

STATEMENT MADE AT THE UNWGIP SESSION HELD AT GENEVA
FROM 26TH JULY TO 30TH JULY, 1999 ON 'INDIGENOUS BODO
PEOPLE'S CRISIS IN REGARDS TO THEIR LAND IN NORTH EAST
INDIA'

BY
MR. URKHAO GWRA BRAHMA
AFATGIRI(PRESIDENT) ALL BODO STUDENTS' UNION.

Honourable Chair person

With great delight, I express my gratitude to you for giving me this opportunity to represent my Bodo people from India at this august session of UNWGIP. At this auspicious moment I wish to highlight the land problems of the Bodos of Assam in India.

The Bodo community belongs to the great Mongolian stock of Sino-Tibetan and Tibetto -Burma family prevalently living in north eastern part of India mostly in Assam. From the historical gleanings, it is found that they made their advent in India Circa 5000 B.C: and reigned Assam, Bengal, Tripura and many parts of in India extending from Nepal to Myanmar. The Bodos ruled in Cachar till 1854 A.D., Dimapur(now in Nagaland) being and Maibong the last capital of their Kingdom. In the annals of Bodo Kingship, Maharaja Gobindo chandra and Tularam Senapati were the last Bodo king and the last General respectively. The great Bodos had to forgo their king and kingdom in the year 1854 to the hands of the British India.

Honourable Chairperson, the Bodos are the sons of the soil of the north east India particularly in Assam. The relationship of the son of the soil is as the body is to soul. 90% of the Bodos are cultivators and have been recognised as ' Scheduled Tribe in India'. For the protection of their land, the Government of Assam created 45 Tribal belts and Blocks with effect from 1947 comprising total area of 1,25,28,320 Bighas 1 Khata 10 Lechas of land. Since 1947 i.e. the date of Indian independence, the law of the tribal belts and blocks, have not been maintained. Rather, the respective State Governments have been found trying to liquidate the belts and blocks by hook and by crook policy of the anti Bodo group known as Assamese ruling clique. It is dismal to depict that within the span of 52 years of Indian independence, they have lost their major portion of lands in their belts and blocks. Land record of Assam shows that till 1999 more than 50% areas have already been occupied by the non-indigenous illegal migrants and the Government itself. The picture of the land problem of the Bodos is very dismal from the time of independence. From this land problem, the honourable chairperson can deduce easily that the Bodos lost their King and Kingdom in 1854 and lost their identity of the royal race. Then they have been identified as tribes and were given slices of land as belts and blocks on compassionate grounds. And now they are going to be the people with no lands.

Here I do undertake to relate the facts so far my information allows:

1. During the period of undivided India, the encroachers of East Bengal(now Bangladesh) began to flow into Assam in large numbers in a systematic and phase manner, mainly from 1901 to 1911 A.D..
2. As soon as India was divided in 1947, large number of non-indigenous migrants from East Paskistan(now Bangladesh) began to flow in to Assam and they were settled mostly in tribal belts and blocks areas as refugees. Out of many evidences, the present Capital city of Assam, Dispur and many other tribal belts abd blocks can be cited, which have already been denotified by the State Government. In the event of Bangladesh liberation war , 1972 also tens of thousands of illegal migrants from Bangladesh entered in to Assam and they were absorbed in the Bodo dominated alias tribal belts and block areas.
3. The Assam Government forcibly imposed Land Ceiling Act in case of tribal belts and blocks too, to secede away the land properties of the Bodo people in an unjustified way, although there is a special provision under Chapter X of the Assam Land Revenue Mannuual, 1886(amended in 1947) for the protection of the aforesaid tribal belts and block areas. With the imposition of the land ceiling act, the tribal of Assam suffered unwarranted economic problem as they have not other professional acument except agricultural production.

WGIP 99/SAS.IND/9

4. As the policy of the negation of the Bodo population is a resolute policy of the Assam Government, it is now resorting to the policy of ethnic conflict in the Bodo dominated area. The Bodos and Santhals of the Bodo dominated area have been facing an unpredicted ethnic clash in the recent years. I surely remember that there had never been any turmoil in between Bodos and Santhals from pre-independent time. They lived peacefully with perfect understanding maintaining their respective language and culture. They were co-operative to each other in the field of social, cultural, and political affairs. Their relationship and fraternal understanding was so strong that, even the two communities maintained matrimonial relationship. But from the year 1987, when the practical movement for a Separate State of Bodoland was started under the banner of All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU) the Assam Government mobilised to infiltrate some non-tribal and non-indigenous people to that area, mostly in tribal dominated and forest area from different parts of India to marginalise the Bodo tribe's population aiming to frustrate the Bodoland movement. This alarming situation has created a serious crisis in the sphere of socio-economic life of the indigenous Bodo people including the present day land problem. In this regard, may I ask a simple question—Is it justified legally, politically and from the humanitarian point of view to allow the en mass migration of one ethnic community from one part of the Country to the areas and territories of an indigenous community of the other part to marginalise them, Do the international organisations agree to such type of heinous conspiracy which aims at endangering the survival and existence of an indigenous people living within their own ancestral lands and territories? From the above circumstances, I am of the opinion that all the afore mentioned long drawn conspiracies were hatched by the chauvinist group of ruling clique consisting of politician and officers with a view to submerge other indigenous people at the cost of the distinct ethnic identities of the later. Honourable chairperson, I want to emphasise the fact that the Bodo people are the sons of the soil in the north east India. They are resolute to live and to die in their land. All of them are cultivators. The cultivators without land cannot be dreamt of. Under the present overall crucial situation, the Bodos have been compelled to think of protecting themselves in all spheres of their community life through the way of achieving a separate state of Bodoland within the Indian union. The Bodos strongly feel that immediate attainment of the same political goal is the only means and ways to ensure the protection of their rights over land and also their question of survival and existence.

In the long run, I would like to appeal to this august body of the UNWGIP and representatives of different indigenous people coming from various countries to extend their hands and co-operation towards our struggle for our survival and existence. I conclude my statement with these few words.

GWJWNTHWNG: THANKING YOU ALL.

Yours Sincerely
(U.G. Brahma)

President
All Bodo Students' Union
Kokrajhar