



TRANSFORMING BODOLAND

A Journey of Change in Bodoland Territorial Region



BODOLAND HAPPINESS MISSION
Government of Bodoland Territorial Region



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A JOURNEY OF CHANGE IN
BODOLAND TERRITORIAL REGION



BODOFANWGWR * KOKRAJHAR- THE CITY OF PEACE
BODOLAND TERRITORIAL REGION, ASSAM

GOVERNMENT OF BODOLAND
TERRITORIAL REGION



DEDICATED TO
BODOFA UPENDRA NATH BRAHMA
(1956-1990)



LIVE AND LET LIVE!



Published by

**The Bodoland Happiness Mission, Government of Bodoland
Territorial Region**

Bodofa Nwgr, Kokrajhar- the City of Peace, PIN 783370

Bodoland Territorial Region (Assam)

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ISBN :

Printed at : **Bhabani Offset & Imaging Systems Pvt. Ltd.**

7 Lachit Lane, Rajgarh Road, Guwahati-781 007

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Key Features

This volume chronicles the evolution of Bodoland through peace-building, economic renewal, and inclusive governance after the historic signing of the Bodo Peace Accord 2020. It explores the political journey, cultural heritage, policy innovations, and socio-economic progress, offering a roadmap for sustainable development, regional cooperation, and identity actualization in Bodoland's transformative era. It is a valuable resource for anyone interested in understanding the dynamics of regional transformation and the interplay of peace-building, social movements, governance, and development. This volume offers a variety of authoritative accounts:

- Provides a detailed examination of Bodoland's political and social evolution, offering valuable insights into its transition from conflict to peace.
- Helps policymakers and scholars understand the impact of various accords and governance models that have shaped the region's development.
- Examines Bodoland's economic transformation, highlighting sustainable development strategies and the role of entrepreneurship in fostering regional growth.
- Explores the significance of linguistic and cultural identity, providing essential knowledge on

indigenous language preservation and its role in regional empowerment.

- Offers case studies on Bodoland's peace process, making it a useful reference for researchers and practitioners working on conflict resolution.
- Presents strategies for inclusive growth, demonstrating how local initiatives and international collaborations contribute to long-term progress.
- Serves as a critical reference for researchers in political science, sociology, anthropology, and regional studies, providing well-researched content on indigenous movements and governance.
- Equips policymakers, activists, and local leaders with strategies to drive social change and foster economic opportunities.
- Connects Bodoland's journey to broader discussions on indigenous rights, self-governance, and peace-building efforts worldwide.

Preface

In the wake of the signing of the Bodo Peace Accord (2020), there has been renewed hope, aspirations and formulations for constructive re-channelising of the Bodoland people's movement for survival and dignity. This follows the earlier two accords that sought to defend the constitutional rights and entitlements of the Bodos. The first accord was signed in 1993 making way for the creation of the Bodoland Autonomous Council (BAC). The second accord signed, ten years later in 2003, carved out the Bodoland Territorial Area Districts (BTAD) to be governed by the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC). It also paved the way for inclusion of the BTAD and the Boro language within the Sixth Schedule and the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution respectively.

The Bodo Peace Accord, in the form of a Memorandum of Settlement signed by the All Bodo Students Union (ABSU), four factions of the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB), United Bodo Peoples' Organisation (UBPO), the Government of India and the Government of Assam, on 27th of January 2020, provided for the creation of Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR). The Memorandum of Settlement recognized the essence of finding a comprehensive solution to the Bodo Movement. It aimed at augmenting the area and powers of existing BTC; addressing the issues of Bodos residing outside the BTAD; promotion and protection of social, cultural, linguistic and ethnic identities of Bodos; providing legislative safeguards for land rights of tribals; ensuring accelerated development of tribal areas; and for rehabilitation of the NDFB cadres who surrendered their weapons to pave the way for peace.

Five years down the lane, each of the contributors of chapters of this edited book, entitled, ***Transforming Bodoland:***

A Journey of Change in Bodoland Territorial Region

highlight and celebrate the extraordinary achievements of peace, security, growth and development through the Bodo Peace Accord 2020. While the Bodo Peace Accord 2020 recognized the need for establishing peace and security in the region, it also immediately flagged off a plethora of change and transformation processes for healing, reconciliation and social development in the light of the aspirations of the Bodos and other communities residing in the BTR. The collective vision of “Peaceful, Smart and Green Bodoland” adopted by the BTR Government, with Pramod Boro at the helm of affairs, has already kickstarted an era of peace, justice and prosperity in the once strife-torn region.

The narrative of Bodoland is one of resilience, transformation, and an enduring pursuit of peace and prosperity. *Transforming Bodoland: A Journey of Change in Bodoland Territorial Region* presents a scholarly examination of the region’s evolution, analyzing key moments that have defined its socio-political landscape, economic resurgence, and cultural vibrancy. This volume is not merely a collection of historical reflections but a profound exploration of the processes shaping Bodoland’s future.

For over four decades, Bodoland region has witnessed intense struggles for recognition, autonomy, and sustainable development. These efforts have culminated in significant peace accords, governance reforms, and a reimaged identity for the Bodo community. The region’s commitment to transitioning from discord to stability exemplifies a broader movement towards inclusivity and self-determination. The chapters in this book meticulously dissect these shifts, offering an in-depth analysis of the role of policy interventions, grassroots movements, and economic strategies that have contributed to Bodoland’s progress.

A crucial aspect of this transformation is the economic revitalization of the Bodo community. Once reliant on traditional agrarian livelihoods, the region has embraced diversified

approaches to development, integrating modern economic policies with indigenous knowledge systems. The book highlights how institutional support, local entrepreneurship, and global connectivity have facilitated this transition, forging pathways for innovation and sustainable growth.

The peace process in Bodoland is also examined through the lens of identity affirmation. The aspirations of the Bodo people have always been deeply intertwined with their linguistic and cultural heritage. Preserving indigenous languages and traditions while fostering modernization remains a delicate balancing act. The discussions in this book illustrate how policies and initiatives aimed at cultural preservation intersect with broader developmental objectives, ensuring that identity remains central to Bodoland's evolving narrative.

A key milestone in this journey has been the various accords that have shaped the governance framework of the region. From the early agreements to the landmark *Bodo Accord 2020*, these accords have played a pivotal role in establishing a foundation for political stability and fostering a climate of mutual cooperation. The analysis presented in this volume underscores their contributions to governance, regional administration, and socio-economic inclusion.

Beyond its political and economic dimensions, Bodoland's transformation is also a testament to the power of localized development supported by national and state-wide networks. Sustainable growth in the region has been reinforced through collaborative efforts, bringing together policy experts, community leaders, and development practitioners. This book critically evaluates how external partnerships and internal initiatives have collectively advanced Bodoland's vision for long-term prosperity.

As a scholarly work, this volume provides valuable insights into the dynamics of regional development, peacebuilding, and identity politics. It serves as an essential resource for researchers,

polymakers, and stakeholders invested in indigenous autonomy, governance models, and conflict resolution strategies.

In essence, this book encapsulates Bodoland's remarkable journey—a transformation defined by perseverance, innovation, and a commitment to a more inclusive future. Through its insightful chapters, the book offers not only an in-depth examination of change but a guiding framework for continued progress and sustainable peace.

The editors of this volume express their profound gratitude to the Hon'ble Chief Executive Member of the Bodoland Territorial Region Shri Pramod Boro Ji, whose years of sacrifice and commitment to peace, development and transformation of Bodoland has been a source of inspiration for this work. His leadership and vision have been instrumental in shaping policies that foster peace, stability, and progress in the Bodoland region. He has always led from the front and carried everyone along- those beside him as well as those in the margins of our society. Therefore, this is an opportune moment to reflect on the remarkable changes unfolding in the region under his leadership.

Equally, the editors extend their heartfelt appreciation to each of the distinguished contributors of this book. All the esteemed individual contributors, through their expertise and deep understanding of Bodoland's socio-political, cultural, and economic landscape, have provided invaluable insights into the transformative processes that are shaping the region's future. Despite their demanding schedules and numerous responsibilities, they have graciously devoted their time and intellect to this project, ensuring that this volume presents a comprehensive and nuanced perspective on the evolution of Bodoland.

Their enthusiasm, dedication, and scholarly contributions have played a pivotal role in bringing this landmark work to fruition. The editors sincerely acknowledge the collective effort and collaborative spirit that have made this endeavor possible. It is through their commitment and shared vision that this book

stands as a testament to the resilience and aspirations of the people of Bodoland, offering a meaningful discourse on its ongoing journey toward sustainable development and lasting peace.

The Hon'ble Executive Council Members, MCLAs and community leaders of BTR have also in no less terms created the precondition, in the first place, along with the 35 Lakh strong population of BTR, for such a work as this to emerge successfully. Mere words cannot adequately thank them, and all those who have left for heavenly abode while trying to create this milieu. The officers and staff of the Government of Bodoland Territorial Region led by Shri Akash Deep, IAS, the Principal Secretary, have supported the editorial team immensely and enabled the timely completion of this project. The editors are deeply indebted to each one of them.

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Smt. Pratibha Brahma

Dr. Geetarth Darshan Baruah

Dr. Victor Narzary

Shri Napoleon Kerketta

Editors

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Smt. Pratibha Brahma – A prolific writer, Smt. Brahma has extensively contributed to discussions on history, art, culture, and gender justice, shaping intellectual discourse in the region. She currently serves as the Chairperson of the Kokrajhar Municipal Development Board, playing a pivotal role in urban governance and infrastructure development in Bodoland.

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Dr. Victor Narzary – A specialist on programmatic interventions for social development, Dr. Narzary serves as an Officer on Special Duty to the Chief of Bodoland Territorial Region. Priorly, he worked on various national and international partnership projects in the area of social work education, research and community engagement.

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Contributors



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A prominent political leader, Pramod Boro serves as the Chief Executive Member of the Bodoland Territorial Council. He has been instrumental in shaping policies for peace and development in Bodoland region and has shaped the return of peace in Bodoland region for the first time in four decades. He was previously the president of the All Bodo Students Union.



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Contributors



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Contributors



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Contributors



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Contributors



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1

Transforming Bodoland : Journey of Peace in Bodoland Territorial Region

Pramod Boro

*Chief Executive Member of
Bodoland Territorial Region*

I. The Dawn of a New Era in Bodoland

As I reflect on the evolution of our great nation, I am reminded of the sweeping transformations that have reshaped Bharat since independence in 1947. This country's journey—from a newly independent state striving to find its feet to a global powerhouse today with a robust economic, scientific, cultural, and social fabric—has been nothing short of extraordinary. More so, over-the-past-decade-and-a-year, under the visionary leadership of our Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi Ji, we have witnessed dramatic changes that have transcended traditional political milestones. Make in India, Digital India, Startup India, Standup India, Fit India, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Udan, Khelo India, Bharatmala, Ek Bharat Shresth Bharat, among others have crystallised into concrete programmes towards making India the Vishwa Guru—taking pride and belief in our civilizational culture, remarkable achievements and intrinsic strength. Modi Ji's clarion call for a "Viksit Bharat@2047," steeped in the ideals of "*Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas, Sabka Prayaas*," has become a rallying point, igniting hope and inspiring progress even in regions as remote as Bodoland, which borders our neighbor Bhutan.

As one can see, the people of Bodoland region, numbering over thirty-five lakhs, inherit a rich cultural, geographical, and

natural heritage. We are blessed with abundant natural resources, endowed with undulating greenery, forests, flora and fauna, and fertile agricultural lands. We are nourished by majestic rivers that serve as tributaries to the mighty river Brahmaputra. Indeed, we are blessed with diverse ecosystems and species and fertile soil for cultivation of a variety of crops, including rice, tea, jute, and sugarcane, alongside fruits like pineapple, oranges and bananas, making it an ideal location for agriculture and horticulture.

The Bodoland region of Assam serves as the main gateway to Northeast India by road and rail, making it a crucial center for economic activity. With three national parks, several wildlife sanctuaries, beautiful wetlands, and flowing rivers, the region is perfect for eco-tourism. Bodoland region also shares a long border (approximately 275 km) with Bhutan, which supports strong cultural and economic ties. On the other hand, these natural riches have provided for the emplacement of a rainbow of diverse communities, cultures, traditions, languages, art and crafts: some ancient and a few others newly found. That our people are very friendly, welcoming, hospitable and caring of one another has been well documented by travellers and historians ever since the ancient times.

