



STATE GOVERNMENT vis-à-vis THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT: NEGLECT, EXPLOITATION OR GENEROSITY

Dr. JOYEETA AHMAD*

ABSTRACT:

Theoretically speaking India polity operates within the confines of a federal set up but functionally a highly centralized form of government or a highly strong central government with its overpowering control over the state units holds the key for the working of Indian federalism. It is however significant to note that an unusually strong central government has never been conducive to the interest of the state units. This is particularly true with the case of India when the peripheral states among which Assam is a prominent one, has always bore the brunt of Centre's high handedness. A highly centralized federal structure controlled by a strong center (whose leaders are generally drawn from a specific cultural segment of the country) has played a crucial role in weakening the federal ideas that had gained prominence during the freedom struggle. Following the attainment of independence our country witnessed several events that strengthened the centripetal forces thereby contributing to the emergence of a strong nation-state. Thus, a situation began to emerge where the central government did not hesitate to overlook the demands of those peripheral states including Assam whose contribution in the freedom struggle was never highlighted. The central government has always been reluctant to allow the state units a free control over their resources. It is thus not surprising that right since the days of the Constituent Assembly debates, the members from Assam have always pleaded for a true federal set-up in which the provinces/states would have full autonomy to utilize its resources for their own interests. These members also wanted the scrapping of the Centre's overriding powers with regard to issues included in the Concurrent List as they did not want any interference of the Union Government in areas of provincial concern. But as has always been the case they say of the Centre prevailed. Since post-independence days the central government has never recognized the special needs of the Assam government. It has always pursued a colonial policy and thereby the population of Assam has always been skeptical about the centre's actual policies its intention and its seriousness to take up the issues affecting the state, its economy and society since decades. India's commitment to federalism has never been serious.

KEY WORDS:

Federalism, constituent assembly, union of India, nation-state, extraordinary power, political alienation, immigration, natural resources, central government, Northeastern Council, special treatment, plan proposals, political solution, long term solutions, Brahmaputra board, regional government.

* Associate Professor, Department of Pol Science, Deshbandhu College (DU), Kalkaji, New Delhi, India



INTRODUCTION:

Federalism is a form of government in which governmental power is distributed between a national/central government and numerous state governments, each of which has assigned spheres of legal supremacy. It is America's greatest contribution to the world in the art of governance. Several countries including India have adopted Federalism as a means to reconcile divergent interest and cultures which characterize our nation. Federalism in fact stands for a dual polity where accommodation of interest of governments at the central and state levels holds the key for its success. The framers of our constitution hesitated to describe our policy as federal and instead opted for a new nomenclature the Union of India. One of the most prominent examples of a lacklustre attitude of the central government towards a state government is that of the former's equation with this North-East state. Extraordinary powers in the hands of the central government be it in the financial or administrative sphere have created havoc in the relationship between Assam and the central government since the days of independence. Mention may be made of the confrontation between Jawaharlal Nehru and the Assamese leaders over the issue of settling refugees in the state in the years following independence. When the Assamese leaders expressed their incapacity to accommodate the refugees Nehru lost no time to declare that in that case Assam would be denied all financial help from the center. This showed the authoritarian attitude of the center towards a peripheral state in particular and also confirmed the center's highhandedness in dealing with issues of financial grant or financial help.

AIM OF THE STUDY:

Assam is the foremost state which is placed in the Northeastern part of our country? Indian federalism has been characterized as that of a centralized nature. It is a known fact that the framers of our constitution keeping in view the need for a strong nation post-independence and the urgency for maintaining law and order across the country opted for a novel typology of federalism in which the distribution of powers tilts in favour of the central government. As and when the situation demands the central governance is thus in a position to intervene into the affairs of any state government. Ideological disalignment between the governments at both the levels also is a cause of strain. In the case of Assam which is located in a far-flung area of the country besides other reasons. There has always been a situation of neglect and indifferent attitude of the central government since the days of our first Prime Minister Nehru. For reasons best known to the central government no serious efforts have ever been made to honestly accommodate the interests and feelings of the Assamese population into the national mainstream. The present article of mine would probe this delicate/sensible relationship between the successive Assam government and the central government to determine the actual factors which have actually gone on to play a key role

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

1. Kumar, D.P., 'Challenge to India's Unity', (B.R. Publishing Corporation, 1990)

This book discusses about how in the early years Assam came to be inhabited by a number of ethnic communities gradually leading to its bifurcation. It also gives an account of the problem of migration in Assam, the anti-foreigner movement and the emergence of a student government who was bent on ousting the foreigners from the state and its not too favorable relationship with the central government, thereby hinting at disruption of federal relations.



