. A joint visit to the Bangladesh border in the Karimganj sector in May, 1999 was also agreed. The Centre also informed DISPU and the AASU that two IR Battalions had been sanctioned for Assam.

The Centre informed the AASU and the State Government that the Cabinet Committee of Economic Affairs had approved the rail-cum-road bridge project at Bogibeel, and that Rs. 5 crore had been provided in the current year’s Budget for survey work. On a query from the AASU on Ashok Paper Mills, the State Government said that Sanghi Textiles had been asked to clarify its position regarding non-registration of the lease agreement, PF dues, etc. The AASU also called for a cap on the release of funds to Sanghi Textiles till the issues raised by it were finalized. 27

On March 27, 1999, the AASU set April 20, 1999 as the deadline for Reliance on the gas cracker and asked the State Government to scout for a different company to start the project. In a press conference in Guwahati, the AASU asked the Government that in case Reliance failed to meet the deadline, the memorandum of undertaking be scrapped. On May 31, 1999, the AASU, through a telegram to the CEC urged the EC to revise the voters’ list as per the Assam Accord. In a press release, the AASU alleged that the EC had failed to fulfil its constitutional obligation of preparing a correct voters’ list.

Another round of tripartite talks regarding review of the implementation of Assam Accord took place on July 1, 1999. Dr P. D. Shenoy led the Centre’s delegation while Additional Chief Secretary, Government of Assam, M. S. Pangtey headed the Assam Government delegation. The AASU was represented by its president and general secretary as well as Sarbananda Sonowal and Samujhaj Bhattacharya as advisers besides Prof. R. Borpatragohain. The AASU raised issues like repeal of IM (DT) Act, 1983, amendment to Citizenship Act, activating the second line of defence on Bangladesh border, flood problems in Assam, etc. They also stated that the sub-committee had been constituted to discuss issues relating to Clause 7 of the Accord. The AASU informed the Centre and the State Government that various irregularities had happened with regard to the revival of Ashok Paper...
Mill. On AASU's insistence, it was agreed that an inquiry needed to be conducted into the matter and those found guilty should be proceeded against, according to law. The AASU urged the Centre that an Ordinance be issued for repeal of IM (DT) Act 1983. The Centre said that it was under active consideration of the Union Government. The AASU wanted flood problem in Assam to be declared as a "National Problem". The Centre, on amendment of the Citizenship Act, to deny children of Bangladeshi migrants of the 1971-86 period Indian citizenship, said that it would convey its views to the State Government within a month.

The meeting agreed to constitute a tripartite sub-committee to consider proposals under Clause 7 of the Assam Accord. The Sub-Committee was to have 10 members to be headed by G. K. Pillai, Joint Secretary (NE) MHA. It was to have three members each from the AASU, the Centre and State Government besides Mr. Pillai. The AASU also called for updating of the NRC. The question of a time frame for different clauses of Assam Accord was deferred to the next meeting. The State Government informed the AASU and the Centre that a few vacancies in the Foreigners' Tribunals and IMD Tribunals had been filled up. The meeting also decided to sanction funds for Assam Government's proposal for Rs. 171 crore for additional roads and fencing. The meeting also agreed that a meeting would be held by Commissioner & Secretary (PWD) before July 15, 1999 to apprise AASU representatives of the border roads and fencing project.28

On July 3, 1999, the AASU met Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee who assured the AASU of a lasting solution to the infiltration problem. The AASU submitted a memorandum to the Prime Minister urging him to treat flood as a national problem and scrapping IM (DT) Act. The AASU also asked Mr. Vajpayee the reasons for delay in implementation of the Assam Accord. On July 9, 1999, Prime Minister Vajpayee inaugurated the Numaligarh Refinery Limited and dedicated it to the nation. On August 18, 1999, a joint team of the Centre, the State Government and the AASU visited the Indo-Bangladesh border in Karimganj. Mr. G. K. Pillai, the Joint Secretary in the MHA said that border roads and fencing would be completed by 2007. The AASU, in a press conference on August 25 in Guwahati, expressed its displeasure over fencing work at the border.

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Another round of tripartite talks regarding review of implementation of Assam Accord was held on November 17, 1999, in New Delhi. The AASU was represented by its president and general secretary as well as its advisers Sammujal Bhattacharyya and Prof. R. Borpatragohain, while Dr. P. D. Shenoy, Additional Secretary, MHA headed the Central team. Dr. Shenoy informed the AASU that the Government of India had sanctioned Rs. 153.85 crore to the Government of Assam for 20 projects from non-lapsable pool of funds. The State Government said that seven judges had been appointed to the Foreigners Tribunals, and some of them had been given dual charges of the adjoining districts. The State Government also said that some of the personnel of PIF/MTF were being deployed as second line of defence in the Karimganj and Dhubri sectors. Dispur also said that the existing proposal for construction of roads and fencing in Dhubri and Karimganj sectors would be completed by March 2000 and March 2001 respectively. The Centre advised the State Government that a review Committee should be constituted by the Government of Assam involving officials of the State Government and AASU representatives under the chairmanship of the Commissioner and Secretary, Implementation of Assam Accord. The review committee would meet on the first Wednesday of every month and review the issues related to Assam Accord. The State Government informed the AASU and the Centre that the completed fences along the Indo-Bangladesh border in Mancachar and Dhubri sectors would be handed over to the BSF by November 30, 1999. The AASU demanded a CBI inquiry into the Ashok Paper Mill issue. The repeal of the IM (DT) Act too came up for discussion. The Assam Government said that work on the preservation and updating of the NRC in all the districts of Assam had already been started. The Centre also decided that the amendment of the Citizenship Act would be referred to the Ministry of Law and Justice. The AASU pointed out to the irregularities done by the Jyoti Chitraban Film Society in the work under progress. The Additional Secretary, MHA said that the Government of Assam should ensure good governance, transparency in administration and functioning of Panchayati Raj institutions, etc.

On November 18, 1999, AASU president Prabin Boro and general secretary Amiyo Bhuyan met Union Home Minister L. K. Advani and urged him to repeal the IM (DT) Act. On November 20, 1999, the AASU, including adviser Samujjal
Bhattacharya and Prof. R. Borpatragohain, met Railway Minister Mamata Banerjee and demanded that work on the Bogibeel Bridge should begin as soon as possible. In a memorandum to Ms. Banerjee, the AASU urged her to complete the Rangiyu Railway Division. On November 29, 1999, Home Minister L. K. Advani said in Rajya Sabha that fencing on the 857.4 kilometres of selected stretches along the Indo-Bangladesh border, and construction of 2866.3 kilometres of motorable road would be completed by March, 2001, at a cost of Rs. 1,004 crore.