Despite its bounteous natural wealth, Bodoland region was confronted with numerous challenges in the last few decades preceding the Covid-19 phase. The region had experienced a long period of violence, civil unrest, and ethnic strife, leaving our social fabric in shambles. Alongside this, the long-felt neglect had created a sense of alienation and mistrust on government institutions. Hence, this trust deficit between the people and the government had led to a downward spiral in the law-and-order situation. Consequently, Bodoland had lagged behind in all development indicators.

In our immediate context, one milestone that provided a welcome window of opportunity to the people of Bodoland region to join the path of India's progress was the historic Bodo

Peace Accord signed on January 27, 2020 in the presence of Hon'ble Home Minister of India Shri Amit Shah Ji. I still recall the gravity of that day—a day when leaders from the Government of India, the Government of Assam, and the representatives of the Bodoland Movement met with a singular purpose: to forge a pathway to peace and comprehensive development. The people of the Bodoland region saw in that accord the promise of a renewed beginning; it was not merely an agreement on paper but a profound commitment to empower the people of Bodoland through increased autonomy, greater legislative safeguards, and a robust framework for economic and cultural revitalization. In my view, the accord was the turning point that enabled us to move away from decades of conflict and violence, thereby, fostering a climate of trust and mutual respect.

This was made possible, by and large, when the whole of India began moving in a new direction in 2014 as Prime Minister Narendra Modi Ji's government came to power. For the first time, he listened to the concerns of the people of Bodoland, and in fact, that of the entire Northeast India with empathy and genuine intent to bring change. His trust in the region sparked new hopes and rebuilt confidence among all communities and different sections of the society. This set the stage for sustainable peace, especially in Bodoland region.

During this period, the Government of India signed numerous peace accords across Northeast India under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi Ji and the guidance of Home Minister Amit Shah Ji. Thousands of former insurgents laid down their arms and rejoined society. These agreements brought peace and opened the vistas to a bright and united future for Bodoland region and the entire Northeast India. Thus, we have the good fortune, today, to proudly join the rest of India on the journey towards a developed and a prosperous nation. Since taking Office, the Home Minister of India, himself came down to BTR a number of times on different occasions. This is

unprecedented in our history. In his most recent visit to Kokrajhar at Thulungapuri—the birth place of Bodofa Upendra Nath Brahma, earlier this year, he once again assured that while several Bodo Peace Accord projects were even now on a fast-track implementation process, a hundred per cent of all its clauses would be eventually executed within a short period of time.

It is true that the growth and prosperity of a nation always depend on the vision of the leaders of that nation or state or region. Hon'ble Chief Minister of Assam Karmayogi Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma Ji is an embodiment of a wave of optimism in our midst. Ever since he assumed the office of the Chief Minister of Assam, his dynamic and farsighted leadership has ensured a complete transformation of Assam. Now there is a serious focus on inclusive development through good governance like never before. The recently concluded Advantage Assam 2.0 has already turned Assam into a global investment hotspot. This has sparked new partnerships and brought exciting opportunities in education, infrastructure, IT, energy, defense, tourism, healthcare, and more. From conflict and stagnation, Assam, too, has stepped into a future filled with potential. With strong leadership and a surge in investments, the state is racing ahead on the road to prosperity.

Dr. Sarma Ji's out-of-the-box decision to hold a Special Assembly Session at Kokrajhar- the City of Peace on the 17th of February 2025 has further leapfrogged the Bodoland region towards development, harmony and integrity. No other Chief Minister has ever taken to heart the issues of the Bodoland region like him. In the last four years as the Chief Minister of Assam, he has already spent seven nights and umpteen number of days here at Kokrajhar. Such love, dedication and commitment for our wellbeing was never to be found in any other Chief Minister of Assam since India's Independence and the formation of the Assam state in 1947! I can see that his close engagement with our people always inspire confidence, trust and assurance.

II. Historical Roots and Journey Through Turbulence—the Sangharsh

The Bodoland region, it is to be mentioned, boasts one of the most enduring human settlements known to Indian antiquity. Referred to as the kingdom of Kamarupa in ancient sacred texts of India, and partially, the *dooars* during colonial administration, this belt has always been a home to a vibrant socio-political fabric unique to the Bodo people and other indigenous communities. Their time-honored customs, governance systems, and cultural expressions thrived autonomously, virtually untouched until the 19th century, when British colonial expansion altered the course of their collective existence. In fact, the ancient Kamarupa kingdom, was a beacon of power and culture in northeastern India. Its capital, Pragjyotishpura, was a hub of social, cultural, political and spiritual advancement, a vibrant legacy that still echoes through the length and breadth of Assam and beyond.

However, the colonial governance, largely insensitive to indigenous social ecosystems, pursued a dual strategy—of either assimilation into the dominant mainstream or bureaucratic neglect via isolation. In this binary approach, communities like the Bodos found themselves at a precarious crossroads. Ethnographer Edward Gait¹ ominously observed that the Bodos stood on the brink of losing their distinctive ethnolinguistic and cultural identity, foretelling a complete merger into the Assamese milieu.

Against this backdrop, the 20th century proved to be a period of relentless struggle. The first half of the century saw the Bodo community actively participating in India's freedom movement. This period also marked their first substantive encounters with modern institutions—state machinery, education, and government reforms—fostering both hope and critical consciousness. Under the leadership of Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma and the like, the prospect of liberation from colonial rule carried immense emotional significance and

promised long-awaited institutional inclusion within the civilization of Bharat.

Post-independence, the Indian Constitution extended formal recognition and safeguards to all citizens, regardless of numerical strength or geographic concentration. It offered the Bodos and the other indigenous communities of the region not only protection under the umbrella of Fundamental Rights but also avenues to access development opportunities, and thereby, enjoyment of the fruits of India's development. However, in the early years, these normative assurances starkly contrasted with lived realities. Instead of integration marked by dignity, the Bodos encountered systemic exclusion. Their aspirations for equal status were often met with indifference or coercive policies aiming at total cultural absorption and assimilation.

This marginalization ignited the Bodoland Movement—a community-driven assertion of identity and rights out of sheer desperation. Initially characterized by democratic expressions such as the demand for linguistic autonomy and cultural preservation, the movement remained largely non-violent until the 1970s. Yet even during these formative years, sacrifices were made, as exemplified by the tragic loss of sixteen lives and thousands of imprisonments during the script movement.

With the advent of the 1980s and the subsequent escalation into armed resistance, the region spiraled into a prolonged phase of unrest. The struggle, once envisioned as a path to legitimate empowerment, became a vortex of conflict marked by intermittent violence. Inter-ethnic strife and internal fissures within the movement led to a tragic era of fratricidal confrontations. Thousands were lost—civilians, activists, and security forces alike—each loss a scar on the collective conscience of the region.

The grief of Bodoland was deeply personal and deeply national. When soldiers perished, the region mourned the defenders of the republic. When young boys and girls from the communities succumbed to bullets, villages wept for sons and

daughters never to return. The duality of this anguish underscored a more profound truth: peace is not just the absence of war but the presence of hope.

However, there appeared a light in the midst of this darkness! In 1986, Bodofa Upendra Nath Brahma became the President of the All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU) by sacrificing his life of comfort and luxury as a government officer. He was on a Mission! He vowed to end all forms of oppression, violence and discrimination faced by the Bodos and other marginalized communities. Being a lover of all peoples and their well-being, he could not tolerate the social exclusion and cultural violence faced by them. He outrightly advocated for their constitutional rights, dignity and justice, and total liberation from the web of domination by proposing the creation of a separate state of Bodoland. Nothing could deter Bodofa!

Bodofa was courageous and right in his thinking, and thus had no fear of any oppressor. He circumvented all forms of oppression and atrocities by rending the slogan: *Live and Let Live!* He called for peaceful dialogue and negotiation, rather than repression, in resolving the issues and concerns of the vulnerable groups and communities. He was a true patriot and a great Indian Nationalist— and thus adopted the stance of *Nationalist Socialism* while leading the Bodoland Movement. Where there was darkness and despair everywhere, Bodofa's revolutionary ideals illuminated a path steering away from hatred and destruction, and pointed towards freedom, justice and compassion. He placed the rights and dignity of the Bodos and other marginalized communities in the front without ever compromising on the integrity and security of Indian Nation.

Thus, the epoch of despair—what many recall as an era where even the capacity to hope and dream had vanished—was the crucible that forged the spirit behind the eventual peace process: a legacy left behind by Bodofa, where everybody could become a winner, and none the loser! This path was marred with difficulties and sacrifice, but it also revealed the enduring resilience of a people unwilling to be erased.

III. Sangharsh to Nirman- Building a Resilient Bodoland Territorial Region

The Bodo Peace Accord 2020 marked the onset of a new era: a moment in history, when the historical trajectory of Bodoland region shifted from *sangharsh* to *nirman*. As a result, our newly formed BTR Government's responsibilities expanded to ensure that the accord becomes the spirit for translating revitalization into tangible actions on the ground. In this regard, when we took office on the 15th of December 2020, we ensured great care was taken in supporting and guiding the rollout of several flagship missions designed to uplift all groups and communities of the region. On the one hand, the lingering divisive and polarizing politics needed to be stemmed out if we were hoping for a sustainable peace and stability in the region. On the other hand, it was a mandate for us to crystallise into concrete actions an inclusive development agenda to cater to the hopes and aspirations of all the people of BTR.

The unique opportunity provided to the people of BTR to root for peace, healing, good governance and all-round development was to be held on to with all that we had. The years of neglect, impoverishment and underdevelopment in the 78 years of India's independence needed to be gradually reversed. The recalcitrant vertical as well as horizontal violence arising out of deeply entrenched community divides and institutional biases were to be put to an end. Some fundamental questions needed to be answered then: How could we do it? What fledgling steps would best address the gaps in BTR? Where would all the resources, help and support come from?

Fortunately for the people of BTR, we were assured of all possible help and support. The Hon'ble Prime Minister of India Modi Ji himself came down to Kokrajhar and addressed a mammoth rally in Kokrajhar- the City of Peace on the 7th of February 2020 and spelled out in very clear terms, "For Bodoland, our mantra is peace, progress and protection." He

further assured that no more tears would be shed henceforth in Bodoland.

That was the moment! It was an uplifting moment for us to grab— which we did with complete sincerity of our hearts, minds and hands. With this kind of goodwill and support forthcoming, it was possible for the Government of BTR to optimally exercise the powers and provisions of the Sixth Schedule of India's Constitution. In this way, our government has done well to launch flagship missions and programmes to expedite development gap-filling on the one hand, and to sustain peace, healing and co-existence on the other hand.

We started from a scratch. The forces that had previously kept the people of BTR mired in one conflict after another with periodic episodes of violence festered on and refused to let change and transformation set a foothold. Large scale misinformation and disinformation campaigns were carried out to weaken the resolve to galvanise our collective march to peace. Like the hydra-headed monster, anti-social elements sought to regressively pull our society once again towards the recently given-up gun culture. Every now and then, there were threats of formation of some armed revolutionary group or the other.

Satyameva Jayate! Truth alone triumphs! This undying and universal truth swayed in favour of the people of Bodoland region. The collective resolve of the people of BTR led us to adopt a unified vision: Peaceful, Smart and Green Bodoland! There has been no looking back ever since. This gave wings to the hopes, aspirations and dreams of our people. A new momentum was gained— to march in unison with the rest of Assam and India in all aspects— social, cultural and economic progress. Violence, hatred, killings and conflicts were events of the bygone days— and should they remain so— an era teaching us of how sheer grit and painful sacrifices of our martyrs enabled peace and harmony in our present times!

The Bodoland Happiness Mission flagged off early on in 2022 was a culmination of our peace building efforts during the

run-up to the Bodo Peace Accord 2020. It became our cornerstone for rallying a vision for peace and harmonious co-existence of all groups, communities and constituents of BTR. This flagship mission provided a transformative platform across the social spectrum of BTR aiming to foster peace, healing and emotional well-being, and sustainable development after decades of conflict.

Likewise, the BTR Government oversaw the vibrant progression of a conglomeration of flagship missions and programmes which were aimed at creating a model of inclusive development and good governance where public services reached even the farthest corners of our territory. We have reaped extremely rich dividends through these missions already. My team and I believed that development should leave no one behind, and we pushed relentlessly to ensure that the benefits of progress were shared broadly.