2. Nadkarni; M.V. Seetharaman, A.S. and Aziz A (eds.), "India: The Emerging Challenges", (Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1991)

This interesting book provides its readers with a number of diverse issues confronting the Indian nation. Significant among them are scarcity of politics in India, emerging issues in Indian agriculture, ecological degradation, human resource management and most significantly the issue of political alienation and internal threats to the Indian nation. The distribution of powers between the center and the states and its implications have also been discussed.

3. Olson, M., 'The Rise and Decline of Nations: Economic Growth, Stagnation and Some Rigidities', (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1984)

This book basically discusses about contemporary economic problems and the significance and logic of collective and joint action. How groupings and various bodies influence the economy and how by controlling economic issues progress can be ensured, are some of the highlights of this book. If a polity remains uninterrupted for a long time it can suffer from stagnation. So the author is in support of interruptions in the working of a political system.

4. Sarmah Alaka, "Immigration and Assam Politics", (Ajanta Book International, Delhi, 1999)

The above book on immigration and politics in Assam discusses the immigration problem in detail, the causes and consequences of it and how it has had a demographic impact on the state of Assam. This book also deals with the change in the nature of politics in the state because of this issue and how its equation with the central government witnessed ups and downs in the process of dealing with it.

5. Sharma Devabrata, "Migration and Assimilation : Society, Economy, Politics of Assam" (Danish Books, 2012).

This book discusses at length the history and beginnings of the origin of the problem of migration in Assam and how over a period of time it emerged as a persistent problem threatening the very identity of the local populace. The failure of the Assam movement to deal with the issue shows that a democratic, economic, and legal solution to the problem has to be worked out and unless the central government becomes seriously involved into this issue inflicting the Assamese population and the state the relations between both the governments would continue to be paralyzed.

MAIN TEXT:

Deteriorating financial health of the state is a matter of grave concern. The crux of the problem lies in the non-plan expenditure taking precedence over the plan expenditure resulting in uncontrolled expenditure and a failure of fiscal reforms. A substantial amount of plan money in the state is directed towards the payment of salary under plan projects. This is a reflection of a sick and degenerated economy because salary component of a plan should emanate from non-plan resources and not otherwise as in Assam. Such an unwanted financial arrangement dwindles the availability of resources for actual projects. The resource base of the overall economy of the state has as such been shrinking with each passing year. The economy of Assam as is widely known thrives on timber, oil, and tea. But because of certain inhibitions these have failed to strengthen the financial base of the state. Timber business has lost its shine due to the embargo put by the Supreme Court of India on timber harvesting. Even though Assam produces precious oil to serve the rest of the country, but it has not been



compensated with sufficient royalty as dues. An indifferent attitude of the Ministry of Petroleum has precipitated the crisis further. Thus, a fiscal deficit state as that of Assam has its hands tied and is not in a position to divert its scarce funds for strengthening its infrastructural base. In the process the state has become a source of repulsion for domestic and foreign capital. To worsen the situation further, Assam has over the years been a silent spectator to the out flow of capital due to law-and-order problems. Repeated requests for additional funds to succeeding Finance Commissions have fallen to deaf ears. It would not be out of place to mention that an apathetic attitude of the central government and institutes for causes best known to them is also responsible for the pathetic condition of the state's financial status. In the year 1969, a decision was mooted to create a group of 'Special Category States'. The original members of this group were Assam, Nagaland, and Jammu and Kashmir. Although Assam was declared a 'Special Category State' liable for additional financial grants from the center, but it was only from April 1990 that the state began to receive special category funding. Such a step-motherly attitude towards the state under study becomes all the more confirmed when on a number of occasions Assam has been given the lowest non-plan revenue grant among the special category states. As such it is not without any reason that the state government and the local populace often feel deprived and dispossessed. Unless a substantial dosage of grant is made available to the state government on a priority basis the state would continue to reel under the burden of revenue deficit thereby rendering fiscal reforms an impossible proposition. Under conditions of financial crunch, no amount of effort can rescue the state from its economic woes. To make the planning process a viable exercise fiscal reforms should be initiated in a time bound manner. Unless the central government initiates corrective measures to compensate for the wrongs inflicted on the state, its economic ills would not enable it to make any headway towards planned and successful growth.