Review Committee and Sub-Committee Meetings:

The first meeting of the Review Committee comprising members of the State Government and the AASU regarding a review of the steps taken by the State Government on the Assam Accord front took place on December 1, 1999, under the chairmanship of Mr. P. C. Sarma, Commissioner and Secretary, Implementation of Assam Accord Department. The AASU said that they were keen to discuss the NRC issue, amendment to Section 3 of the Citizenship Act, detection of foreigners of 1966-71 stream and matters relating to Indo-Bangladesh border. The State Government informed the AASU that a proposal for funds for preservation of the NRC had already been submitted to the Centre on October 28, 1999, and a revised proposal would also be sent soon. The Joint Secretary, Home and Political Department, Mr. G. K. Kalita said that the NRC was available in 14 districts of the State, and that the 1966 Electoral Rolls were also available. The AASU said that they had submitted a proposal for the NRC in the year 1990, and expressed apprehension about the safety of the NRC and the 1966 Electoral Rolls, and demanded suitable measures for proper preservation of these important documents. The AASU said that steps should be taken for getting the necessary funds released so that work could start early. Regarding amendment to Section 3 of the Citizenship Act, the State Government informed the AASU that legal argument as desired by the Central Government in the meeting held on April 6, 1998, had already been sent. The AASU requested that a specific time be fixed for completion of the work of detection of foreigners of the 1966-71 stream, since detection was to be done as per the Foreigners’ Act, 1946 and not as per the IM (DT) Act.

On AASU’s request regarding filling up of 1,010 posts of PIF from among local Assamese youths, the State Government representatives said that the posts were reserved for ex-servicemen only. The Commissioner and Special Secretary, PWD
briefed the participants about the progress of work along the Indo-Bangladesh border. He said that the roads in Mancachar along the Bangladesh border had already been handed over to the Central Public Works Department while the one at Dhubri would be handed over soon. The Commissioner and Secretary, Implementation of Assam Accord Department said that a border management committee had already been constituted on October 23, 1998.

The AASU pressed for simultaneous CBI and CID inquiries into the Sangli Textiles Ltd’s handling of Ashok Paper Mills Assam Ltd. The AASU requested the State Government to take effective measures for concretizing the Assam Gas Cracker Project in a time-bound manner. The AASU was also entrusted to provide necessary inputs for a memorandum to be submitted by the State Government on the flood problem of Assam. A joint visit by AASU and State Government representatives to the Jyoti Chitraban Film Studio and Sankardeva Kalakshetra was agreed. The AASU reiterated its demand for repeal of the IM (DT) Act.

On January 30, 2000, the AASU asked Reliance to set up the gas cracker project by February 10, 2000, failing which, the AASU asked the State Government and the Centre to look for alternative arrangements. On April 10, the sub-committee meeting to examine the proposals submitted by the Government of Assam and the AASU was held in Guwahati under the chairmanship of Mr. G. K. Pillai, Joint Secretary (NE) MHA. He informed the sub-committee members that the proposals insofar as amendments to Article 3 was concerned, had been approved. On reservation of seats in Parliament, State Legislature and local bodies for Assamese, the AASU said that they would like to have the definition of ‘Assamese People’ which would be based on the NRC, 1951. The AASU noted that there were no NRC, 1951 figures for seven districts for which the 1952 electoral rolls of the earliest available electoral rolls could be the basis, as these would be more widely acceptable as it would include all communities residing in Assam. When Mr. Pillai stated the need for more details of total population under the definition, the AASU said that the NRC, 1951 had been upheld in various court judgements and the details could be furnished at the next meeting. The AASU also submitted a list of monuments being declared as ‘monuments of importance’ which could then be taken over by the Archeological Survey of India. On the advice of the chairman, the AASU handed over the list to State Government, which in turn, was to prune the list for consideration of the sub-committee in the next meeting.
On April 12, 2000, in a press conference, the AASU said that there would be no compromise on 100 per cent seat reservation for indigenous Assamese i.e. those whose names were registered in the National Register of Citizens, 1951 and their descendants. On April 17, 2000, former AASU president Sarbananda Sonowal filed a writ petition in the Supreme Court challenging the constitutional validity of the IM (DT) Act, 1983. The petition said that the Act was ultra vires, contrary to the very spirit of the Constitution and discriminatory. On May 23, 2000, the Centre had approved Rs. 1,334 crore to fence the entire stretch of Indo-Bangladesh border. The Bangladesh Government immediately notified its displeasure to New Delhi on the border fencing.

**Talks and More Talks:**

Another round of tripartite talks began in Delhi on May 31, 2000, chaired by Dr. P. D. Shenoy, Additional Secretary, (Home) MHA. He reiterated the Centre's commitment to implement the Assam Accord in letter and spirit, and referred to the Prime Minister's announcement in Shillong of Rs. 10,271 crore agenda for the socio-economic development of the North-east and Sikkim. The meeting reviewed the follow-up action taken on decisions of the meeting held on November 17, 1999. The Government of Assam informed the AASU and the Centre that all the Foreigners Tribunals and the IMD Tribunals had been functioning, except for two posts which were lying unmanned in Goalpara and Kokrajhar. The AASU, however, expressed grave concern at the failure of the BSF in containing influx of migrants. On the issue of the second line of defence, the State Government said that from the existing personnel, about 500 were being deployed as a second line of defence. The Government of Assam also disclosed that for raising two India Reserve Battalions, 1,300 to 1,400 youth of Assam had already been selected for recruitment. The Commissioner, PWD, Assam, informed the AASU and the Centre that complete fencing of Mancachar and Dhubri sectors of the Indo-Bangladesh border could not be handed over to the BSF because of the latter's time-consuming procedure in taking over of the completed fence. The Assam Government also said that action had been initiated against Sanghi Textiles Pvt. Ltd., in the matter of Ashok Paper Mills on the basis of the report of inquiry officer, the detail of which, it said, would be given in the forthcoming monthly review meeting.
The AASU reiterated its demand to amend the Citizenship Act. It also said that the funds sanctioned by the Minister of Information and Broadcasting to the Ekushe Chitraban Film Society for modernization and expansion of the studio had not yet been fully utilized, instead the funds had been deposited with nationalized banks and some private sector financial companies. The AASU also raised the demand for a fourth bridge across the Brahmaputra, to which the Centre said that proposal for the bridge had already been approved. On the Gas Cracker Project, the Centre said that due to objection of the Indian Air Force, a different site was being looked into.