The details of the flagship missions and programmes may be found in Table 1.

Table 1: Flagship Missions and Programmes of BTR Government

Sl. No.	Mission/ Programme	Description
1.	Bodoland Happiness Mission	This mission aims to foster and sustain long-term peace and unity by encouraging dialogue among diverse communities of BTR. Community Vision Documents addressing the aspirations and concerns of 26 different communities have been formulated and launched. As outputs, an all-language word-book, the Bodoland Engaged Ethnography Initiative, a Museum-cum-Research Centre for all the 26 communities of BTR have been initiated.

Sl. No.	Mission/ Programme	Description
2.	Mission Fin Rwdwmkhang	A post-conflict socio-economic reintegration and livelihood rehabilitation initiative launched by BTR Govt. for ex-NDFB cadres, martyrs' families, and local entrepreneurs from victim families. Implemented by RWDWM Federation of Cooperative Societies Ltd., 19 cooperatives have been registered in various sectors, namely, rice production and milling, dairy, poultry, layer farms, Agro-Tourism, etc.
3.	Rog Nirmul BTR Mission	Aims at holistic healthcare through solarized PHCs, enhancing health services access and outreach through MMUs, community engagement. Programmes such as the AaiOnsaiBithangki and Bodoland Cancer Care Trust have addressed long-pending gaps in maternal health support, cancer care, and chronic illness financial aid to enhance health access and outcomes in BTR.
4.	Giyan Swrang Onsungthai	Annual one-time scholarship for students from economically challenged backgrounds in BTR to support education, civil services, and professional preparation. 200 students per 46 constituencies selected annually with over 35000 students benefiting a total of Rs. 17.5 Crores worth of stipends in the last four years.
5.	Bodofa UN Brahma Super-50 Mission	This mission empowers high-potential students from poor economic backgrounds and underrepresented communities. Fully sponsored residential

Sl. No.	Mission/ Programme	Description
		coaching is provided for IIT-JEE, NEET, APSC, and UPSC Examinations. More than 600 youth have benefitted directly from this mission with good success rates in the previous three years.
6.	Bodoland School Adoption Programme (BSAP)	Voluntary adoption of government schools by community leaders and business houses to improve infrastructure, learning outcomes, and community involvement. 863 schools adopted.
7.	Bodoland Science Education Programme (BSEP)	Experiential science and math education through mobile labs and trained teachers in collaboration with Agastya Foundation. 9 Mobile Science Labs and 18 Lab-on-Bikes have covered over 30,000 students in the last two years. 300+ teachers have completed a tailor-made programme at the Agastya Foundation Kuppam Campus, Bangalore. Besides, low-cost science kits have also been distributed in our government schools.
8.	Bodoland Space Education Programme	This mission enhances space science learning through labs, ISRO visits, and simulation tools. In collaboration with Vyomika Space Academy, 13 Space Labs have been planned across the schools of BTR, 4 being already operational.
9.	Bodoland Youth Employment Mission	This mission aims to provide coaching and digital education support to our youth for clearing government service exams and professional courses' entrance tests. 25 institutions have already started offering weekend coaching through peer study teams, digital tools, and alumni mentorship.

Sl. No.	Mission/ Programme	Description
10.	Dr. Bashi Ram Bodo Doctoral Fellowship	This signature Fellowship Programme aims to promote equitable access to research and cultivate local intellectual leadership. Currently, it supports 50 doctoral students from BTR who lack other government research support, annually, with an assured grant of Rs. 3.6 lakhs each over a period of 3 years.
11.	Bodoland Career Counselling Programme	This programme focuses on competitive exams, scholarships and vocational opportunities. Counsellors receive regular training and digital resources, while 23 zonal officers monitor quality. It aims to democratize career decisions among youth. Presently, career guidance is being provided in 1,180 schools and colleges via trained nodal teachers and zonal officers.
12.	One Student One File (OSOF) Mission	Implemented in 10 schools initially, this mission seeks to enable data-driven decisions, personalized learning, and community-teacher-parent engagement.
13.	Child Friendly BTR Mission	1% of the total budget of BTR is allocated for this mission. It aims at the development of evidence-based and result-oriented policies, intervention projects and schemes, and a robust Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) framework to ensure elimination of all forms of child- labour, child-marriage and exploitation of children of BTR.
14.	Disabled Friendly BTR Mission	Funded with a total of 1% of BTR Government's annual budget, this mission seeks to ensure Universal Access for Persons with Disability in BTR. Since 2024, ITIs have been offering ITI-ability

Sl. No.	Mission/ Programme	Description
		programmes for 50 persons in Domestic Data Entry Operator (DDEO)/DTP, IT, Digital Literacy and other trades in order to ensure that PwDs become economically empowered. There is also an additional ongoing training of 120 PwDs to enable them as the Disabled Friendly BTR Mission Champions across all the constituencies of BTR.
15.	Bodoland Women Empowerment Mission	This mission aims to capacitate women with leadership skills preparing them to take up social, economic and political leadership roles in the Bodoland region. In the year 2025-26, a 10-day Residential Training and Capacity building of 650 Bodoland Women Empowerment Champions is ongoing. The 26 Community-based groups are also being supported to organize 5 each Women Leadership Workshops/Seminars for their respective communities across the districts of BTR.
16.	Bodoland Pig Mission	This Mission focusses on the pork production deficit in the region - both Bodoland as well as North Eastern India. Through this Mission, the goal is to create 60,000 HH producing 1 Lakh kg of Pork / Day.
17.	Bodoland Sericulture Mission	This Mission aims to generate employment for 40,000 silkworm rearers and 10,000 weavers and enhance silk production to 2000 MT by 2026-27 through capacity building, seed and post-cocoon sector development.

Sl. No.	Mission/ Programme	Description
18.	Mission- Mahila Lakhpati Mission (VPRP)	Mahila Lakhpati Mission is an initiative of MoRD which BTC has adopted as one of its flagship programs with necessary contextualization and renamed it as "Lakhpati Abo". The objective of the initiative is ensure sustainable income of >1 Lakhs for rural SHG women of BTR through a multi departmental convergence effort.
19.	Bodofa Livelihood Mission (Agaru Clubs)	Under Bodofa Livelihood Mission, 40 Agaru Clubs each club equipped with nurseries promote agarwood-based agroforestry with over 18,000 farmers. Over 13.5 lakh saplings have been planted by households to increase economic returns from agro-forest resources.
20.	Mainao Swrang Bithanki	A women-centric economic development initiative under which Rs. 24.6 Cr was distributed to 9865 SHGs covering over 36,850 families to strengthen livelihoods and economic empowerment of women.
21.	Bodoland Handloom Mission	Focuses on strengthening the community ecosystem through upgraded looms, incubation support and skill training for artisans to preserve Bodoland's weaving heritage and enhance livelihood opportunities. 40 Handloom Clusters have been formed under the mission, and over 1000 loom units have been upgraded along with infrastructural support, training, and product diversification.
22.	DWIMU Initiative	This flagship initiative is a collaborative effort of the BTR Government and the BRLF. It has completed 51 VCDCs community natural resource management

Sl. No.	Mission/ Programme	Description
		plans prepared and approved by Gram Sabha & VDCs. Over Rs 150 crore approved by BTC from MGNREGS, mostly for construction of Farm Ponds, Horticulture and other Livelihood activities.
23.	The Skill, Employment & Entrepreneurship Development (SEED) Mission	The SEED Mission promotes technical and vocational education through expanded ITI seats, industrial placements, and youth upskilling across BTR. The mission has been instrumental in the increase of 644 seats in ITIs since 2020, covering 28 Engineering and 17 Non-Engineering trades, boasting over 300 placements in reputed firms like ITC, AISATS, etc.
24.	Digital Literacy & Counselling Centres	These centres aim to digitally empower 2000 individuals annually in digital literacy, e-services, counselling and infrastructure support at 5 locations through BTR Government- NTPC CSR partnership.
25.	BTR Farm Mechanization Mission	This mission seeks to introduce and maintain Mechanization Centres across 420 VDCs of BTR. It has promoted women farmers through women-friendly farm machines and tools, including addressing of rural power deficits. It has set up 5 solar-powered cold storage units across BTR to preserve agricultural produce and support small-scale farmers.
26.	Alari Swrang Bithanki (Religious Support)	Provides Rs. 2 lakh to each religious site of all communities in BTR to preserve cultural identity and support interfaith harmony through restoration and

Sl. No.	Mission/ Programme	Description
		maintenance support. So far over 695 religious places of worship have received the grant.
27.	Vibrant BTR Mission 1.0 & 2.0	A multi-tiered governance push for access of all Central Sponsored Schemes, State Sponsored Schemes and Flagship Schemes of BTR Government for rapid transformation and development in Livelihood, Sericulture, Education, and other key sectors through time-bound strategies, departmental ownership, and measurable goals.
28.	Mission Bwiswmuthi 1.0 & 2.0	A flagship mission for digitization and simplification of land records and services. Over 3.23 lakh services delivered including GIS mapping, land melas, and citizen service enhancements. 26775 landless families have been allotted revenue land pattas, while under the Forest Rights Act 2006, close to 33,000 Individual Land Titles have been provided along with the distribution of 1161 Community Land Titles.
29.	Mission to GI Tag Bodoland items	Geographic Indication (GI) tagging of 21 products completed: Aronai, Dokhona, Eri Silk/Indi Silk, Jwmgra, Gamsa, Keradapini, Napham, Thorka, Ondla/ Onla, Gwkha-Gwkhwi, Jou Gwran, Jou Gishi, Maibra Jou Bidwi, GangarDunjia, Kham, Serja, Sifung, Khardwi, Narzi, Gongona, and Jotha
30.	Green Bodoland Mission	This mission aims at environmental regeneration through reforestation, plastic reduction, waste management, wetland rejuvenation and groundwater

Sl. No.	Mission/ Programme	Description
		conservation initiatives. Reclamation of extensive forest cover and inauguration of Raimona National Park (422 square kilometres) on 5 th June 2021, and the SikhnaJwhwlaio National Park (spanning an area of 321.90 square kilometres) on 5 th June 2025 are the major achievements. Also, 2 Miyawaki Forests have been successfully created during its first phase along with 2 wetlands being restored. Regional groundwater mapping is in progress in collaboration with IIT Roorkee. 25 villages have been adopted across BTR for mass scale plantation and vermicompost promotion.

Equally important was the Green Bodoland Mission, an endeavour that reflected our respect for nature and our commitment to sustainable development. An initiative close to my heart, it seeks to address environmental degradation through innovative counter measures such as mega tree plantation projects, reducing plastic waste and regenerating groundwater reserves. Particularly, pleasing to note is, this mission has led to the reclamation of extensive forest cover and inauguration of two National Parks, namely, Raimona National Park (422 square kilometres) on 5th June 2021, and the SikhnaJwhwlaio National Park (spanning an area of 321.90 square kilometres) on 5th June 2025. These stand as monuments of our sustainable ecological vision.

Educational and economic reforms have also formed a pillar of the change and transformation in BTR. Giyan Swrang Bithangki, which ensures quality education from KG 2 PG, and specialized programmes such as the Space Education Programme and the Bodoland Science Education Mission are empowering our youth with knowledge and critical thinking

which are essential for nurturing innovation and driving societal progress. The presently ongoing appointment of teachers, carried out in a transparent manner, has improved the overall quality of education in the region. This, coupled with tailor-made training provided in collaboration specialist institutions augur a bright future in the sector. The Bodofa Super 50 Mission comprising four sets of cutting-edge coaching for our meritorious underprivileged youth who aspire to clear engineering, medical, Assam Civil Services and Indian Civil Services examinations. Based at Kokrajhar, Guwahati and New Delhi respectively, these tailor-made training have already produced heartwarming stories of grit and success so far.

I have always dreamed of a world where knowledge is readily and freely available for all. Very many challenges in the past had restricted the access of education and knowledge to the people of Bodoland region. Many of our generations survived through purely indigenous knowledge systems without ever being able to benefit from the science and technological know-how offered by the modern education system. I believe that we need to bridge this divide by integrating the best that are offered by our indigenous and traditional knowledge systems as well as modern sciences. As such, the BTR Government has established SubungthiniThandwiBineswar Brahma Bodoland Knowledge Centres in over 200 places across the BTR. Equipped with digital libraries and cutting edge technology, these centres are designed as community-managed resource hubs for dissemination of information and provision of services to all members of the community: farmers, SHGs, local leaders, students and business persons.