Assam has bountiful natural resources. It is one of the largest producers of tea not only in the country but worldwide. The national exchequer benefits much from its export. But the tea industry till date continues to adhere to the colonial mode of exploitation resulting in an outflow of majority surplus from the state. The ethnic work force who are engaged in this industry runs to millions but in terms of education, social status, literacy and health they still remain one of the most backward sections of the society. Despite tea being a national product, the central government has never taken up the cause of this industry either on its own capacity or in collaboration with the Assam government. Similar is the case with the oil and natural gas sector of the state. Till today no major auxiliary industry has come up in the state based on these resources. Even though tea, forestry and oil are highly surplus yielding sectors, but it has failed to develop a strong and self-reliant Assamese economy. There is obviously a penetration of monopoly capital into the state but the investing parties including the Central government undertakings have always encouraged surplus outflow from the state instead of vice-versa. The repressive attitude of the Central government towards Assam has a long history and it continues till date. What better example can be put forth than the case of the oil industry. With extensive oil exploration in Assam in the post independent period, Soviet along with Indian experts had suggested the site for a proposed refinery near Nowgong in Assam. But the central government ignoring all such pleas and for economic reasons decided to set up the refinery in Barauni, Bihar. Strong protest movements followed the Centre's decision. In return a small refinery was allowed to be set up in Gauhati with a much low capacity. As a large chunk of Assam's crude oil output is processed outside the State, it is deprived of its numerous benefits be it direct or indirect. Even in the fixation of the rate of royalty, it is done so by the Ministry of



Petroleum, government of India at fixed intervals. This deprives Assam government of enjoying the benefits of royalty revisions but at the same time permitting the Central government to increase excise duty on petro products and enjoy its benefits.

Still another instance of the Centre's apathy towards Assam has to do with the Northeastern Council. The Northeastern Council (NEC) is a body set up in the year 1972 by the center to promote the economic interests and to solve the common problems of the Northeastern region. As such this body from time to time adopts plans and seeks to undertake projects for the upliftment of the region including the state of Assam. But this is a handicapped body as it has to depend on the central government and the Planning Commission for the receipt of funds. It has been observed that from time to time the latter has been reducing the amount of allocated funds, resulting in a slow implementation of the projects taken up by the NEC. For instance, "the ambitious plan for human resources development chalked out by the NEC for the eighth plan had to be drastically curtailed as the council was allocated only Rs. 80/- crore against the proposed outlay of Rs. 116.15 crore"¹. This is the case even when the expenses of projects under way or proposed to be taken by the Council are steadily rising. This problem can thus be also linked with the inadequate financial grants from the center during the implementation of plan proposals. Assam today is a special category state with majority of its advances from the center being written off as grants. Considering the state's special importance, the size of plan has not been increasing at an adequate pace because by the time the plans reach the stage of implementation the commodity value of money gets drastically reduced. As such the real value of the plan allocation either declines or remains the same.

The State Planning Board had fixed the eighth plan's anticipated expenditure much higher than Rs. 7,000 crores but the centre's intervention witnessed its drastic reduction at the time of its final ratification, much to the dismay of the state officials. Moreover, according to the Gadgil formula the Planning Commission determines the feasible plans for the Northeastern states on the basis of the state plan proposals and provides central assistance to them for implementing the projects. Assam is also eligible for this special treatment. This system of over protecting the states has however been sometimes criticized as it has failed to build up their incentives to develop more resources so that they are themselves able to bear the expenses for their plans. There is also the absence of any criteria which would like to determine the eligibility of a state to remain in the special category list so as to avail special treatment in the form of grants. In other words, instead of trying to help the states do away with their economic problems, the center in a way preserves their problems by rendering out special treatment facilities to them for an unlimited period of time. Such states not only become dependent on the center but also start developing a feeling of inequality and a feeling of inferiority complex particularly when they are compared with the developed states of the country that do not require such facilities. Thus, in the absence of any central guidance to help such states including Assam to adopt a self-reliant posture based on their existing resources, their planners have not only failed to utilize their own resources but have also failed to make an efficient utilization of the central funds. Either way it is the fragile economy of such states who are the main sufferers and their people who continue to thrive under conditions of poverty and deprivation.

