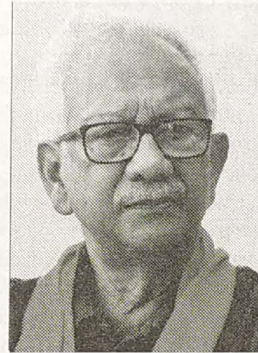


'Delete illegal voters who stayed away from NRC'

Face to Face

Prasanta J Baruah

Pradip Bhuyan, is an IITan and an octogenarian citizen. He was associated with the NRC case in the SC since 2009. He is a staunch believer of sustainable development, especially in the hydro power sector. He is one of the founder trustees of Faculty HS School, North Guwahati. Currently he is working in Karbi foothills on wild elephants in a "Hati Bondhu Community Project".



The final updated National Register of Citizens (NRC) published on August 31, 2019 will now complete one year. What is your assessment of the uncertainty surrounding the NRC?

There is some uncertainty about the NRC 2019, but the NRC as completed under the direction of Hon'ble Supreme Court, is a legal reality and cannot be wished away.

We have a unique situation where the stakeholders – the AASU, the State Government and the Central Government are all unhappy over the outcome of the NRC. Your comment.

AASU is possibly unhappy because names of some indigenous people are not in the NRC and names of some foreigners are in the NRC. They also want to see a totally correct NRC. Regarding unhappiness of the State

and the Central Govt., it must be due to detection of large number of Hindu immigrants in the NRC'19.

The final updated NRC contains 31 million (3.1 crore) names out of a population of 33 million (3.3 crore), leaving out 1.9 million (19 lakhs) applicants, making them potentially stateless. Are you satisfied with the outcome of the final NRC?

For a correct perspective of the NRC process, we need to see the total picture embracing all the post '71 foreigners in Assam and not through the prism of 329 lakhs applicants out of 339 lakhs population as projected from the census 2011 and 19 lakhs detected from these applicants, as foreigners. The crux of the issue is that, - Assam's census population upto 2011, does not stand up to scrutiny based on various available data. Assam's pop-

ulation growth as per Census from 1981 to 2011 is only 20% decadal growth. However, the voter's growth from 1983-2011 is +35% and there is no co-relation between population growth at 20% decadal as per Census and voter's growth rate of +35%. Even if we assume, Assam's population growth rate, via media at 28% decadal conservatively, then based on Assam's population of 180 lakhs in 1981, it will grow to around 420 lakhs in 2015. But Census population in 2015 as projected from the 2011 Census is only 339 lakhs. The difference of 420-339 = 81 lakhs can be deemed to be illegal Bangladeshis.

Out of the projected actual population of Assam as 420 lakhs or so as on 2015 (against census population of 339 lakhs), 329 lakhs have only applied for inclusion in NRC. If every illegal immi-

grant had applied then the total application in NRC would have been over 400 lakhs. In this context, there is no scope for large scale inclusion of immigrants within the 329 lakhs NRC applicants. Some immigrants have applied and some indigenous people did not apply and 19 lakhs of the immigrant group was detected. But, we can safely say that large majority of post 71 immigrants did not apply in NRC process as otherwise number of applicants would have been over 400 lakhs.

As per starred question No. 332 answered by the Union Minister of State, Sri Prakash Jaiswal in Parliament on July 14, 2004, it was stated in the Parliament as below:

Estimated number of illegal Bangladeshis in India as on 31/12/2003 (Statewise) Assam : 50,00,000 lakhs which projected to 2015 conservatively will be around 65 lakhs.

In this context, whatever may be the number of illegal immigrants, - 65 lakhs- 80 lakhs, the NRC 2019 has taken care of all of them, - 19 lakhs detected through application, rest did not apply and hence are automatically out of NRC 2019. This is a golden opportunity to purge the voters list of Assam of all foreigners. We

must be pragmatic and cannot fritter away this golden opportunity.

As the Supreme Court had monitored the NRC exercise, is it not the duty of the SC to order the State Government to delete the names of people in voter's rolls whose names are not in NRC till Tribunal decide otherwise?

I cannot say what is the duty of Hon'ble Supreme Court, but as far as I know, no one has approached the Hon'ble SC for deletion of the names from the voter's list based on NRC, as doubtful voters, till Foreigner's Tribunals declare their status.

The ruling BJP had supported the NRC exercise and had announced that it would be implemented all over India. But now it has backtracked on its assurances. Your comment.

BJP may have realized that NRC all over the country cannot be a priority for the country, when most states of India have negligible percentage of foreigners, unlike Assam where it is a burning problem. They have also witnessed countrywide protest against NRC in the entire country.

What is your take on the Citizenship (Amend-

ment) Act, 2019 which goes against the spirit of the Assam Accord and the NRC?

I am opposed to the CAA, because CAA is against the secular character of the country. Political parties have their own political ideologies, - and in a democratic setup no one can deny it.

The State BJP Government has supported the CAA to protect illegal Bangladeshi Hindu refugee in Assam whose names have not been included in NRC. But these Bangladeshi Hindus had applied for inclusion in NRC claiming to be Indian citizens and not as refugees from Bangladesh. Your comment.

It certainly is a paradox!

But, all parties and other organizations surely will agree to the fact that Assam has already taken the burden of lakhs of people from present Bangladesh between 1951-71 period and is groaning now under the burden of lakhs of post '71 Bangladeshis. In this context, it is quite legitimate to seek that Assam is kept out of the purview of CAA, like Manipur, Arunachal and Nagaland etc. This will also act as an invisible barrier for future infiltration from Bangladesh.

(pjaruah_at@yahoo.com)