In tandem with these educational reforms, the BTR Government has spearheaded numerous livelihood enhancement projects—ranging from the Bodofa Livelihood Mission and Bodoland Pig Mission to initiatives focused on augmenting incomes sericulture, handlooms, goatery, women farmers,

budding entrepreneurs, farmers' producer companies, cooperative societies among others. All these efforts are now crystallizing towards the establishment of a Centre of Excellence in Agriculture Technology in honour of SubunghiniThandwiBineswar Brahma. In the realm of health, we have been proud to push forward our change agenda with the Rog Nirmul BTR Mission, a transformative programme that has significantly contributed to reducing maternal and infant mortality through strategic partnerships and multi-faceted community outreach. These projects have been meticulously crafted to leverage local and national skills and resources, thereby fostering an environment where our citizens can achieve economic self-reliance and dignity.

In addition to social development, infrastructural and economic advancements, it was crucial for our BTR Government to champion knowledge exchange, arts and literature through events such as the Bodoland International Knowledge Festival, Kokrajhar LitFests, Bodoland Mohotsov, and international theatre festivals and knowledge expos. We have thus, witnessed the rebirth of our heritage. The SAI Sports Complex in Kokrajhar is now equipped with a FIFA standard football field, the first-of-its-kind in the entire North East India having "Sand-Based Football Ground with Hi-tech Smart Sprinkler and Smart Internal Drainage System". We have successfully held Durand Cup matches for two consecutive sessions in the previous years, while preparations are underway to host its 134th Edition at Kokrajhar- the City of Peace later this year. To me, these cultural endeavours are as crucial as any economic initiative because they have done much to restore the dignity and self-respect of our people, healing long-standing wounds inflicted by decades of bitterness and conflict.

One crucial arena of intervention has been the strengthening of the governance institutions, mechanisms and processes. How can our BTR Government, within the framework of the Sixth Schedule of India's Constitution, devise strong

institutions, robust mechanisms and transparent processes? This had been a lingering question all along. In response, our Vibrant BTR Mission became the mainframe around which there was a construction of a SMART BTR. A BTR Government that would be able to operate 24*7, where citizens' grievances were tended to instantaneously, where the last mile services were as good as the services provided at one's threshold. We resolved to bring governance to the peoples' doorsteps through this flagship mission. Four-and-a-half years down the lane, it is gratifying to note that BTR Government has been the first Sixth Schedule Council Government to digitize 100% of our land records through Mission Bwiswmuthi 1.0. We became the first to also launch e-Office system to ensure transparency in our government procedures, and we were also the first to launch the CEM Grievance Redressal and Disaster Response portal.

In particular, Mission Bwiswmuthi 1.0, our flagship initiative, has been a beacon of hope for countless families who endured generations of land-related uncertainties. By ensuring 100% digitization of land records and resolving long-pending land disputes, we have not only streamlined governance but also transformed land—once a site of conflict—into an instrument of peace, justice, and harmonious co-existence. Based on these principles, our government has provided revenue land pattas to 26775 families in the last two and half years. Again, under the Forest Rights Act 2006, close to 33,000 Individual Land Titles have been provided along with the distribution of 1161 Community Land Titles. We take pride in the fact that approximately 3,23,178 beneficiaries have got various land related services in both offline and online mode within this period in Bodoland Territorial Region. Carrying this work forward, the recently launched Mission Bwiswmuthi 2.0 again aims to benefit over 47,000 landless indigenous families, and 9,000 small tea-growers and rubber farmers across BTR providing them with economic benefits and entrepreneurial opportunities.

While reflecting on this marvellous journey of change, it is clear that transformation is a multifaceted process—one that cannot be measured solely by economic indicators or infrastructural improvements. It is, in essence, a human story. It is the story of the reclamation of humanity itself. It is about reversing the process of abject dehumanization by once again revitalizing the innate human qualities: the capacity to love, be happy, and be hopeful of a better future. It is about reimagining a future once marred by hatred, violence, killings and disparity, and it demands a synthesis of visionary policy, such as we collectively built. The progress we have achieved in Bodoland is sure enough evidence that we have successfully charted a new course when we dared to dream of a peaceful, more inclusive, and genuinely participatory society.

IV. Bodoland— where Converged the Community Visions for a Shared Future!

Looking back on my formative years, I remain profoundly grateful for the lessons I learned on the ground. Those experiences taught me that the path to peace is long and fraught with setbacks, yet every effort mattered, every conversation counted. I realized that the seeds of lasting reconciliation must be sown through everyday interactions and nurtured with untiring commitment. My journey as a humble peace *karyakarta* was not merely a personal evolution; it was a conscious endeavour to build bridges and restore hope in the communities of Bodoland region that had long suffered from division and despair.

It is understood that diversity of our country, state and council includes - language, culture and communities. This diversity is the beauty of human society and the very essence of Indianness since the ancient times. However, in the last few decades, most of the smaller communities felt they were deprived of their constitutional rights and that they could not fully enjoy the rights and entitlements as the citizens of our nation. Till

today, they struggle in many ways to achieve their goals and aspirations to protect their identity, culture and dignity of life. Though the Council is an intermediate arrangement as per the provisions of the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution, here, the BTR Government took an unprecedented decision to protect their language, culture and dignity.

On the 30th of December 2024, in a path-breaking move, Hon'ble Governor of Assam Shri Lakshman Prasad Acharya Ji launched our Community Vision Documents for 26 different communities residing in BTR. This was surely a culmination of all our collective efforts, and at the same time a blueprint for sustainable peace and harmonious co-existence in the future. This initiative under the aegis of the Bodoland Happiness Mission aimed to once-and-for-all heal the built-up trauma and hurt from decades of conflict, violence, killings and hatred by building a shared culture of reconciliation, peace, happiness, co-existence and emotional resilience.

The BTR Community Vision Document is not just a policy tool but a testament to the inclusive governance of the BTR Government for a 'Peaceful, Smart, and Green Bodoland.' It encapsulates the diverse aspirations of the communities residing in BTR and seeks to align the government's efforts with their needs, ensuring that every voice is heard and that every community is represented in the journey towards peace and development. Early on, we had also opened up our arms inviting social development and corporate partners to come in with their vast experiences and technical expertise to work arm-in-arm with the people of Bodoland.

The process of creating the Vision Documents was a culmination of the four years of the BTR Government's efforts for sustaining peace, security and inclusive development. The task of compilation of the document was an intensively participatory effort. Our members of the Bodoland Happiness Mission, BTR Development Fellows and Happiness Champions

worked tirelessly to engage over 70 organizations, agencies and institutions spearheading and voicing the aspirations of 26 different communities residing in BTR. Extensive engaged research methodology and instruments were used for people of different genders, professions, and age groups to share their perspectives. Teachers, retired service personnel, farmers, youth leaders, and women leaders were among those who participated in this exhaustive fieldwork that was carried out in dialogical modes, providing valuable insights into the needs and aspirations of their communities. Interviews with community elders and leaders offered deeper insights into the unique challenges and opportunities within the communities, eliciting a number of thematic areas and specific community needs, ranging from education and healthcare to economic empowerment, cultural preservation, and environmental sustainability¹.

The Community Vision Documents are unique in its community-driven approach, emphasizing the importance of equal ownership among all stakeholders. By involving community organizations, grassroots leaders, and individuals at every stage, the process fostered trust and ensured that the respective documents truly reflected the collective aspirations of BTR's people. It also provided a platform for historically marginalized voices to be heard, thus promoting a sense of unity and shared purpose across the region. We are already seeing this initiative take deep roots and thrive already: an all-language word-book, the Bodoland Engaged Ethnography Initiative, a Museum-cum-Research Centre for all the 26 communities of BTR, are gradually taking concrete form today.

As a guiding framework, the Vision Document lays the foundation for holistic and inclusive development in the Bodoland Territorial Region. It embodies the resilience and aspirations of its people, while also serving as a roadmap for the Council Government to prioritize initiatives and allocate resources effectively. This project is not just a reflection of the past and

present but a beacon of hope for the future—a future where the wounds of the past are healed, communities are empowered, and sustainable peace is achieved.

Today, when I see the transformation that Bodoland has undergone, I am reminded of the long, challenging road the people of Bodoland have travelled together. The termination of gun culture and violence, and the establishment of a lasting peace in our region have been hard-won victories—victories that are as much about the spirit of the people as they are about policy and governance. I remain inspired by the goodwill and support of those at the helm of affairs in India and Assam on the one hand, and the everyday heroism of my fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters and children of BTR, on the other hand, who, despite all odds, chose to believe in the possibility of a better tomorrow. Their courage has been the guiding light behind every initiative our BTR Government has undertaken, and it continues to inspire our journey toward a united and prosperous Bodoland region.

All experiences: the good as well as the not-so-good make us up as individuals, families, communities and societies, I suppose. Just like every drop of water is dear and sustains life, in its temporal essence, I am bounden to behold that every precious drop of blood shed in sacrifice have transformed human history since antiquity. However, these very sacrifices remain imprinted in us the mothers, the fathers, the children or the families of the victims, forever, as dark chapters of history, reminding us never to repeat.

Another world is possible if you wish for it! Looking toward the future, I envision a Bodoland where every citizen is not merely a 'voter,' but an active architect of progress—a society in which scientific temperament, economic development, environmental sustainability, cultural richness, and social justice coexist harmoniously. I am acutely aware that challenges yet remain, and that our journey is far from over. However, the steps we have taken, the dialogues we continue to nurture, and the

innovative policies we implement every day reaffirm my belief that sustainable peace is not an abstract ideal but an attainable reality. I remain profoundly grateful to every individual, institution and organization who have contributed tremendously to this effort and feel energized by the vision of a Bodoland that not only heals its past but strides confidently towards a Viksit Bharat @2047!

Notes

¹Gait, E.A. (1906). *A History of Assam*. Assam (India): Thacker, Spink & Company.

²It is to be noted that in order to implement the community visions, the BTR Government has created a separate community funding framework for the development of language, culture and literature of all the groups and communities of BTR within the FY 2025-26. Experts from the Gandhi Hindustani Sahitya Sabha and other agencies have started facilitating language, literature and cultural preservation, development and promotion of different communities since the National Seminar held on the 29th and 30th of March

2025 at Rajghat, Delhi. The major Community Festivals of each of the communities have been included in the BTR Official Calendar as restricted holidays from this year on. A proposal on Bodoland Community Museum has been approved to showcase the rich traditions and legacies of all the communities residing in BTR. Similarly, another proposal has been approved for establishment of the Bodoland International School of Peace and Happiness at the Indo-Bhutan border town of Tamulpur to carry out peace and happiness education and training, research and community engagement projects.

2

The Bodoland Journey

Prof. Shantha Sinha

My first introduction to All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) was in the year 2001, when the Assam government invited M V Foundation to give technical support for getting every child to school in 10 blocks in 10 districts of Assam. This included Kokrajhar District to Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. It is in this journey that ABSU extended full support to MVF's efforts at community mobilisation, reaching out to parents, children, school teachers and other functionaries. The cadre of ABSU were so unlike the students' unions I have come across in the country in their voluntarism, commitment to the cause of education of the Bodo people, and deep connect with the community. I learnt that it had to do with their pride in the history of their land infused with an extraordinary struggle to carve out an autonomous politico- administrative unit to preserve and nurture their distinct identity, language, culture of the Bodo people, and bring forth a transformation in all aspects of their lives.

I have been in continuous touch with ABSU since then. I had the privilege of seeing the energy of the Bodo peoples and the huge organising capacities of ABSU in the year 2006 at Kashikotra conference. Subsequently, during my tenure as the Chairperson National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR), in the year 2011-13, ABSU was of great help in helping in implementation of the Bal Bandhu program that focussed on children's rights to education. It is during this time that I was conferred the 9th UN Brahma Soldier of Humanity Award by the Upendra Nath Brahma Trust (UNBT) in the year

2012. I felt overwhelmed and humbled when I received this prestigious award. Subsequently in the year 2017 I was invited for the Golden Jubilee Celebration of ABSU at Jangkhritai Fwthar Kokrajhar. This time the Conference was bigger and indicated to me the growing strength and power of ABSU.