Infiltration into Assam has been at the root of Assam's political crisis. Since independence the Indian government has found it problematic to deal with the refugee problem. Situated close to China, Bangladesh, and Myanmar the states of North-East India have faced the problem of refugees to a much greater extent as compared to the other states of the Union. An unending and unchecked inflow of refugees over the years has reached a point where in some areas



particularly in Assam the number of outsiders has outnumbered the local population. Continuous influx of people from erstwhile Bengal into Assam has had a negative impact on the State's economy compelling the local Assamese to come out in protest the situation. So, the late seventies saw the coming of the Assam agitation spearheaded for the first time by a student body. This agitation gained immense public support and engulfed the entire State. This movement was unique in the sense that it was the first organized movement against the presence of outsiders in Assam. It made public the volatile situation of the entire region including Assam. It was an eye-opener for the Central government as it realized that insurgency was not a local problem but a problem with national repercussions. It called for a need to tackle the problem of infiltration on an urgent basis as it was proving to be a challenge to the nation building process itself. However, the agitation on the issue of foreigners created an awareness among the local population about the extent to which they were economically exploited at times in a proportion much worse than in days prior to independence.

Despite facing the problem of immigration for an unending period and despite its opposition by the local Assamese but at the level of the state government concrete steps have been taken to tackle the issue. This is primarily because immigration as a policy is the prime responsibility of the Central government but for reasons best known to it, till date the government of India has not evolved any policy decision pertaining to the crucial issue at hand. No concrete action plan has been initiated by it and it has always been unresponsive to debates on this issue. As the large-scale immigration crisis has sought to threaten the economy of Assam and has challenged its socio-cultural fabric it has become a major cause of tension between the Central and State government. The Centre's passive attitude with regard to this issue is today challenging the tolerance of the local population. It is to be noted that the central government has in fact played a major role in the politicization of this entire issue which in turn has created a volatile situation in the State. Post-independence political parties of all shades realized that outsiders could be used as vote banks. This led to a stiff competition among them to win over the aliens. To ensure the continuous presence of these vote banks political parties have never been serious enough to tackle the problem of immigration. For the sake of vote banks these self-centered politicians have never taken any positive steps to curb the menace of illegal immigration. The center's passiveness with regard to this problem has gone beyond the tolerance capacity of the local population to an extent that the latter today fears being overshadowed by the 'aliens' in all spheres. The center should realize that the situation in Assam has become very volatile and before it is too late concrete steps should be taken to defuse the crisis. Non resolution of this problem has been disastrous for Assam because to a great extent the rise of extremist in the State can be attributed to it. As immigration policy falls within the ambit of the central government the state government of Assam has but a little choice to adopt a wait and watch policy. A political solution to the problem should be found on an emergency basis. The central government should either stop all future immigration or should help to find a political settlement to the problem. The center should realize that illegal Bangladeshi immigration influx has and is not only posing a challenge to the identity of the Assamese people but also to our national security. In fact, by viewing the issue of illegal migration issue as a regional affair affecting only Assam and its inhabitants New Delhi has not realized its negative repercussion on the overall security scenarios. This attitude of the central government has encouraged external factors to politically destabilize the peripheral state of the Northeast of which Assam has a key place. However, a halfhearted step was taken by the centre in the year 1983 to tackle the problem of illegal migration by setting up the Illegal Migration (Determination by Tribunals) Act.