Another round of the Review Committee meeting took place in Guwahati on June 7, 2000. The AASU stated that the meeting should discuss detection of foreigners of 1966-71 stream, joint patrolling of Indo-Bangladesh border by the BSF and the Assam Police, fixation of time-frame for implementation of various clauses of Assam Accord, joint visit to border areas, the flood problem and matters concerning Sankardeva Kalakshetra and Jyoti Chitraban. They also wanted talks on upgradation of the NRC and progress of fencing and construction work at the border. The meeting decided that the Government of India should be requested for release of funds for the NRC at the earliest. The AASU also pointed out that migrants of pre-1966 period should be regularized by issue of certificates in the form of identity cards or citizenship certificates on the basis of the 1966 Electoral Rolls. The meeting also decided that the Ministry of Home Affairs be requested for issue of necessary certificates as per Clause 5.2 of the Assam Accord. The State Government informed the AASU that the Centre had rejected proposals sent by Dispur regarding amendment to Section 3 of the Citizenship Act.

The Home and Political Secretary, Assam, told the AASU that fixed time for disposal of cases related to detection of foreigners of 1966-1971 stream could not be imposed on the judiciary. The AASU, however, said that time should be fixed for detection of 1966-71 stream of foreigners as the border department had sufficient manpower. The AASU also suggested that the Indo-Bangladesh border be handed over to the Assam Police or joint patrolling be done by the BSF and the Assam Police as that was likely to be more effective in checking infiltration, to which the State Government said that unless written instructions were received from MHA, joint patrolling was not possible. The AASU, however, pointed out that when the
had met the DG, BSF, he had agreed for joint patrolling the by BSF and the Assam Police, and so wanted the confusion be clarified by referring the matter to the Home Ministry. The AASU expressed dissatisfaction at the quality of work done by the PWD at the Indo-Bangladesh border. The meeting also decided that a meeting of the Border Management Committee would be held to sort out the problems between the BSF and the PWD, if any, before the next tripartite talks. The AASU said that wrong planning and design by the PWD, had led to erection of fence at certain low-lying portions making it susceptible to be submerged during high rainfall and flood, and ultimately serving no purpose in checking infiltration. The AASU asked the State Government to fix accountability on the persons at fault. The AASU called for a shoot-at-sight order at the border and a fixation of date for a joint visit.

The AASU alleged sub-standard purchase in case of Jyoti Chitrabai and wanted that the utilization certificate of funds released be submitted by the Cultural Affairs Department to the Centre for further release of funds. The AASU demanded a high-level inquiry against Sanghi Textiles Pvt. Ltd., and the officials involved in the irregularities leading to the closure of the Mill. The Commissioner and Secretary, Implementation of Assam Accord (IAA), suggested that an FIR be lodged against the company regarding bounced cheques issued by the company. The AASU wanted that the Mill's handing over to a new party be kept in abeyance. The AASU asked the State Government to write to the Ministry of Water Resources regarding declaration of flood in Assam as a national problem. The AASU expressed unhappiness over the functioning of the Food Control Department. It reiterated the demand for repeal of IM (DT) Act, 1983.

The next round of meeting between the Government of Assam and the AASU took place on June 27, 2000, on the modalities for upgradation of the NRC. When the Commissioner and Secretary, IAA, sought for relevant details on categories 1 (2) and 1 (3) of the modalities already submitted by the AASU regarding the upgradation of the NRC, the AASU said that the NRC, 1951 be taken as the basis for upgradation. The AASU said that in case of persons not enlisted therein, 1951 electoral rolls be consulted and the names of eligible persons be included. They pointed out that 1966 Electoral Rolls could not be the basis for upgradation of the NRC and suggested that in case of persons belonging to category 1 (3), names could...
be included on the basis of evidence provided in the form of land documents such as
land revenue receipts, land pattas, PRCs and ration cards issued by civil administration of the State Government. The Commissioner and Secretary, AASU sought clarification on what was actually meant by 1951-66 documents as stated in the modalities already furnished by the AASU. The AASU said that it could clarify the matter in the next meeting.32

Another round of meeting between the AASU and the State Government took place on July 7, 2000. The AASU on the matter of functioning of gaonburahs in the matter of ingress of new persons felt that the gaonburahs should be in a position to identify new entrants to the village and so more powers and facilities be provided to them. The AASU, however, welcomed the steps taken by the State Government while serving “Quit India” notices to foreigners. On the issue of depositing of Government funds with private organizations, the Commissioner and Secretary, Cultural Affairs said that the Board comprising official members and non-official members which took this decision had since been disbanded, a decision which the AASU welcomed. The Commissioner and Secretary, Cultural Affairs said that the utilization certificate for Rs. 8.79 crore had been submitted to the Centre. The AASU wanted to know about the extension project of Sankardeva Kalakshetra. They also pointed out that the composite culture of Assam had not been reflected appropriately in the Kalakshetra and requested for creation of a martyrs’ column there. The AASU was given copies of literature of the Kalakshetra as demanded by it in the last meeting. On the Ashok Paper Mill, the AASU demanded a CBI inquiry pending which, it said, the Mill should not be handed over to any party. It wanted to know as to who had designed and approved the scheme for border fencing along the India-Bangladesh border. On being told that the plan had been prepared by the BSI and approved by the Centre, the AASU suggested that valid, permanent and effective measures be taken to plug porosity of the border to check infiltration. The State Government informed the AASU that 200 personnel had already been placed in the border areas as the second line of defence. The AASU raised the question on the voters in the meeting.33

Another round of bipartite review meeting took place between the AASU and the Government of Assam on August 9, 2000. The meeting was chaired by the Additional Chief Secretary Mr M. S. Pangtey, who was also the Principal Secretary.
Implementation of Assam Accord. The AASU pointed out to the Government that for want of proper response from the State Government, no action had yet been taken on the repeal of IM (DT) Act, Indo-Bangladesh border joint visit, etc. They also felt peeved that a CBI inquiry demanded by the AASU into the alleged irregularities in the Ashok Paper Mill issue had not been ordered and that appropriate instructions had not been issued to concerned authorities on the issue of "Quit India" notices to foreigners. The AASU also conveyed its disinterest in the continuation of bipartite talks unless the State Government made its stand clear on the repeal of IM (D'l) Act. They, however, agreed that bipartite meetings be held once in every two months.

The State Government issued a document on the follow-up action, taken in pursuance of points raised during tripartite talks on Assam Accord on May 31, 2000 in the first week of September, 2000 enlisting the performances of the 11 Foreigners Tribunals and 16 IMD Tribunals till August 31, 2000. The State Government's record stated that the number of enquiries initiated by police were 513,787 and completed by them were 513,252. The cases referred to Foreigners Tribunals by police totalled 35,781 and the number of cases disposed of by Foreigners' Tribunals were 25,179 out of which 24,746 persons were declared as foreigners while the number of cases pending with Foreigners' Tribunals were 10,502. The Government also listed the performance of the IMD Tribunals since 1986 to August 31, 2000. The statistics showed that number of inquiries initiated by police were 315,680 out of which they completed inquiries of 311,955 cases. The number of inquiries referred to the screening committee was 305,482 of which 42,587 cases were referred to the 16 tribunals, which, in turn, disposed of 17,733 cases, while the number of pending cases with the Tribunals stood at 24,836 and persons declared as illegal migrants were 10,145 and persons expelled were 1,487.