Education, Bodo Language and the Bodo movement

I witnessed ABSU's endeavour to reconstruct the lives of its youth force through education, especially from rural areas who have been victims of politics of violence, extremist activities. They worked relentlessly with students and teachers to improve their education at all levels, from primary school to higher secondary education, college, university and beyond.

The movement for expansion of education was closely linked to the language politics and rights of the Bodos for their culture, identity and autonomy. Bodo language was declared as the medium of instruction in 1963 at the lower primary schools and gradually at all levels. This endeavour to promote the Bodo language was taken forward with the Bodo language being declared an associate official language in 1985. It is to the credit of the movement that the Bodo language was listed under the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution via the 92nd constitutional amendment 2003. At the same time there have been gains in expanding the institutional base of the Bodo language as it was introduced as a Modern Indian Language in Gauhati University, Dibrugarh University, Tezpur University and Bodoland University¹. There are a large number of Boro books on poetry, drama, short stories, novels, biography, travelogues, children's literature, and literary criticism.

At the same time there was a simultaneous long drawn demand for a script for the Bodo language heralded by ABSU and the Bodo Sahitya Sabha who contested the idea of having Assamese/Bengali script and the roman script advocated by the Government of Assam. The Bodos finally settled with the Devnagiri script for Bodo language and literature.

The struggle for a legitimate space for the Bodo language demonstrates how the symbolism and idiom that is embedded in one's culture has the power of thousand words. The Bodo language movement shows how preserving and nurturing one own language is so integral to its daily expressions of thought and action that gives the creative energy to express through traditional as well as new art forms, literature and other cultural expressions. The emphasis on primacy of language has also shown how it is linked to the process of democratisation of the Bodo movement.

Indeed, the gains made in the field of education gave confidence to invite Former President of India Dr. Abdul Kalam in 2011 to inaugurate the Conference 'Mission Quality Education' in which nearly ten thousand students and teachers participated.

However, ABSU continues to face the challenges to achieve the goal of universalisation of education with lack of adequate Bodo medium school teachers, physical infrastructure, text books especially in the Bodo language, provincialisation and so on. At the policy level ABSU's demand for setting up of a separate Directorate for Bodo Medium Education by the Assam government remains to be fulfilled. The negotiations have culminated in forming an advisory committee to discuss and resolve all issues.

It is important to underscore that no other mass movement in the country has recognised the potent of education for societal transformation, equality, and justice. The link between development of language and ABSU and the Bodo movement is uniquely placed in consistently working towards strengthening of the education system especially in the mother tongue and putting education at the centre stage of democratic politics.

Building a Mass Movement

The recognition of Bodo language gave impetus to the Bodos to spearhead the movement for a separate state of

Bodoland (Udayachal) to assert their cultural identity and political autonomy vis-à-vis the Assamese government which they perceived was discriminatory towards the Bodo people and indigenous population.

In building the movement for Bodoland, there was no unanimity regarding the short term and long-term goals of the movement or even the methods and strategy for carrying out the struggle among various protagonists including the PTCA, PTCA (P), United Nationalist Liberation Front, National Democratic Front of Bodoland and ABSU.

The role of ABSU in strategizing for a separate state using multiple forms of struggle through legitimate means remains significant. It is under the leadership of Upender Nath Brahma that the demand for fully fledged statehood with the nomenclature 'Bodoland' became. The movement for Bodoland came to the peak in 1989-90 with thousands participating in a historic struggle for Bodoland. In 1989, the then Congress Government led by late Rajiv Gandhi was compelled to formally invite the ABSU president for a tripartite talk between the Central government, the Assam government and the ABSU. In spite of ill health and suffering from cancer Upender Nath took and active part in 5 rounds of tripartite talks².

Under his leadership Upendra Nath Brahma gave a concrete shape to the mass movement 'with a 92-point Charter centred around the creation of a separate Bodoland state on the North Bank, a regional council for non-Karbis in Karbi Anglong and an autonomous region for Bodo people living on the 41 South Bank. He also spoke for the rights of other smaller Plain Tribals, ethnic cousins within the larger Bodo family and...set a target for achieving their goal of separate state by 1990'. The ABSU organized a huge rally on 12th June, at Judge Field of Guwahati, which was attended by thousands of Bodo people shouting Slogan 'divide Assam fifty-fifty; do or die' etc.

Finally, first accord was signed in 1993 making way for the creation of the Bodoland Autonomous Council (BAC) Act

1993, passed in the Assam legislative Assembly which provided maximum autonomy within the framework of Indian Constitution for social, economic, education, ethnic and cultural advancement of the Bodo residing therein. The second accord was signed, ten years later in 2003, carved out the Bodoland Territorial Area Districts (BTAD) to be governed by the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC). It also paved the way for inclusion of the BTAD and as mentioned above for including the Bodo language within the Sixth Schedule and the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution respectively.

The Bodo Peace Accord (2020) between the All Bodo Students Union (ABSU), four factions of the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB), United Bodo Peoples' Organisation (UBPO) and the the Government of India and the Government of Assam, on 27th of January 2020 was a significant milestone. . It provided for the creation of Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR). It aimed at "augmenting the area and powers of existing BTC; addressing the issues of Bodos residing outside the BTAD; promotion and protection of social, cultural, linguistic and ethnic identities of Bodos; providing legislative safeguards for land rights of tribals; ensuring accelerated development of tribal areas; and for rehabilitation of the NDFB cadres who surrendered their weapons to pave the way for peace"³. In a way the long drawn struggle for Bodoland, crystallised the concrete steps to be taken up in the governance of the area, institutional arrangements and the core areas for overall development and growth of the Bodo people.

Further it recognised the need for focusing on moral and ethical fibre of the people for deepening of democracy and bringing about peace, justice and security in the area. The struggle for a separate state of Bodoland has been a protracted struggle with gains made inch by inch towards autonomy and a say in the decision-making processes. It is important to recognise the Bodo movement not just as a localised movement but as one that has paved the path for, greater decentralisation and

autonomy to states and an opportunity to dream audaciously for deepening of democracy and over all development of India's citizens.

I pay my homage to Upender Nath Brahmo- 'Bodofa'- who laid the foundation for the Bodoland movement. I wish the cadre as well as the leadership of ABSU more power for taking forward the cause of Bodos along with all other marginalised and deprived sections of the society towards the goal of freedom and justice for all.

Notes

¹Chithum Basumatary, Marginalised Bodo people in Education by the Government-A Sociological Study, IOSR Journal Of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS) Volume 19, Issue 1, Ver. VII (Jan. 2014), PP 64-66 e-ISSN: 2279-0837, p-ISSN: 2279-0845. www.iosrjournals.org

² Tragically, the great leader died even before he could see the fruits of his leadership on May 1, 1990.

³ Background note

3

बोडोलैण्ड में अमृतकाल का आगाज

प्रो. रमेश भारद्वाज

आजकल हम भारतवर्ष के 75 वर्ष पूरे होने पर 'भारत के अमृतकाल' का उत्सव मना रहे हैं। इस वेला में भारत के अभिन्न अंग पूर्वोत्तर भारत में विशेष रूप से पूर्वोत्तर के मुखद्वार बोडोलैण्ड में जो शान्ति एवं विकास की नवीन परिस्थितियाँ देखने में आ रही हैं वह सब यह कहने को मजबूर करती हैं कि वहाँ अमृतकाल का शुभारम्भ हो रहा है।

असम राज्य में पहली बार सन् 1985 में आना हुआ। उस समय हममें गाँधी हिन्दुस्तानी साहित्य सभा, राजघाट, नई दिल्ली के संस्थापक आचार्य काकासाहब कालेलकर की जन्मशती के समारोह का गौहाटी में आयोजन किया था। उसी समय प्रो. महेश्वर नियोग एवं प्रॉ नगेन सेकिया से परिचय हुआ और पाठशाला वाले असम साहित्य सभा के अधिवेशन में शामिल होने का अवसर भी मिला। उसके बाद असम के प्रथम मुख्यमंत्री लोकप्रिय गोपीनाथ बरदलै की जन्मताब्दी समिति के राष्ट्रीय संयोजक के रूप में 1990-94 तक देशभर में अकादमिक अनुष्ठानों का संयोजन किया। इसी दरम्यान बोडो जाति के विषय में जानकारी मिली। उस समय यह जानकर अच्छा लगा कि गाँधी विचार के अनुसार बोडो समाज ने अपनी भाषा के लिए देवनागरी लिपि अंगीकार किया हुआ है।

आदिवासी भाषाओं में गाँधीजी की जीवनी प्रकाशित करने की गाँधी स्मारक निधि की योजना थी। उसके अंतर्गत बोडो भाषा में गाँधी जी की संक्षिप्त आत्मकथा का अनुवाद स्वनामधन्य पुरस्कार से सम्मानित अध्यापक श्रीरामचरण ब्रह्म से करवाकर हमने 1998 में प्रकाशित किया। विमोचन के समय गौहाटी में हिन्दी बिद्वान डॉ. शर्मा से ज्ञात हुआ कि बोडो समाज का एक वर्ग देवनागरी छोड़ बोडो भाषा के लिए रोमन लिपि अपनाने हेतु आन्दोलन कर रहा है।

राष्ट्रीय भावात्मक एकता के इस विषय पर दिल्ली में गाँधीजन की बैठक में निर्णय हुआ और इस विषय में कारवाई हेतु मुझे अधिकृत किया गया।

बोडो साहित्य सभा एवं ऑल बोडो स्टूडेंट्स यूनियन (आब्सू) के अध्यक्ष श्री बिनेश्वर ब्रह्म तथा श्री यू. जी. ब्रह्म के साथ गौहाटी और नई दिल्ली में बैठक के बाद ज्ञात हुआ कि दोनों ही संगठन देवनागरी को जारी रखने के पक्ष में हैं। उनका मानना था कि पिछले पच्चीस वर्षों से बोडो भाषा (देवनागरी में लिखित) में प्रारम्भिक, माध्यमिक एवं उच्च शिक्षा दी जा रही है। अब इस मोड़ पर रोमन लिपि अपनाने से समाज में गलत संदेश जाएगा और बोडो भाषा एवं साहित्य को पिछले पच्चीस वर्षों में प्रादेशिक एवं राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर जो पहचान और सम्मान मिला है उसे भी धक्का लगेगा। उन्हीं दिनों हमारे अनुरोध पर 16 नवम्बर, 1999 को बोडो साहित्य सभा का स्थापना दिवस नई दिल्ली में मनाया गया। विश्व युवक केन्द्र, नई दिल्ली में आयोजित इस सम्मेलन में तत्कालीन मानव संसाधन मन्त्री प्रो. मुरली मनोहर जोशी सहित श्री सुन्दरलाल बहुगुणा, श्री नटवर ठक्कर, श्री रामेश्वर ठाकुर जैसे गाँधी विचारक शामिल हुए। इस अवसर पर बोडो भाषा को संविधान की आठवीं अनुसूची में शामिल करने एवं केन्द्र सरकार के विभिन्न विभागों द्वारा बोडो भाषा के संवर्धन में सहयोग हेतु प्रस्ताव पारित किए गए। प्रो. जोशी ने तुरन्त प्रभाव से वैज्ञानिक एवं तकनीकी शब्दावली आयोग को बोडो-हिन्दी-अंग्रेजी शब्दकोश बनवाने का आदेश दिया। बोडो साहित्य सभा के तीन महीने बाद होने वाले अधिवेशन से यह कार्य प्रारम्भ भी हो गया।

बोडो साहित्य सभा के महासचिव श्री गोपीनाथ जी के गाँब में यह अधिवेशन सम्पन्न हुआ, जिसमें मुझे भी आमन्त्रित किया गया था। इस अधिवेशन में देवनागरी को जारी रखने का प्रस्ताव पारित किया गया। जिससे हिंसाग्रस्त बोडोलैण्ड में खूनी।

टकराव शुरू हो गया, जिसका पहला शिकार बोडो साहित्य सभा के सभापति श्री बिनेश्वर ब्रह्म बने। उनकी निर्मम हत्या के बाद वातावरण और विषाक्त होता गया।

मगर मुझे यह कहने में कोई संकोच नहीं कि उन विकट परिस्थिति में भी बोडो जाति के बुद्धिजीवियों ने बोडो भाषा के संवर्धन को ओर जीवट तरीके से