It was passed under an act of the Parliament. This act was applicable only for the state of Assam. The chief provision of this act was that any person who had come and settled in Assam before March 1971 would be entitled for a legal status. However, for the rest of India July 1948 is the cutoff date for acquiring citizenship. The most illogical aspect of the Act of 1983 which clearly depicts the callous and passive attitude of the Centre is that this act had laid the responsibility of proving the citizenship of the accused on the complainant rather than on the accused. The Foreigner's Act 1946 on the other hand is in direct contrast to the IMDT Act. It places the responsibility of proving citizenship status on the accused and not otherwise. Logically speaking, this Act instead of making it difficult for the illegal migrants to prolong their stay in the state of Assam showed political favoritism towards them. It was in fact a pro-illegal migrants Act passed by the Centre in connivance with the then state government for narrow political gains. The implementation of this Act was thus met by large scale criticism. The IMDT Act thus proved to be ineffective in identifying and deporting the illegal migrants. Thus, in July 2005 the Supreme Court in a historic judgment ruled that the IMDT Act was the main hurdle in the identification and deportation of illegal migrants, as such it was an unconstitutional act and ought to be scrapped. It had also stated that this Act contravened Article 355 of the constitution which entrusts upon the union of India the duty to protect every state against external aggression and internal disturbances. Henceforth the Supreme Court ordered the setting up of fresh tribunals under the Foreigners Act 1946 and Foreigners (Tribunal Order) 1964. This decision of the Supreme Court for the effective management of the situation was thus meant to strengthen the internal legal procedures to tackle and check the influx of illegal migrants into Assam. All the above developments bear testimony to the fact that it was only with the interference of the Supreme Court/ Judiciary that a reasonable solution was attempted to help Assam get rid of this politically volatile issue. Still another instance of the central government's apathetic attitude towards Assam is with regard to natural calamities of which Assam has always been a victim particularly in the context of floods. Assam has become chronically a flood affected state and its spread and intensity appear to be increasing every year. Constant dread of the flood ravage has given birth to a feeling of depression and hopelessness among the poor cultivators as they cannot look forward to an assured harvest. The perennial problem of floods has destroyed the economy of the state as the overall damages caused by floods run into crores of rupees every year.

The severity of the problem has still been persisting as the state and more significantly the central government has not taken any permanent measure to save the state from the losses caused by the fury of floods. The Brahmaputra Board constituted by the Centre in 1982 to control the mighty river has so far adopted ad-hoc measures as the Centre has shown reluctance to render possible assistance to this Board for the execution of works to which it is entrusted. Moreover, the Board becomes active only when the rain sets in and does not take any concrete measures during the off season.

The enormity of the problem calls for a long-term solution in which both the central and the state governments are to play crucial roles. The Brahmaputra Board was meant to undertake survey and investigation and to draw a master plan to control the river and its tributaries, restrict bank erosion, improve drainage congestion, harness hydropower etc. but besides initiating a few anti-erosion schemes and drawing up a master plan for the river and its tributaries the Board has been rendered incapable to take up other tasks because of financial constraints. It is yet to initiate any major project which would substantially reduce the menace of floods. As such the state governments every year must initiate short-term measures to bring



the flood situation under control. In the absence of big investment from the Centre it has become impossible for the state government to harness the numerous tributaries of the Brahmaputra for hydel purposes. Unless the board is revamped and made to play a crucial role in executing plans long-term solutions to problems of flood and erosion will remain a distant dream. Financial authority has also to be devolved to the Board for any constructive impact. Moreover, the governments at the central and state level should take the neighboring states into confidence for the proposed construction of multipurpose dams on the tributaries of the Brahmaputra that originate in their territories. It is however a distant goal and as long as it is not materialized Assam will continue to face devastation and wreckage brought in by annual floods. This would also mean the state government clamoring every year for relief and rehabilitation packages from the Centre. This situation has in fact become habitual. It is only with a strong determination and honesty of purpose on the part of the central government and persistent push by the state government that chances of a possible solution can be rendered viable. Added to this, Assam is among the flood prone states which have refused to adopt the Flood Plain Zoning method which could have enabled the local authorities to demarcate the flood prone areas and minimize the damage.