A fresh round of tripartite sub-committee meeting to examine the proposal submitted by the Government of Assam and the AASU under Clause 6 of the Assam Accord was held on September 7, 2000, in Guwahati wherein the AASU reiterated its demand for seat reservation for the ethnic Assamese and repeal of the IM (D'l) Act, 1983. The State Government informed the sub-committee that it had not yet decided on the AASU's demand of 100 per cent reservation of seats. The Centre also stated that normally reservations were for minorities and cited that the Supreme
Court had also said in the past that reservation above 50 per cent would not be legally sustainable, and the existing reservations for Schedule Caste and Schedule Tribe in the State could not be disturbed. On the question of monuments of importance, the Commissioner (Education), Government of Assam handed over a list of 61 places according to priority of the State Government. The meeting reviewed Clause 7 of the Accord on the economic development of Assam. The Joint Secretary, (NE) MHA, the G. K. Pillai said that the RIL and OIL had reached an agreement on gas supply for the gas cracker project, and that the project was likely to commence by January, 2001. The AASU expressed its concern at the large-scale unemployment in the State, and regretted that banks were not extending credit, especially for self-employment. The meeting discussed the problem of small tea growers. The AASU demanded the State Government’s response on the various economic development proposals submitted by it.\textsuperscript{36}

On September 18, 2000, the AASU submitted a memorandum to the Chief Minister calling for a time-bound implementation of the Assam Accord and scrapping of the IM (DT) Act. The AASU urged the Chief Minister to take measures to pressurize the Centre to recognize flood as a national problem. It also asked the Centre for a revision of the State Electoral Rolls before the next polls in Assam.

On September 19, 2000, AASU president Prabin Boro, its general secretary Amiya Bhuyan and adviser Samujjal Bhattacharjya met Union Home Minister L. K. Advani in New Delhi. Advani assured the AASU that the Centre was very soon going to take a decision on IM (DT) Act. On October 15, 2000, the AASU met CEC M. S. Gill in New Delhi and urged him for special measures to correct the voters’ list. The AASU said that a mere summary revision would not be enough for preparing a correct voters’ list. On October 19, 2000, Reliance Assam Petrochemical Ltd and Oil India Limited signed a gas supply deal for the Assam Gas Cracker Project.

On October 30, 2000, the Assam Government prepared a status report on the implementation of the Assam Accord preparing itself for the forthcoming round of tripartite talks beginning in New Delhi on November 7, 2000. The tripartite talks were chaired by Additional Secretary, Home, MHA representing the Centre alone with G. K. Pillai, Joint Secretary (NE) and E. N. Rammohan, Director General, BSU, while the four-member AASU delegation had its president, general secretary, advisers...
Samujjal Bhattacharya and Prof. R. C. Borpatragohain. Additional Chief Secretary M. S. Pangtey led the Assam Government team. The State Government informed the participants that they were not getting suitable judges for the IMD Tribunals and would request the Home Ministry to relax the eligibility criteria for selection of judges to be appointed in the lower tribunals under IM (DT) Act 1983. They also said that 11 Tribunals were functioning properly.

On the second line of defence, the State Government said that 185 personnel had been deployed, and added that due to accommodation problem more personnel could not be deployed. The AASU, however, alleged irregularities regarding the 1300-1400 persons recruited for raising of two IR battalions. On the issue of joint visit to the border, the BSF DG agreed to an AASU request, consequent of which it was decided that a joint visit comprising representatives of the Government of Assam, the AASU and the BSF would be conducted at the border between November 14 and 17, 2000. The State Government said that work of Phase-I (fencing and border road) would be completed by March 31, 2001. The State Government informed that three criminal cases had been registered against Sanghi Textiles Pvt. Ltd. It was also decided that disciplinary action should be taken against the State Government officials involved with Sanghi Textiles. The State Government assured that it would hand over a copy of the memorandum of understanding signed between the Government of Assam and the new party to the AASU. The State Government informed the Centre and the AASU that the Jyoti Chitraban Film Society was functioning properly, and that Dispur had issued Rs. 8.20 crore to it. It, however, said that utilization certificate from the Society was yet to be received.

The Centre instructed the State Government that each month a meeting between the AASU and the Additional Chief Secretary, and another meeting between the AASU and the Commissioner and Secretary, AAI be convened to resolve pending issues. On November 27, 2000, the outgoing BSF DG E.R. Rammohan said in Delhi that politicians were the main hurdle in solution of the influx issue.

On December 9, 2000, the AASU carried out a torchlight procession on Assam Accord. It demanded proper rehabilitation of the families of martyrs of the Assam movement, and solution to the foreigners’ problem, and repeal of IM (DT) Act. In
a press conference later, AASU adviser Samujal Bhattacharya alleged that Bangladeshi vote bank was behind the Prafulla Mahanta-led Government's silence on foreigners. On December 12, 2000, the draft Electoral Rolls of 126 legislative Assemblies in the State were published.

On January 3, 2001, the Jamiat-Ulema-Hind filed a petition in the Supreme Court challenging the State Government as well as Sarbananda Sonowal’s petition on the IM (DT) Act repeal. It also sought to have its name included as a party in the case, initially filed by the All India Lawyers’ Forum for Civil Liberties. Mr. Abdul Muhib Mazumdar, a Cabinet Minister in the Prafulla Mahanta-led coalition Government said that IM (DT) Act was a result of a broad agreement between the Centre and the State, promulgated in the State with the consent of a Legislative Assembly in 1983 when Hiteswar Saikia was the Chief Minister. The Centre on January 8, 2001, sought the help of the Supreme Court for consensus to repeal IM (DT) Act after three groups filed two new intervention petitions. The UML and Citizens Rights’ Preservation Committee filed an intervention petition and the Jamiat filed a writ petition. The Solicitor General of India Harish Salve told the Supreme Court that the Centre, despite all its efforts, had failed to build up a political accord. The State Electoral rolls were, however, finally published after complaints, claims and objections were settled and preparing and printing of supplements, on January 30, 2001. On February 26, 2001, the Supreme Court decided to go into the validity of IM (DT) Act after the Centre accepted that the Act was discriminatory. On the same day, the State Government released statistics of IM (DT) Act cases from 1983 to November 2000. It said that the Assam Police initiated 319,019 inquiries and completed 314,519 of them, while it referred 307,407 cases to screening committees which in turn referred 43,255 cases to the IMD Tribunals. The Tribunals disposed off 18,184 cases and declared 10,181 as illegal migrants and expelled 149 foreigners. During the same time, 24,707 fresh and reinfilters were pushed back. On March 10, 2001, the State Government selected 28 places along the 270 kilometres Assam-Bangladesh border for posting of the second line of defence comprising personnel of the Border Security Force to check influx. Dhubri and Barak shared equally the places according to vulnerability of the area. On March 21, 2001, the AASU said that State Electoral Rolls were not acceptable to them. They conveyed this to CEC M. S. Gill during his visit to Guwahati. On July 9, 2001.
whereas the AASU burnt copies of the IM (DT) Act, 1983 in Guwahati the Supreme Court allowed the State Government four week time to file its revised affidavit by adjourning further hearing on the case by seven weeks.