जारी रखा। इसी कारण त्रिपक्षीय समझौते के तहत बोडो भाछा को आठवों अनुसूची में मान्यता, यूनिवर्सिटी, सी आई टी जैसी अकादमिक, उपलब्धियाँ हासिल की। मगर उन उपलब्धियों के पीछे वह रणनीति थी जिसके तहत लगातार चार वर्षों तक नई दिल्ली, कलकाता, गौहाटी में सम्मेलनों द्वारा बोडो जाति की मांगों के समर्थन में देश के नीति-निर्धारकों के बीच सहमति प्राप्त की। आब्सू बोडो साहित्य सभा के साथ मिलकर गाँधी हिन्दुस्तानी साहित्य सभा ने गैर-अनुसूचित भाषा सम्मेलन (तीन) एवं नई दिल्ली के हिमाचल भवन में दस दिवसीय नेशनल बोडो मेला का आयोजन किया। सांसद श्री यू. जी ब्रह्म (पूर्व सभापति, आब्सू) एवं श्री सांसुमा बैसुमथियारी के साथ श्री नार्जारी (आज के राज्यसभा सांसद) के नेतृत्व में केन्द्र के अनेक मन्त्री, असम के मुख्यमंत्री एवं लगभग आठ केन्द्रीय मंत्रालयों के सचिव (ब्यूरोक्रेट) ने इस मेले में भाग लिया। बोडोलैण्ड एवं देश के अन्य भागों से लगभग 500 बोडो बुद्धिजीवी, पारम्परिक ज्ञान के जानकार इस मेले में शामिल हुए। जिन्होंने बोडो जाति के इतिहास, उपलब्धियों एवं मौजूदा हालात में आवश्यकताओं को देश के कर्णधारों के सामने रखा।

सन् 2004 के बाद त्रिपक्षीय समझौते के तहत विकास के लिए आवश्यक पूर्वोक्त संसाधन तो बोडोलैण्ड को मिले। मगर विकास को अंतिम जन तक पहुंचाने के लिए जिस सामाजिक सौहार्द एवं शान्तिमय वातावरण की अनिवार्यता अपेक्षित है उसका निर्माण न हो सका।

ऐसी परिस्थितियों में आब्सू (जोकि बोडो जाति का एकमात्र बड़ा संगठन है जिसने समाज की आवश्यकताओं को चिह्नित करते हुए समाज का नेतृत्व किया) के सभापति श्री प्रमोद बोडो बने। उन्होंने अपने पूर्ववर्ती बोडोफा श्री उपेन्द्र नाथ ब्रह्म एवं यू. जी. ब्रह्म की अहिंसात्मक दृष्टि को अपनाते हुए बोडो आंदोलन को नई दिशा दी। उन्होंने बोडो युवकों को हिंसा को त्यागकर महात्मा गाँधी के अहिंसात्मक उपायों द्वारा आंदोलन के लिए एकजुट करना प्रारम्भ किया। अनेक बोडो युवक समाज के समूहों को गाँधीतीर्थों एवं देश के रचनात्मक संस्थानों में ले जाकर गाँधीदृष्टि देने का सफल प्रयास किया। इन्हीं सत्प्रयासों के फलस्वरूप आज बोडोलैण्ड में अमृतकाल का आगाज हो रहा है।

जब हम दिल्ली में कोई बोडो कार्यक्रम करते तो आमन्त्रित महानुभाव भयमिश्रित भाव से बड़े संकोच के साथ हमारे अनुरोध को स्वीकारते थे। दोश के बड़े बुद्धिजीवी बोडोलैण्ड क्षेत्र में होने वाले कार्यक्रमों में जाने को बहुत मशक्कत से तैयार होते थे। मगर आज माननीय श्री प्रमोद बोडो, चीफ, बी टी आर के नेतृत्व में बोडो क्षेत्र में सामाजिक सौहार्द एवं शान्तिमय वातावरण है। इसीलिए पिछले दो वर्षों में आयोजित अंतर्राष्ट्रीय साहित्योत्सव एवं अंतर्राष्ट्रीय ज्ञान में सम्मेलन में न केवल भारत के अपितु विश्व के अन्य भागों के बुद्धिजीवियों ने सहर्ष भाग लिया।

इन कार्यक्रमों के सफल आयोजनों का सबसे सुखद परिणाम यह है कि अंतर्राष्ट्रीय एवं राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर बोडो जाति का परिचय एक संस्कृति से सम्पन्न जाति के रूप में स्थापित हुआ। जिसने पिछले कई दशकों से मीडिया में हिंसाग्रस्त समाज के रूप में परिचित बोडो क्षेत्र का नया परिचय करवाया है। वह परिचय है- इक्कीसवीं सदी के अनुरूप सामाजिक सौहार्द एवं शान्तिमय वातावरण में प्रगति के पथ पर अग्रगामी बोडो समाज।

4

The Indigenous Languages in India : A Reflection

Prof. G. N. Devy

Thinking of the Bodo friends, I tend to think of the larger issues related with the 'Indigenous people' and with the 'indigenous languages.' And, I want to place these thoughts in a larger perspective. The term 'indigenous' holds within it a tragic and an unending saga, an unceasing epic of 'othering', 'alienation', 'alterity', 'exclusion' and people being pushed out. We cannot imagine the term being used in intellectual discourses in any part of the world before colonialism had started its spreading out. These communities that had been in place, in order and in command at the beginning of the colonial times are today reduced to a minority in an unpardonable, unimaginable way. To give you some examples, out of the 8 or 9 billion people in the world, about 390 million are designated as indigenous, that is, roughly about 4 to 5 percent of the world population. Before colonialism, in the Americas, their population was hundred percent; then arrived Columbus and in the wake of the 'discovery' of the Americas, also came diseases, armed attacks, expulsion and extermination. As a result, at present the population of the indigenous in North America is only one percent of the total population. Thus there is a 99 percent deflection in the continent's demography. It is the same story in Australia where the population of the aborigines is reduced to 1.5 to 2 percent. I am aware that in some parts of South America the population proportion is a little more favourable. However, in almost all countries in the world where they used

to be previously majority, the indigenous now are in absolute minority.

If we think of languages— and going by the UNESCO figure of 7,000 languages in use at present—approximately only about 140 languages come anywhere at all in active knowledge transactions. That is about 2 percent of the language prevailing today. An overwhelming 98 percent of languages are completely left out of knowledge transactions. And 99 percent of the indigenous languages fall within the languages excluded from the dominant knowledge transactions. In other words, 99 percent of indigenous languages today have already been driven to extinction as languages of knowledge.

But the term ‘indigenous’ cannot be understood only if we look at it in the context of colonialism. Its beginning, its origin, goes back to a long historical past. For instance, for this place, Mexico, you know that human habitation was identified as having started about 11,300 years ago at Tulum. More research needs to be done on South America; but in Europe one can go back, if we follow research in Genetics for tracing the rise of the linguistic *Homo sapiens*, to 40,000 years ago. Similarly, in South and East Asia we can speak of 45,000 years of indigenous existence. In Australia and in Africa, we have clear scientific record of 65,000 years of human habitation. The 65,000 years of human history in Africa and Australia, 45,000 years of a similar history in the Indian subcontinent and of thousands of years in America together form a part of the history of the indigenous.

Though the pre-colonial world changed altogether during the colonial times, there is no point in imagining that everything before colonialism was all perfect. There have been numerous instances of social exclusion in that past also; and they too contributed to notions of ‘indiginity’. There have been migrations all through human histories and many native manners in which large sections of populations were turned indigenously indigenous. There’s also no point in imagining that

everything that Europe spread out in the world was evil. That would be an extreme historical over-simplification. Thinking of the indigenous in terms of binaries is of no use either to the indigenous or the non-indigenous. Therefore, it would be good to look at the exchanges between the indigenous and non-indigenous, particularly during the colonial times.

Colonialism carried four great ideas to the rest of the world: freedom, reason, equality, and individualism. For the traditional societies, freedom became an attractive idea. The kind of freedom that a phenomenon like the French Revolution seemed to offer was very attractive for many other continents. The idea of individualism was of great interest for a society such as India or Nigeria long saddled with the caste and feudal orders. It was a potential mode of escape from other kinds of oppressions. The idea of equality, particularly legal equality, was a great European invention. Finally, reason, which helped organising knowledge in a certain systematic way, was found profoundly desirable by societies which had thought of knowledge as rooted in divine inspiration alone. Quite naturally, these four ideas that Europe was developing during the colonial times attracted the rest of the world. Leaving aside momentarily the utter cruelty and brutality that Europeans displayed in exterminating the indigenous, these four ideas appear to have complemented something missing in the indigenous cultures previously.

However, one may say in hind-sight that the contact with these ideas resulted in a greater loss than gain for the indigenous communities. Again, I shall place before you the spectrum of loss with a four-fold division: one was the loss of the traditional cultural memory; the second was that they lost their ability to love, affinity, affection, their ability to relate to their community and the rest of the world; the third loss was that they had a severely diminished self-image and self-esteem. These communities started thinking of themselves as inherently inferior, necessarily lagging behind and essentially

underdeveloped; and that discourse has continued on both sides, bolstered by the arrogance of Europe and deepened by the timidity of the rest of the world in thinking that the indigenous were always lagging behind and that they belong to the past of some kind and not to the present. That was a great loss affected by the colonial impact. The loss of cultural memory, the loss of self-esteem, the loss of ability to relate to nature and society, and the pervasive domination of the twin gods brought in by the Europe—reason and individualism—resulted in such a great loss for the indigenous that they started losing their languages altogether.

On the part of Europeans who colonised, the four great ideas that looked great in the beginning of their purported 'civilising mission' also seem to be clouded today. For example, the idea of freedom, which provided the French Revolution its rational, also brought with it within Europe an idea of 'nation'; and, for quite a while, the rest of the world thought that to have a nation is as good as having freedom. But in Europe, at the middle of the twentieth century, those countries which swore in the name of 'nation' and the other countries that were defending freedom had to engage into a Great War. So, the idea of freedom that the indigenous thought was coming to them together with the idea of nation is by now severely dented within Europe itself.

The idea of reason was great for organising knowledge Leibnitz had spelt it out or later when Augustus Comte had spelt it out in the context of social sciences. But the idea of reason actually slowly, invisibly, turned into a method of a bureaucratic management of the society and the human mind. Reason, therefore, instead of opening up vistas of knowledge, actually dragged down the mental and visionary horizons of humanity.

The idea of equality was probably the most brilliant that Europe produced. But it got split in two. One was equality of the individual's capacity; the other was equality that the state

must guarantee. And, after an experiment of about half a century, we now know that both ideas have collapsed. Initially, they looked like collapsing together when the wall of Berlin was pulled down, and we thought that an open world, a global world, a world for everybody would emerge. What has emerged is a forest of greed in which the human animal is left free to be hunted by the greediest.

While the great European ideas got defeated within Europe and outside, the loss of the indigenous could not be reversed and recovered simultaneously. The ideas that the indigenous had given up in order to embrace European modernity could not be recovered or easily re-accessed by them. In the process, the indigenous lost their languages – I'm not saying all indigenous languages – though one may witness in the coming decades such a grey scenario opening up. It appears that the trajectory of Memory in human evolution has now reached a stage where artificial memory is very aggressively interlacing with natural human memory. All of us are slaves of our mobile phones, of the memory chips – they remember for us, we no longer remember. And languages, as we know them, for the last 10,000 years are memory-based semantic structures.

I should elaborate a little bit on this point because so many of us from the indigenous communities or working with them are greatly concerned with the language question. Human languages that we know are of an approximately 70,000 years' lineage, in the human history that we know of which is of about 500,000 years. Of this long period, for the first 200,000 years the communication of homo-sapiens was carried out through movement, dance and gestures. For the next 200,000 years they 'spoke' with the help of tones, textures, and mono-syllabic short sounds, developing the physiological apparatus for speech, but not producing speech as yet. In that era, the tongue was not for speech nor was the teeth for speech; but the evolving homo-sapiens brought them to speak. It is for the last 70,000 years that we have been speaking sentences the way we do now. Of

these 70,000 years, approximately 40,000 years we spoke sentences only in the present tense. That which is beyond their sight or beyond their sensory perception was not within the capture and control of the human speech. It is only during the last 30,000 years that we started using language with a present tense structure and a past tense structure, and, as a reflection of the past tense, the future tense structure.