It is crucial to note that seeds of alienation and feelings of discontentment among the people of Assam against the central government were sown much earlier. The spread of English education had brought the Assamese in close connection to the people of the other provinces of British India. Influenced by the teachings of Gandhi they participated in the non-violent freedom struggle in large numbers. But what gave a jolt to the Assamese mindset was the attempts made by the Cabinet Mission Plan to literally force Assam to join Pakistan. Because of a strong agitation by the Assamese led by Gopinath Bordoloi this plan was not implemented and Assam remained with India. This scar of being abandoned has never been healed and even today the older generation among the Assamese populace continues to harness feelings of denial and betrayal. Such feelings continued to be confirmed when post-independent Union Governments over the years have initiated plans for Assam in complete ignorance of the sentiments of the Assamese people. The decision of the Centre to set up a refinery in Barauni instead of Assam itself made the Assamese accuse the former of being a colonial exploiter. Every developmental project / scheme has been the outcome of a long-drawn struggle or a prolonged agitation. The setting up of Bongaigaon refinery was also the outcome of a long-drawn-out struggle. Such instances have had such a damaging impact on the mindset of the local population that the Assamese people have realized that unless voices of protest are raised no developmental project can come up in Assam with the initiative of the central government. The top Indian bureaucracy and the Centre is yet to overcome the feeling that any industry or project would run the risk of being a target of militant attack or extremist agitation and hence its utility would be compromised. Such an attitude of the central government for years has played a key role in the slow and unbalanced rate of development of the State. The product of poor economic growth has been the emergence of a large chunk of educated unemployed who lost no time in joining the ranks of militant groups because of their frustration and anger at the indifferent attitude of the Centre in particular. Rise of militarism / extremism in Assam is in fact the outcome of the complete alienation of the frustrated Assamese population, the youth in particular from the Indian government. The colonial pattern of exploitation by the Centre over the years have for long created a feeling among the present generation that the British have departed but they have been replaced by the present Indian state. The Indian constitution though permits autonomous administration in the states to some extent, but the central



government has still not evolved a proper and effective viable strategy of development for the peripheral state of which Assam is a crucial component. These states are the neglected regions of our country. In the absence of a concrete strategy for the development and growth of the backward areas of the country the Centre is sabotaging the bright prospects of growth of Assam.

India has a weak federal set up. The ambivalent nature of India federalism is also reflected in the unlimited powers vested in the hands of the central government to carry out re-organization of states and to create new ones via simple parliamentary majorities without taking into consideration the express willingness of the concerned state legislatures. This power has been used/misused with much ease by the Centre with regard to the northeastern part of the country as it is considered to be a volatile border area. The breaking up of Assam into autonomous units of Nagaland, Meghalaya and Mizoram has not helped to curb ethnic violence. It has in fact failed to accommodate the economic and social disparities between the hill and valley areas. The center has not recognized the socio-ethnic sensitivities of the region. Those concerned with policy making, the Indian intelligentsia and top-level bureaucrats consider the entire northeast as one social and political unit. By overlooking the inter-regional disparities and also the differences within one state, concerned issues remain un-tackled and unresolved. Such issues when remain untreated for long as has been the case with Assam an explosive situation defying political and democratic norms emerges. An unchecked dose of militarization in the process has met with utter frustration and a deep sense of alienation among the residents of the state. The central policy makers should realize that the state which fall under the nomenclature 'the north-east' have their unique features and different political aspirations. Instead of bunching the entire region in to one unit the uniqueness of the different states should determine the shaping of policies. This attitude if adopted by the centre would go a long way in bridging the psychological gap between itself and the respective states of the region.

Poor economic growth of Assam has been a perennial issue haunting successive state government, as this crucial issue has always been linked with the rise of militarism in the state. It is pertinent to note that in all social relationships the economic factor plays a determinant role. Similarly in political relationships between the Centre and the states the economic factor or the issue of allocation of funds plays a crucial role. In this background it is important to analyze the give and take relationship between the central government and the government of Assam. In the context of financial apportionment our constitution is heavily tilted in favour of the central government. The makers of our constitution were obsessed with the issue of national growth ;thus they have included in the constitution the central planning process giving the Centre near absolute powers of economic management. This aspect of our constitution has been interpreted by successive union governments to exercise more and more control over resources of states. This aspect of our weak federalism assumes much importance in the case of Assam as it has abundance of tea, oil and natural gas resources. If the state would have had complete control over its natural resources, the economic standing of the state would have been much better. In addition to this in states like that of Assam the problem of militarism undermines the political disposition of the government to raise local resources. With a radical centralized financial arrangement in our constitution, it has become a normal tendency of a state to always go to central government with a begging bowl asking for funds to meet their increasing expenditures. Taking advantage of this disposition of the states the Centre does not hesitate to offer and provide



special packages to them so that they become frontal approvers of the decisions it takes in course of time. This is the reason as to why regional governments like the Asom Gana Parishad in Assam when comes to power begins to talk the language of the central government instead of being accountable to its own people. If the Assam government is allowed to exercise complete control over its resources and if it could raise resources independently it would have been easier to operate within the confines of accountability under such circumstances it would not have to rush to the Centre again and again for financial resources to meet its resource crunch. Thus ,losing the tight strings of India's centralized federal polity is the need of the hour. Accommodating the interests of the Assam / state governments and the central government without the former being made a scapegoat at the hands of the latter would go a long way in mitigating the miseries of the Assam / state governments.