Meanwhile, a new Congress (I) Government came to power in Assam following the Assembly election and Tarun Gogoi became the Chief Minister.

On August 1, 2001, Union Minister of State for Home Vidya Sagar Rao told the Rajya Sabha that the Home Minister would amend the Foreigners (Registration) Order, 1971 to check illegal immigration from Bangladesh and Pakistan while on August 2, 2001, the Union Labour Minister S. N. Jatiya ruled out work permit for infiltrators. On August 10, 2001, the AASU warned of a nationwide stir if the IM (DT) Act was not repealed. In a memorandum to the Home Minister in New Delhi, the AASU demanded a political dialogue to take a fresh look at the implementation of the Assam Accord, besides the tripartite talks wherein the parties would be the same.

The new-Congress (I) Government in Assam in its revised petition in the Supreme Court opposed the replacement of IM (DT) Act by the Foreigners Act as proposed by the AGP Government. The Congress (I) Government said that Bangladesh was refusing to accept the infiltrators deported by Assam, so there was no point in replacing the IM (DT) Act, 1983.

The sub-committee meeting to examine the proposals submitted by the AASU under Clause 6 of the Assam Accord was held on September 15, 2001, at Guwahati under the chairmanship of Surendra Kumar, Joint Secretary (NE), MHA. The chairman said that despite discussion in two earlier meetings on April 10, 2000 and September 7, 2000, the State Government had not submitted the definition of 'Assamese people' and neither had it sent any firm proposals for reservation in elected bodies. A peeved AASU expressed its dissatisfaction on the inordinate delay in the matter as well as the insouciant approach of the State Government in holding bipartite meetings despite agreeing to do so. It said that there was hardly any progress as far as provisions under Clause 6 of the Accord was concerned despite 18 years of signing of the Accord. On the question of reservation, the AASU said that
there were cases of complete reservation of seats in elected bodies in four other states—Meghalaya, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland. The same could be applied if the definition of Assamese people was decided upon.

The meeting dwelt at length on Clause 7 of the Accord concerning economic development of Assam. The AASU said that it was interested mostly in four projects—construction of rail-cum-road project at Bogibeel, Reliance Gas Cracker Project, increase in CD ratio of Banks in the State and floods in Assam being taken up as a national problem. The AASU said that Reliance Industries was no longer interested in the gas cracker project and was using the LOI as a barrier so that nobody else could take up the project in Assam. On the issue of declining CD ratio in Assam as compared to the national average, the AASU sought an Assam-centred loan scheme and easy availability of loans to unemployed youths. The AASU said that there was need of long-term credit plan for the State, providing credit for cultivation of pepper, coconut, beetal nut and beetal leaves. It wanted to know as to why the L. C. Jain Committee and Shukla Committee recommendations were not implemented. It demanded that representatives of the Ministry of Railways, Water Resources, Chemicals and Petroleum and Natural Gas should be called in the Assam Accord meeting so that they could be confronted with these major issues.

On November 6, 2001, the AASU served a 7-day ultimatum to Reliance on the gas cracker project. It said in New Delhi that maximum concession had been given to the company. The AASU said that if Reliance was not sincere on the issue then it would stop all major projects of the company in Assam.

A fresh round of tripartite talks began in New Delhi on November 6, 2001, chaired by Dr. P. D. Shenoy, Special Secretary (NE) MHA. The AASU regretted lack of follow-up decisions of the last tripartite meeting. It resented the fact that no bipartite meeting between the AASU and the State Government had taken place during the last one year to review the status of the Accord.

The State Government said that some posts in the 16 IMD Tribunals were unmanned in the State for which the Centre said that advertisements in national dailies be given for inviting applications from serving and retired judicial officers to
fill up the vacant posts. The AASU demanded a list of industrial loan advanced in Assam by banks for their analysis so as to understand low CD ratio in Assam. The representative of the Ministry of Water Resources apprised the meeting about the schemes in Assam for flood control. It pointed out that it had submitted a memorandum to the ministry for declaration of flood as a national problem to which the Special Secretary (NE) asked the Ministry of Water Resources to study the representation of the AASU at an early date. The AASU reiterated its demand for finding a new partner for the gas cracker project. The State Government, on the issue of border fencing and roads, said that the entire border of Assam with Bangladesh would be fenced by March 31, 2004. The AASU suggested that:

(a) Sufficient Goss may be deployed along the Assam-Bangladesh border and (b) joint patrolling comprising Assam Police and BSF personnel along the borders.41

Bipartite talks resumed between the AASU and State Government, after more than a year of hiatus, on December 6, 2001 in Guwahati. The State Government decided that its departments would decide a suitable time-frame to complete various activities related to implementation of the Assam Accord, after the AASU had presented a statement of status of various activities pertaining to the Accord. The Government decided that work on NRC computerization would be expedited and more districts would be covered under the scheme. The Government set a deadline of January, 2002 to finalize with the BSF, a scheme for joint patrolling and also decided to move the Centre to increase the strength of BSF in the State and speed up the scheme of second line of defence. It also decided to take up with the Union Government, matters relating to the amendment of the Citizenship Act. The Government of Assam decided to give a fresh look to the agreement with Reliance in the matter of gas cracker project and to ensure immediate operationalization of Ashok Paper Mill.42

On December 19, 2001, the External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh told the Lok Sabha that fencing along the Indo-Bangladesh border would be completed by 2007. He said that 854 points had already been fenced while the rest 2,431 would be fenced by 2007.43

On January 11, 2002, the Guwahati High Court upheld an EC circular of December 9, 1997 which had debarred doubtful citizens from casting votes.44
Assam elections notwithstanding their enrollment in the State’s electoral rolls, unless their citizenship was favourably decided by the Tribunals constituted under the provision of IM (DT) Act. On January 18, 2002, a three-member bench of the Supreme Court while resuming hearing on the writ petition challenging the IM (DT) Act fixed a final hearing for April 2002. It also clubbed a separate petition challenging the grant of citizenship to descendants of foreigners with the case.