The language structured within a time-order is breaking down today. And that is why UNESCO-like organisations are worried that languages are dying at a much higher rate today than any time in the past. At a rough estimate, out of 7,000 living languages that are in existence today, probably in the next 30 years, approximately 4,000 will have gone. The remaining 3,000 languages will survive somehow, but not with all their limbs, their domains, intact. Many domains of many of the languages are dropping off. For instance, the domain of talking about pain and pleasure in most languages other than the 140 languages used for knowledge transaction is grossly non-operational. Talking about pain and pleasure in one's own language has become nearly impossible because no doctor in the world may understand the precise nature of your pain if you speak about it in your mother tongue.

Recent Neurological researches indicate that the human brain seems to have developed a reading fatigue and the Boca's lobe in the brain which analyses the world through sound is slowly handing over its work to the frontal cortex of the brain which analyses the world in images. Therefore, while one is speaking, the listeners may be more interested in image-based communication and not in words. 'Languages' which work primarily through visual image and are free from the constraints of space and time, are languages that humans are looking forward to because, it appears, rightly or wrongly, the humans are thinking of a multi-planetary existence. Between a given set of two planets, the human sense of time has no use, the human sense of space has no meaning, and, therefore, the human

brain appears to be preparing itself for entering into a new language zone which is made of visual images and is free of the time and space constraints. The emerging language is the language of digits since digits occupy neither real space nor real time.

The virtual is today treated as more real than the physical and all of us are labourers engaged in constructing such a world. Please look at yourselves at this very moment, see how many of you are actually handling the virtual machine and trying to force your entry into the virtual world, leaving behind the physical world. Humans are doing this all over the world as never before because we have come to the end of a language of one order and entering an era of a very different order language. At that threshold, all the labour of the last 65,000 years that the indigenous have contributed towards making of speech, and all the experience of the world that they have accumulated in their semantic systems, sadly, might be left behind if we did not return at this juncture to the indigenous again.

All over the world, two kinds of visions of the future are being presented. One is a vision in which the entire nature will be destroyed; all natural resources will be entirely plundered. This scary vision postulates that we will leave this Earth a charred planet and probably cause extinction of all living species. It is said that, in comparison to the extinction of natural species that happened the last time, during the great cold age from 18,000 to 12,000 years before our time, the rate of extinction today has gone up nearly by 4,000 times. That means, what took 4,000 years the last time for extinction shall require only one year for extinction in our time. This is one vision of the future that many of us are facing.

The second vision is that of an unlimited 'progress'. We all know that migrations all over the world have been energy driven; people try to move to habitats and areas that have a greater access to energy. It is thought – after a Russian astronaut defined access to energy as the most important parameter for

measuring development in 1967-68 – that it is probably possible to trap limitless energy for use on earth by creating an artificial shell around the earth. The idea is known as Dyson's Shell because Dyson was the mathematician who calculated the amount of energy that will become accessible to the humans if such cover were to be created. Probably, the business tenders for creating a Dyson's shell have already been floated in Canada. If at all it were to be constructed, it is believed that the access that humans will have to energy to travel anywhere, reduce work and produce all that we need ending all human misery. This is one vision presented by the merry men of the advent laboratories and the Wall Streets of the world.

Both visions are frightening. One is entirely plastic, and the other is entirely made in ash. One is a non-existent heaven, and the other is complete darkness. If one vision succeeds, instead of homo-sapiens we may become homo-dues – god-like figures. And if the other image unfortunately comes true, we will have to accept to become cyborgs, battling climate change with artificial chips planted in our brains.

Languages made us human. We are the youngest thinking species in the world. We need to think of the future of the planet; and we need to think about language as well, at this juncture more than ever before. That is where the question of the indigenous returns to us very forcefully, very positively, because we need to strike a 'reset' equation of sensibility with nature and environment. We need a new sensibility of looking at other species and learn to think of us as one among them. We must learn to think that we belong to the earth – the earth does not belong to us. Besides, in the forest of greed where we are let loose, we have nearly become all-consuming animals. We need to learn once again to be like humans in the past, like the indigenous and in possession of the virtue of a self-limiting desire. The 'masculinity' that access to technology, control of armament and use of reason have imbibed in us needs to be challenged with femininity that the indigenous cultivated when

they knew how to bow down to gods, humans, animals and plants on equal footing.

Industrialisation destroyed innocence in this world. Sigmund Freud was only a full-stop put to that historical sentence. We must set out in a renewed search of innocence, wherever it is. Probably, it is the innocence of the indigenous; and one is not thinking of Russo's indigenous – Russo's primitive. I am thinking of that indigenous person who, in a community, is willing to break one's bread and share it equally with other members of the community. In the last four centuries years, all of us – the communities that are non-European – have imbibed internalised, accepted and assimilated many of the values in the hope of those rosy ideas that Enlightenment put before us, and, in the process have, even if born as indigenous, lost the capacity to remain indigenous. On the other hand, even if they are born in Europe, there have been thinkers who have been 'indigenous' at heart — I'm thinking of William Blake. W. B. Yates. One need not be born indigenous in order to be one. One can become indigenous by accepting a way of thinking, visioning and coping with life and reality.

The question of the indigenous today therefore, must be placed not only in ethnographic terms, but in philosophical terms and in the context of the development paradigm. It is the indigenous who will probably help the world in surviving as humans. Many courageous things will have to be done for this. But there is another thing that I wish to mention here. In India, I documented with a large team of about 3000 volunteers about 780 living languages; and, after completing the task, I decided to collect words for peace, love and relationships from those languages. To my surprise, in every language I was able to find many such words still in active use. Can we not say to the world that, 'look, we have thousands of ways of loving, relating, establishing peace'? That will be something, a book of peace, love and relation to be produced by PEN.

My last three thoughts

I do not know if my consciousness is a kind of delusion from which I suffer.

I do not know if the external reality of what Immanuel Kant called the 'phenomenal world' is only a dream that I am dreaming. Whether it is there or not, whether it exists or not.

I know one thing for sure: the only bridge between my consciousness and the world that is out there is language. The word.

The 7,000 languages that are still out there in the world are 7,000 bridges between the human consciousness and the rest of the world, and almost all of those are about to sink as if a huge continent were about to be submerged in an eternal amnesia. These 'bridges' were constructed by the mental labour of indigenous over the last 70,000 years. Most of the scripts are initially born in the mental labour of the indigenous. We have only imposed on those scripts mechanical type-faces fonts.

Let us recover all those bridges by bowing down to the indigenous, by asking for their forgiveness, and by saying to them, 'look, we are here to learn. We were an arrogant world; we want to be human again. Please accept us with open arms.'

I am sure that they will accept all people of the world with the forgiveness of the Buddha, Christ, Gandhi and Tolstoy.

5

वन से हम जब लौटे थे

अन्जु

वन से हम जब लौट आए थे
 शहर में बिजली बतियों जलने लगे थे
 अंधेरे में तिम-तिमिती रोशनी
 रहस्य की जाल बुन रहे थे

कमर से छाती तक पहुंचती देखना जैसी
 रात करवत बदलते लगे थे

जितना हम शहर में घुसे जा रहे थे
 उतना ही पीछे छोड़कर आए थे हारियाली
 उतना ही बढ़ते भीड़-भाड़
 वाहनो की हॉर्न कोलाहल में

उड़ता हुआ धूल जैसा
 हर कोई इतना व्यस्त क्यों
 शहर की आवली छाती जैसे
 विश्राम के पलभर की फुरशत ही नहीं

तब भी
 हारियाली चिपकी हुई थी सासों में
 तब भी
 वन बसी हुई थी आखों में

शहर की भीड़ सड़क पर उतारते ही
मन अचानक मुझाने लगा था
कमल की तरह

तासरी लैन पर जब मैं घर पहुँची
तब मेरे संग एक भी पेड़ न आया था
ठीकाना तो यहीं था जहाँ होना चाहिए
लेकिन वन नहीं था वहाँ
जहाँ मैंने चाहा था

हैरान हूँ मैं
शहर की सारी उड़ती धूल
कैसे समा जाती हैं मेरे ही छाती में

*दखना : छ बर महिला की जातिय पोसाक

*स्वयं कवयित्री द्वारा अनुदित

6

Diverse Bodo Accords : Their Roles, Contributions, and Impact on Bodoland

Dr. Kamal Bodosa

“The Bodo Accords have not only been instrumental in resolving the Bodo conflicts but have also paved the way for building a prosperous, inclusive, and harmonious Bodoland.”

Abstract :

The history of Bodoland in the northeastern region of India is marked by a series of negotiated agreements known as the “Bodo Accords.” These accords, signed at different points of time, have played a pivotal role in shaping the socio-political landscape of Bodoland. “Diverse Bodo Accords: Their Roles, Contributions, and Impact on Bodoland” delves into the multifaceted journey of these agreements and their enduring impact.

This article offers an in-depth examination of the various Bodo Accords, starting with the early agreements of the 1993 and culminating with the most recent accord of 2020. It explores their roles in addressing the long-standing demands of the Bodo community, which include political autonomy, socio-economic development, and the preservation of their cultural identity.

Each accord is dissected to unravel its unique contributions to the region’s transformation. While the earlier accords provided initial impetus to the Bodo movement, subsequent agreements sought to address shortcomings and

expand the scope of autonomy and development, culminating in the comprehensive Bodo Accord of 2020.

The article also meticulously assesses the enduring impact of these accords. The journey from insurgency to peace, political stability, and economic development is traced, and the vital role of these agreements in achieving these milestones is highlighted. Furthermore, the inclusive approach to governance and development, which aims to bring harmony among the diverse communities of Bodoland, is examined.

“Diverse Bodo Accords” is a comprehensive exploration of the intricate process of negotiation, compromise, and growth. It reveals that these accords have not only been instrumental in resolving the Bodo conflict but have also paved the way for building a prosperous, inclusive, and harmonious Bodoland under sixth schedule provision of the constitution of India.

Keywords : Bodo accords; autonomy; inclusive governance; comprehensive and final solution.

I. Diverse Bodo Accords

The specifics of each Bodo Accord were related on the historical and contextual factors surrounding its negotiation and signing. Each of these accords has played a role in shaping the political and socio-economic landscape in the Bodoland region.

The term “Bodo Accords” may refer to different agreements and accords that have been signed over the years such as for the first time the *Bodoland Autonomous Council* (BAC Accord, 1993), signed with the leaders of All Bodo Students Union (ABSU), Bodo People’s Action Committee (BPAC) and between both the Government of India and the Government Assam to bring about an amicable solution to the problems of the Bodos and other Plains Tribals living in the north bank of river Brahmaputra within the state of Assam.

However, the Bodo leaders rejected the *Bodoland Autonomous Council (BAC) Accord* of 20th February 1993 primarily because they felt that the accord did not adequately address their demands for political autonomy, socio-economic development, and protection of Bodo identity and the hopes and aspirations of the Bodos as they desired. They perceived the accord as falling short of their expectations and believed that the proposed autonomous council did not provide sufficient powers and lacks constitutional provisions to safeguards for the Bodo community's interests. The rejection eventually led to another Bodo movement for a separate state of Bodoland led by Bodo Liberation Tiger (BLT) since March 2000 and continued negotiations resulting the signing of subsequent 2nd Bodo Accord on 10th February 2003 (*Bodoland Territorial Area Districts (BTAD)*) as agreed to create an autonomous self-governing body to be known as *Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC)* for the Bodos and other tribals under the sixth schedule provisions of the Constitution of India.

"The effectiveness of the BTR Accord as a comprehensive and final solution will be determined by the successful implementation of its provisions and ongoing efforts to address challenges and promote sustainable development in the Bodoland region, as agreed upon by the Memorandum of Settlement (MoS)."

Moreover, the ABSU (All Bodo Students' Union) and its associated organisations as well as various factions of NDFB (*National Democratic Front of Boroland*), and UBPO (*United Bodo People's Organization*) continued with the demand for separate Bodoland statehood to advocate for the more political and socio-economic rights of the Bodo community. They sought greater autonomy, to ensure accelerated development, and the protection of socio-cultural, linguistic, and ethnic identities of Bodos as per the provisions of the Indian Constitution. The movement aimed to address historical grievances, including legislative safeguards for land rights, issues relating to Bodos residing outside BTAD and representation, leading to negotiations for a

comprehensive and final solution to their demands with the Indian government and finally, the 3rd Bodo Accord of 27th January 2020 was signed between various Bodo groups (*ABSU*,

"The effectiveness of the BTR Accord as a comprehensive and final solution will be determined by the successful implementation of its provisions and ongoing efforts to address challenges and promote sustainable development in the Bodoland region, as agreed upon by the Memorandum of Settlement (MoS)."