CONCLUSION:

All said and done there is no doubt that insurgent activities in Assam need to be curbed sooner than later as it has proved to be the most important hurdle in the path of development. The need of the hour is an accelerated pace of economic development ensuring a decent standing of living for the common masses. Only then can the psychological gap (of being neglected and step motherly treatment being meted out to the people of Assam) between Assam and the rest of country be lessened and further diluted in the future. The central government should time and again give development packages to the state of Assam to not only promote and modernize the economy but to also generate employment opportunities. Democratization of the entire growth process is called for. This will bring the youth closer to the administration and help remove the feeling of isolation, distrust, and discrimination among the common people at large. But the initiative should come from the center and the Assam government should seriously execute the development projects and maintain law and order at the same time. Unfettered and complete development of Assamese people lies at the core of the solution of the present agitation in Assam which today is at a subdued phase. The problem of Assam should be viewed by the bourgeois leadership as an integral part of the general national problem in India. The political leaders should act as true representatives of the people. They should rise above religious, ethnic, and linguistic divisions and involve the common people in the process of development. The problem of illegal immigration should be solved by the centera priority basis as this problem involves the security and stability of the country particularly the North-East. Unless there is a favorable climate for the free expression and exchange of views among different individuals and organizations and the unity of the democratic masses irrespective of religion language and race is guaranteed. There should be a congenial climate for free interaction and expression of views without any inhibition between diverse organization and individuals. Moreover, unless people are democratically united irrespective of the differences of language, religion, caste or race .“it will be impossible to find a stable wholesome and peaceful solution of such a tangled question as the expulsion of foreign nationals.”²The government of India should convince the extremists of the state about its seriousness to promote social and economic development of the region so that feelings of frustration and exploitation can be reduced and finally done away with. The militants should be encouraged by the democratic masses also to come and sit across the negotiating table



for a permanent solution. In short encouragement should come from all quarters for a proper and wholesome solution to the problem of Assam.

FOOT NOTES:

1. The Assam Tribune, January 27, 1994.
2. Report of the Working Group on Development of Northeastern Region during the Seventh Five Year Plan. (March 1985), p. 25.

REFERENCES:

1. Adishesiah, M.S. (ed.), 'The Economies of the states of the Indian Union', Lancer International, New Delhi, 1989.
2. Agarwal, A.K. (ed.), 'Economic Problems and Planning in North - East India,' Sterling Publishers Pvt.Ltd., New Delhi, 1987.
3. Alam, Khurshid (ed.), 'Planning in North-Eastern India', Omsons Publications, New Delhi, 1985.
4. Arndt, H.W., 'The Rise and Fall of Economic Growth - A Study in Contemporary Thought', The University of Chicago Press Ltd., London, 1978.
5. Bandhyopadhy, J., 'The Poverty of Nations, A Global Perspective of Mass Poverty in the Third World', Allied Publishers Pvt.ltd., New Delhi, 1985.
6. Bardhan Pranab, 'The Political Economy of Development in India, Basil Black well Publishers Ltd., London, 1984.10.
7. Barlingay, S.S., Poverty Power, Progress, 'Panchsheel Publishers, New Delhi, 1988.
8. Barua, Indrani, "Pressure Group in Assam" Om Sons Publications, Gauhati, 1990.
9. Barua, P.C. "Development Planning of North-East India" Mittal Publication, New Delhi, 1990.Delhi,1992.
10. Baruah, Sanjib, "India Against Itself-----Assam and the politics of Nationality" Oxford University Press, New Delhi 1999.
11. Bharadwaj, Krishna, 'Irrigation In India - Alternative perspective', Indian Council and Social Science Research, New Delhi, 1990.