On February 23, 2002, the State Government issued a six-month deadline to all the parties concerned to begin the gas cracker project before reviewing it.

In a press conference, on March 2, 2002, the AASU said that it had prepared a white paper on the State Government and the Centre for their failure in implementing the historic Assam Accord, a copy of which had already been submitted to the State Government. AASU adviser Samujjal Bhattacharya said that a national seminar would be organized in April, 2002 in New Delhi to launch a nationwide stir against the lackadaisical attitude of the Government at the Centre and the State Government on the implementation of the Accord. On March 25, 2002, in another press conference, the AASU threatened a stir over the IM (DT) Act if the Centre failed to announce any decision regarding the demand for a joint session of Parliament. AASU president Prabin Boro and general secretary Amiyo Bhuyan said that justice was being denied to Assam. They argued that if a joint session of Parliament could be organized for the POTA, why not for the IM (DT) Act? On April 13, 2002, Opposition leader Sonia Gandhi addressing the media in Guwahati said that the IM (DT) Act must remain in force. On April 16, 2002, a special bench of the Supreme Court bifurcated the case challenging the IM (DT) Act, from the case relating to illegal infiltration. On April 22, 2002, the Centre, during the hearing of Sarbananda Sonowal’s petition seeking the repeal of the IM (DT) Act, admitted that the Act was hampering aliens’ deportation and ruled out its extension to other States. The Supreme Court asked the Assam Government to make its written submission before May 10, 2002 on the issue. A day earlier, Prime Minister Vajpayee announced the start of work of the Bogibeel Bridge.

The AASU in the two-day seminar on ‘Foreigners Problems, the Assam Accord and the IM (DT) Act, 1983’ held at the Constitutional Club in New Delhi on
May 7, 2002 said that only through the implementation of the Assam Accord a permanent solution to the problems of Assam could be found out, and reiterated steps on illegal influx, compilation of the NRC, repeal of IM (DT) Act.41 Speakers in the seminar wanted the AASU to put the Centre on notice and revive stir against foreigners. The AASU passed a “Delhi Declaration” at the end of the seminar.

On May 15, 2002, Reliance and the ONGC inked a deal on gas supply for the gas cracker project. On June 9, 2002, Mr. Tarun Gogoi, Assam Chief Minister after a Cabinet expansion, elected Pankaj Bora as the Assam Accord Implementation (AAI) Minister.

A bipartite meeting between the State Government and the AASU began on July 12, 2002. The State Government decided that instructions to all DCs would be given for completing the computerization of the existing NRC by June 30, 2003 and Dispur would also move the Government of India for funds in accordance with this time-frame. The AASU wanted that the issues relating to joint patrolling might be discussed during the meeting convened by the Political Department on July 19, 2002, along with the issue of expeditious construction of all the border outposts within a fixed time-frame. The AASU asked the Government of Assam to cancel the agreement with Reliance by August 15, 2002 if the company failed to finalize the deal. It suggested that the State Government should propose new areas, other than the existing industrial estates, for notification under the new industrial policy to attract excise benefits available for such notified areas. This, the AASU felt, was necessary to encourage new investments in the State. The AASU called for compensation to those affected people whose land would be acquired by the district authorities for the Bogibeel Bridge project. The AASU pointed out that review of the implementation of Clauses 6 and 7 had become long overdue and requested the Minister, the AAI, to hold discussions on these issues exclusively. It pointed out that the issue of rehabilitation of the sufferers of Assam agitation who had not yet been rehabilitated, should be taken up earnestly. It suggested a joint visit to the border by August 15, 2002.

Another round of talks between the AASU and the State Government began on July 19, 2002, to specifically take stock of the progress of border road and fencing
work. The Chief Engineer, PWD, informed the meeting that completed road and fences in the Dhubri district had been handed over to the CPWD and the BSF respectively while the same was still to be done in the Karimganj and Cachar sectors. The BSF explained that some rectifications in the Karimganj and Cachar sectors needed to be carried out while fencing in Dhubri district was submerged under water and would require realignment before they take it over. The AASU wanted an inquiry for defective planning of roads, bridges and fences. It demanded a fixed time frame for handing over and taking over of roads and fences already completed and that funds for repairing be given to the Central PWD while the balance work be completed within a specific time-frame. The Chief Engineer, PWD (Border) said that roads and fences of Cachar portion would be ready for handing over within August 31 and September 7, 2002 respectively, and the Karimganj district portion by December 31, 2002. The AASU, however, said that almost 17 years had already elapsed and hardly any progress had been made. It demanded speedy completion of roads and fencing construction work and a joint visit programme to assess progress of work done. On the Indo-Bangladesh border management, the AASU demanded to know the status of joint patrolling, strengthening of the BSF and strengthening the second line of defence as well as deployment of force at border. The Home and Political Commissioner informed the AASU that a meeting of the State-level Border Management Committee was held on July 16, 2002. He said that joint patrolling in the Karimganj district border had already started while the Centre had been moved to allow setting up of more border out posts for the BSF to narrow down the intervals two border out posts for effective detection of infiltrators. He said that the Government was taking steps to fill up the vacancies of the second line of defence. The ADGP (Admin) informed the meeting that joint patrolling in Dhubri and Cachar was to begin at the earliest despite logistic bottlenecks. The Commissioner and Secretary, Home and Political Department also assured the AASU that the issue of abolition of Commissioner of Border post from Assam would be examined by the State Government and would be taken up with the Government of India for reconsideration.

On August 7, 2002, the Government of Assam filed its counter affidavit before the Supreme Court, but on August 10, 2002, the Supreme Court deferred hearing of the IM (DT) case.
On August 14, 2002, the AASU, in a press conference, said that the Government was compromising on national security, and threatened a stir against non-implementation of the Assam Accord even after 17 years of its signing. On August 27, 2002, an all-party meet convened by the AASU resolved to urge the Centre to implement the Accord, and ensure adequate safety along the Indo-Bangladesh border. It also asked the Centre to consider floods in Assam as a national problem. On October 27, 2002, the AASU reiterated the need for fencing along the Indo-Bangladesh international border. Just two days later, the BSF DG, Mr. Apurba Ranjan Sharma, in his welcome address before the beginning of the Indo-Bangladesh DG meet, said that the BSF was wary of unabating influx of illegal immigrants. The meeting finally agreed to set up joint check posts in the riverine areas along the international border. On November 4, 2002, in a press conference, AASU adviser Samujjal Bhattacharyya lashed out at the Centre and the State Government for ignoring the Assam Accord. He said that tripartite talks were not held regularly despite promise by the Centre for a quarterly meeting. He said that bipartite talks supposed to be held every month had not been held for the last six months. He said that because the Accord was not being treated seriously, militants in the State were getting wrong signals regarding the sincerity of the Centre and Dispur in holding talks with them. On the NRC, he said that the Centre had released money but the State Government failed to buy computers.

On November 9, 2002, Defence Minister George Fernandes, during his visit to Guwahati, said that the Indo-Bangladesh border was well-guarded. On the same day, Assam Governor Lt Gen (Retd.) S. K. Sinha said that illegal migrants must be declared as Stateless citizens. On November 26, 2002, the Minister of State for Home at the Centre, Mr. I. D. Swami, told the Lok Sabha that influx from Bangladesh was declining while on the same day the BSF said that influx was still on the rise. Citing figures, the BSF said that till the beginning of November 2002, they had apprehended 7,803 Bangladeshi infiltrators while admitting that many more had crossed over to India. On December 16, 2002, the Centre said that the NRC would be reviewed. It also announced the formulation of an action plan to check influx including better border management. The Centre, while admitting that there were 1.5 crore Bangladeshis in India, said that a National Register of Indian Citizens (NRIC) and a unique National Identity Number to each Indian were being planned to counter infiltration.
A December 26, 2002, report in a local daily said that Bangladeshi migrants were eying Mukong-Selek and Jonai tribal belts along the Assam-Arunachal border in Dhemaji. On January 1, 2003, the State Government released a status report listing activities and projects completed since the signing of the Accord.

Repeal of IM (DT) Act: Waiting for Godot

On January 4, 2003, an AASU press release urged Home Minister L. K. Advani to take steps to update the National Register of Citizens. It said that a scheme to this effect was also submitted in 1990, but nothing had been done on that front. On January 8, 2003, the AASU, along with the North East Students' Organization (NESO), called for repeal of the IM (DT) Act and welcomed the Centre's announcement that detection, deletion and deportation of the illegal Bangladeshi migrants would be completed by June, 2003. On January 12, 2003, the AASU threatened a 'rethink' on the Assam Accord and decried the failure of the Home Minister at the Centre to visit the Mancachar border where BDR men had killed 16 BSF jawans. On January 24, 2003, the Supreme Court asked the Centre and the State Government to file an updated status report on infiltration. On February 5, 2003, the AASU said that correct voters' list was a must before issue of multi-purpose identity cards.

On February 11, 2003, just three days before tripartite talks resumed again, the AASU rapped the Centre and State Government for doing nothing on the Accord. In the tripartite meeting, the Centre assured the AASU of its commitment to fully implement the Accord. The AASU suggested that specific action plan for each clause be drawn up. On the issue of the IM (DT) Act, the AASU demanded a joint Parliament session to be convened as was done in the case of POTA. The progress in detection and deportation of foreigners under IM (DT) Act was reviewed and the Centre found it far from satisfactory, and asked the State Government to have a relook on the IM (DT) Act. On the fencing issue along the border, the State Government said that out of the 224 kilometres of border, 72 kilometres of fencing needed to be completed, which would be done by December 2004. On the issue of patrolling along the border, it was decided that new border out posts (BOPs) would be set up and BOP distance would be reduced to 3.5 kilometres. On riverine patrolling, the State Government informed the meeting that a proposal had been submitted to the MHA for sanctioning of riverine battalions.
On the issue of preparation of the NRC, the AASU said that despite promise to protect, update and computerize the NRC, virtually nothing had been done. The State Government said that order for computer hardwares had been placed while the software for the NRC had been developed by the NIC, and the work would start in Dhubri soon. However, the State Government mentioned that full records of citizens were not available and because 100 per cent registration of birth and death was not being done in the State, updating of NRC might not be a foolproof one. The Centre suggested the State Government that while preparing the NRC, the scheme of multipurpose identity cards (MPIC) being implemented by Government of India be kept in view and dovetailing of the NRC with MPIC be done.

On the gas cracker project, the Ministry of Chemicals and Petrochemicals pointed out that implementation of the project had been held up because of non-resolution of feedstock issue and the acquisition of land. The State Government, however, said that the land required for the project was 1,100 acres and had been identified and once payment was made, the land could be released.

The representative of the Brahmaputra Board disputed AASU's claim that the Board had not significantly contributed to address the flood problem in the State. He stated that a Master Plan had been prepared based on which several individual project reports had also been drawn up. He insisted that flood control had to be a joint venture of the Ministry of Water Resources and State Government. The Centre, on the demand of the AASU to declare flood as a national problem, said that Central assistance was being made available to all States, including Assam, to tackle the problem.46

On March 11, 2003, Mr Pankaj Bora, Assam Accord Implementation Minister, informed the Legislative Assembly that Rs. 12 crore had been spent to deport 1,504 migrants since 1985. He also said that in the year 2002, only four migrants were deported. As on January 1, 2003, he said, 20,297 cases had been disposed of by IMD Tribunals. Along the border, the AAI Minister said, 149.29 kilometres of fencing and 161.31 kilometres of roads had been constructed while 69.69 kilometres of roads and 73.72 kilometres of fencing needed to be completed. On March 13, 2003, the Minister of State for Statistics and Programme Implementation Mr S. B. Mookherjee
told the Rajya Sabha that influx had hit Assam the most. On April 2, 2003, Railway Minister Nitish Kumar inaugurated the Rangiya Rail Division, after 33 years of pleas and agitations.

On April 5, 2003, a newspaper report said that the State Government’s grant to the Jyoti Chitraban Film Studio had been decreasing. From 1990 to 1994, it was Rs. 10 lakh each year, while it came to Rs. 5.5 lakh in 1997 and 1998 and Rs. 3.5 lakh in 1999, 2000. In 2002, not even a single penny was contributed by the Government of Assam to the Chitraban.47

On April 7, 2003, a fresh petition demanding implementation of IM (DT) Act 1983 all over India was filed in the Supreme Court by Ms Abu Hanifa. The Chief Justice of the apex Court said, “It was an Act framed by Parliament and therefore should be dealt by it, if the Government finds that the law has failed to serve its purpose, it has to request the Parliament to repeal it”. The Ministry of Home Affairs said in the court that it had no plan to extend IM (DT) Act, to other States.

Meanwhile, a high-powered Parliament Committee asked the Centre to form a committee headed by the Cabinet Secretary to solve the Gas Cracker Project impasse in Assam. On April 20, 2003, Home Minister L. K. Advani said that the IM (DT) Act should be repealed. On May 6, 2003, the Cabinet accorded its seal of approval to repeal the IM (DT) Act and replace it by Foreigners Act, 1946 and Rules. It said that all cases now pending under the IM (DT) Act might be tried under Foreigners Act. The Cabinet decision was to be forwarded to the Parliament Standing Committee attached to the Ministry of Home Affairs for finalization before being tabled in Parliament for passage. The Cabinet also noted an explanation to be added to Section 2 of the Immigrants (Expulsion from Assam) Act, 1950 to the effect that the provision shall not be applicable to any person who had migrated to India from Bangladesh on or after March 25, 1971. Whereas the AASU welcomed the Cabinet move, the All Assam Minority Students’ Union called an Assam bandh and sought President Kalam’s intervention. On May 9, 2003, the IM (DT) Act Repeal Bill was tabled in Parliament where the Congress staged a walk-out. There were hectic activities in Assam on May 10, 2003. On the one hand, Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi said that the IM (DT) Repeal Bill was a gimmick, on the other, the State Cabinet
adopted a resolution opposing the AAMSU bandh. The bandh, however, failed to evoke response. On May 12, 2003, the AASU, in a press statement, declared its intention to resort to agitational measures to press for the repeal of the IM (DT) Act, implementation of the Assam Accord and sealing of the Indo-Bangladesh border. On May 17, 2003, the AASU carried out processions throughout the State demanding a joint Parliament session to repeal the IM (DT) Act. On June 23, 2003, it also threatened a mass movement against the gas cracker project. It asked all political parties to work jointly.


On August 4, 2003, an AASU delegation met the Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister L. K. Advani in Delhi and demanded the repeal of the IM (DT) Act and implementation of the Assam Accord. They also urged Mr. Advani of a political dialogue between the Centre, State Government and the AASU to finalize a time frame for implementation of the Accord. On August 14, 2003, while commemorating 18 years of the Assam Accord, AASU adviser Samujjal Bhattacharya said that the State might very soon become part of Bangladesh if influx of Bangladeshi immigrants continued unabated.

On September 4, 2003, the Parliamentary Standing Committee attached to the Ministry of Home Affairs began the process of hearing from parties for and against the repeal of the IM (DT) Act, before submitting a report to the Lok Sabha. Altogether, the Committee received 112 representations out of which 72 were in favour of repeal of the Act, including the AASU, the AGP, the BJP, etc., while 48 others, including the AAMSU, the UMF, Jamiat-Ulema-e-Hind were against the repeal of the Act. Two other organizations—the CPI and the Tripura Upajati Karmachari Parishad—were in favour of amendments to the Bill. A four-member AASU delegation led by its president Prabin Boro and secretary Amiya Bhouman besides its adviser Ramesh Borpatragohain and organization secretary Inammat...
Haque, while submitting their suggestions before the Committee, demanded expulsion of all infiltrators irrespective of their religion. The AASU also referred to the List of ‘D’ category of voters prepared by the EC and was later upheld by the court.

On September 11, 2003, mass convention jointly organized by Tinsukia and Dibrugarh units of AASU and the Asom Gas Cracker Prakalpa Sangram Samiti at Dibrugarh gave a clarion call to the people to launch a Delhi Chalo agitation if the demand for immediate start of the Assam Gas Cracker project was not met. The convention, which was attended among others by Rajya Sabha MP Kuldip Sayani, rejected the Central Government’s contention that there was not enough natural gas for this project to come up. AASU adviser Samujjal Bhattacharya was highly critical of Government of Assam’s role in ‘being soft’ towards RIL for not cancelling the contract with it even after getting clearance from Central Government towards that end. He appealed to all the political parties of Assam to rise above their narrow partisan attitudes. The convention also demanded a fifth bridge over the Brahmaputra between Saikhowaghat and Sadiya, and provision of economic safeguard to small tea growers of Assam.

Meanwhile, in New Delhi, the Parliamentary Standing Committee deliberating on the Bill to repeal the IM (DT) Act, wound up the process of hearing on September 17, 2003, after listening on the last day to the NESO, UMF and Jamiat-ul-Minare-e-Hind.

A fresh round of tripartite talks began in New Delhi on October 16, 2003. A livid AASU expressed its resentment over the delay in implementation of the Accord in toto. The AASU reiterated its demand for a 100 per cent reservation of seats in Parliament, Assembly and local bodies under the provision of Clause 6 of the Assam Accord. It demanded that Dispur should clear its stand on the issue so that a final decision could be arrived at. The AASU asked the Central and State Governments to announce a date for setting up of the gas cracker project. The issue of considering floods and erosion as national problem was also raised by the AASU. The AASU criticized the Centre for its failure to take the issue seriously. The AASU raised the issue of 100 per cent reservation in appointment of local youths to Central
Government and semi-government departments and organizations. Issues like problems of small tea gardens and reluctance of nationalized banks to advance loan to local youths were also raised by the AASU.48

Meanwhile, the AASU delegation camping in New Delhi for the tripartite talks were trying to elicit support of the MPs in favour of scrapping the IM (DT) Act. It also threatened a rethink on the Assam Accord because of lack of interest shown by the Centre and the State Government in implementing all the clauses of the Assam Accord within a specific time-frame.

The AASU alleged that the State Government was showing no interest at all in implementing the Assam Accord citing the failure of Dispur in carrying the minutes of the last tripartite talks to the recently-concluded meeting. It also said that the tripartite sub-committee meeting on Clauses 6 and 7 had earlier agreed on principle the need for reservation of seats for indigenous people in Parliament, State Assembly and local bodies, but the State Cabinet was yet to take a decision on the definition of indigenous people and the percentage of seats to be kept reserved which the AASU said, proved lack of interest on the part of the State Government.

As a follow-up of the tripartite meeting of October 16, 2003, a high level meeting on implementation of the Assam Accord between the AASU and the State Government was held wherein the former called for expediting the border fencing work so as to complete it by March 2004 as had been promised by the Centre. The State Government informed the AASU that the first phase of fencing had been completed while permission for the second phase from the Centre was awaited. The meeting regretted that despite the submission of 52 flood control schemes to the Centre by Dispur in the last two years, practically nothing had been done. On the ‘jinxed’ gas cracker project, the State Government informed the AASU that the matter was in the final stage and “work could be started after getting the green signal from the secretary-level committee of the Centre”. The meeting also decided that a joint AASU—State Government delegation would visit the Bangladesh border in December.49 However, on February 6, 2004, the Centre told the Assam Government that they had better look for an alternative project instead of the gas cracker project.
Overall, it has been the same old story. The Centre's neglect, disputes, and bureaucratic hurdles. The result is that major clauses of the Accord remain unimplemented. Despite 25-odd tripartite and bipartite discussions on the Accord front, the progress is tardy to say the least. The fences along the Indi-Bangladesh border are still open, IM (DT) Act is still in vogue, the number of illegal infiltrators has increased, the gas cracker project is history and Assam's economy is in tatters. Taking all these into account, one wonders, whether the Centre and the State Government were serious at any point of time in their commitment to the Assam Accord or to the people of Assam, or was the signing of the Accord an expedient means for the Centre to escape the AASU fury.
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