NDFB and UBPO), Government of Assam, and the Indian Government while keeping intact the territorial integrity of the state of Assam. Accordingly, by renaming the existing BTAD, the *Bodoland Territorial Region* (BTR) was created to augment its area, powers and streamline functioning of the existing BTC and to address issues relating to Bodos residing outside BTR, creating the *Bodo-Kochari Welfare Autonomous Council* (BKWAC) in the lines of other existing Autonomous Councils for Plain Tribes of Assam which aimed to address the concerns of the all-round development of the Bodo people more comprehensively.

The term "*comprehensive and final solution*" in the context of the BTR Accord suggests that the agreement aims to provide a thorough and conclusive resolution to the issues that have historically led to conflict and unrest in the Bodoland region. Here are some reasons why the BTR accord is referred to as comprehensive and final solution:

1. **Addresses Core Issues:** The BTR accord is designed to address comprehensively the core issues demanded by the different Bodo movement groups (*ABSU* and its allied organisations, various factions of *NDFB* and *UBPO*) that have been at the root of the Bodo conflict in terms of their nature of demands, including demands for autonomy, socio-economic development, and recognition of the Bodo

identity. By comprehensively addressing core issues of the different Bodo movement groups, the accord seeks to provide a fundamental solution on it.

2. **Autonomy and Governance Structure:** The accords led to the establishment of the Bodoland Autonomous Council (BAC), Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC), and then Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) providing a significant degree of autonomy to the Bodo and other tribal people in the administration of their region. This governance structure is considered comprehensive in terms of self-governance.
3. **Inclusivity:** The accord emphasizes inclusivity by recognizing and including non-Bodo communities in the governance structure of the BTR. This inclusivity is intended to promote harmony and unity among the diverse ethnic groups in the region.
4. **Economic Development Package:** A comprehensive development package is outlined in the accord, covering various aspects such as infrastructure development, educational initiatives, healthcare facilities, and other socio-economic projects. This economic development package is designed to address the socio-economic disparities that have contributed to the conflict.
5. **Disarmament and Rehabilitation:** The accords include provisions for the disarmament and rehabilitation of Bodo militants, contributing to the overall demilitarization of the region and fostering a more peaceful environment and solution became a role model to other militancy groups of Assam.
6. **Resolution of Grievances:** The accords aim to resolve long-standing grievances related to land rights, displacement, and economic disparities. By addressing these grievances, the accords seek to eliminate some of the root causes of the conflict not only of Bodos but also of other non-Bodo communities living in Bodoland.

7. **Government Commitment:** The use of the term “final solution” also indicates a commitment from the government to implement the accord in its entirety, with the expectation that the outlined measures will lead to a lasting resolution of the issues. If, however, there remain clauses of the accord unimplemented within a specified time frame, there may again be a possibility of issues arising in the days to come, potentially leading to a turbulent political and social atmosphere in the region.

It's important to note that the effectiveness of the BTR Accord as a comprehensive and final solution will be determined by the successful implementation of its provisions and ongoing efforts to address challenges and promote sustainable development in the Bodoland region, as agreed upon by the Memorandum of Settlement (MoS).

I. Why for Multiple Bodo Accords

The primary reasons for multiple accords can be attributed to the evolving nature of negotiations, changing demands, and the complex socio-political landscape. Here are some key reasons:

1. **Evolving Demands and Aspirations:** The demands and aspirations of the Bodo community may have evolved over time. Different accords might reflect different stages in the negotiation process, each addressing specific issues or demands that were relevant at the time of negotiation.
2. **Changing Political and Social Context:** The political and social context in which negotiations took place can change over the years. New leadership shifts in government policies and changing regional dynamics can influence the terms and conditions of agreements.
3. **Multiple Bodo Groups:** The Bodo community is not monolithic, and historically, there have been different factions and groups representing the Bodos interests. Different accords in different time periods might be the result of negotiations with different Bodo groups, each with its own set of concerns and priorities.

4. **Peacebuilding Process:** Negotiating peace and resolving conflicts is often a gradual and complex process. It may involve multiple rounds of discussions and agreements to address various dimensions of the conflict, such as political autonomy, socio-economic development, ethnic and cultural identity, and preservation.
5. **Learning from Past Agreements:** In cases of Bodo Accords, subsequent accords might have been signed to build upon or modify earlier agreements. If certain provisions of a previous accords were not fully implemented (e.g., BAC Accord) or if new issues arose, additional agreements might be negotiated to address those concerns.
6. **Dynamic Nature of Conflicts:** Conflicts related to the demand for a separate state of Bodoland or Bodo issues are dynamic, and the factors contributing to them change over time. New challenges or opportunities may emerge, necessitating new negotiations and agreements to adapt to the evolving situation.
7. **Incremental Approach to Solutions:** - Achieving a comprehensive and final solution to a complex conflict may require an incremental approach. Different accords may represent steps toward a larger, long-term resolution, with each accord addressing specific aspects of the overall issue.

These are some of the main reasons for having more than one accord to address the burning Bodo issues.

II. Contributions of Bodo Accords in Bodoland

The Bodo Accords have contributed to political stability in Bodoland through several key mechanisms:

1. **Autonomous Administrative Structure:** The accords led to the establishment of the Bodoland Autonomous Council (BAC), Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) and the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR). The BTC has been

granted certain legislative, executive, and financial powers, providing a degree of autonomy to the Bodo and other tribal people in the administration of their region under the provisions of the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. This autonomy helps in addressing local issues and concerns through a decentralized governance structure. Moreover, the BTR accord has further enhanced autonomy by expanding the area, powers, and representation under the same constitutional provisions of India. The creation of the Boro-Kochari Welfare Council (BKWC) for the focused development of Bodo villages outside the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR), following the model of existing councils for the plain's tribes of Assam, is a remarkable achievement of the BTR Accord. The provision to take effective measures to confer land rights under the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, upon tribals living in forest areas outside the erstwhile BTAD, in accordance with the prescribed procedure under the Act, is another milestone of the BTR Accord for the downtrodden Bodo and other tribals living in the BTR and outside the BTR.

2. **End of Insurgency:** A major factor contributing to political stability is the resolution of the Bodo insurgency. The BTR accord marked the end of a protracted conflict, which had been a source of instability and violence in the region for several decades. The disarmament and rehabilitation of Bodo militants have played a crucial role in maintaining peace.
3. **Inclusive Approach:** The BTR accord adopts an inclusive approach by recognizing the multi-ethnic nature of Bodoland. It emphasizes the representation of not only the Bodo community but also non-Bodo communities in the governance structure. This inclusivity helps in

fostering a sense of belonging and cooperation among diverse groups, reducing the potential for conflict.

4. **Resolution of Grievances:** By addressing long-standing issues related to land rights, displacement, and economic disparities, the accord has addressed some of the root causes of grievances that fuelled the insurgency. The resolution of these issues contributes to a more stable political environment.
5. **Security Measures:** The accord includes provisions for enhanced security measures in the region. A secure environment is crucial for political stability, and measures to ensure the safety of residents contribute to the overall stability of Bodoland.
6. **Development Initiatives:** The accord outlines a comprehensive development package for the Bodoland Territorial Region, encompassing infrastructure development, educational initiatives, healthcare facilities, and other socio-economic projects. Economic development can contribute to stability by addressing issues of unemployment and poverty.
7. **International Recognition and Support:** The resolution of the Bodo conflict and the signing of the accords have received recognition and support at the national and international levels. This external support and acknowledgment contribute to the legitimacy of the accord, bolstering its potential for stability.
8. **Political Representation:** With the establishment of the BTC, the Bodo people have gained a more direct role in shaping their political destiny. Political representation allows for the peaceful expression of the community's aspirations and concerns within the established legal and political framework. Provision for increasing the council representative from 40 to maximum of 60 seats through BTR accord will be gained for better representations and administration for the region.

While the Bodo Accords have set the stage for political stability, ongoing efforts in the implementation of its provisions, effective governance, and addressing socio-economic challenges will be crucial in maintaining and consolidating this stability over the long term.

III. Role of Bodo Accords in fostering socio-economic development in Bodoland

The Bodo Accords, signed in February 1993, particularly in February 2003 and January 2020, plays a pivotal role in fostering socio-economic development in Bodoland. Here's a detailed exploration of how the accord contributes to the region's socio-economic advancement. The role of the Bodo Accords may be outlined in following briefly in the following points:

1. **Infrastructure Development:** The accord outlines a comprehensive development package for the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR), including significant investments in infrastructure. This encompasses the construction of roads, bridges, schools, colleges, university, healthcare facilities, and other essential infrastructure projects. Improved infrastructure is fundamental for economic growth as it facilitates transportation, trade, and accessibility to basic services.
2. **Educational Initiatives:** A crucial aspect of the socio-economic development plan under the Bodo Accord is the focus on education. The accord allocates resources for the establishment of schools, colleges, institute of technology, vocational training centres and other educational institutions in the region. Access to quality education enhances human capital, creating a skilled workforce necessary for economic development.
3. **Healthcare Facilities:** The accord addresses healthcare disparities by allocating resources for the establishment medical colleges and improvement of healthcare facilities

in Bodoland. Better healthcare infrastructure contributes not only to improved public health but also to increased productivity and a better quality of life for residents.

4. **Employment Opportunities:** Economic development is closely tied to job creation. The Bodo Accord includes provisions for initiatives that aim to boost various sectors of the economy, such as agriculture, tourism, and small-scale industries. The creation of employment opportunities is crucial for reducing unemployment and poverty, contributing to overall socio-economic development.
5. **Agricultural Development:** The accord recognizes the importance of agriculture and allied activities in the region and includes measures to promote agricultural development. This involves support for farmers through modernization, irrigation facilities, and the introduction of advanced farming techniques. Strengthening the agricultural sector contributes to food security and income generation for the local population.
6. **Tourism Promotion:** Bodoland, with its rich cultural heritage and natural beauty, has the potential to become a tourist destination. The accord includes provisions for the promotion of tourism, which can stimulate economic growth by attracting visitors and creating opportunities for businesses in the hospitality and service industries.
7. **Skill Development and Entrepreneurship:** The accord emphasizes skill development initiatives to enhance the capabilities of the local workforce. This includes vocational and professional training programs and support for entrepreneurship. A skilled and entrepreneurial population is better positioned to contribute to economic development and innovation.
8. **Inclusive Growth:** An essential feature of the accord is its commitment to inclusive growth. It recognizes the multi-ethnic nature of Bodoland and ensures the

participation of non-Bodo communities in the development process. This inclusivity is crucial for social harmony and the overall well-being of the diverse population.

9. **Natural Resource Management:** The accord addresses environmental and natural resource management, promoting sustainable development practices. This includes measures to conserve the rich biodiversity of the region while supporting responsible resource utilization for economic gain.
10. **Financial Support and Investments:** The accord involves financial commitments and investments from the government to fund various development projects. Adequate financial support is a key driver for the successful implementation of socio-economic initiatives outlined in the accord. Some of the schemes launched by the present BTR Government, such as 'OnsaiBithangkhi,' 'GiyanswrangBithangkhi,' 'Bodoland Super 50,' 'Bodoland Pig Mission,' and 'Bwiswmuthi,' are worth mentioning.

In summary, the Bodo Accords' focus on infrastructure, education, healthcare, employment, agriculture, tourism, skill development, inclusivity, and sustainable practices collectively contributes to a holistic framework for socio-economic development in Bodoland. However, the successful implementation of these measures is essential for realizing the full potential of the accord in uplifting the standard of living and fostering prosperity in the region.

IV. The impact of the Bodo Accords on Bodoland

The impact of the Bodo Accords on Bodoland has been significant across various dimensions, ranging from socio-political dynamics to economic development and cultural preservation. Here are key aspects of its impact:

1. **Political Stability:** The Bodo Accord, signed in January 2020, aimed to bring an end to the decades-long Bodo

insurgency in Assam. One of its primary impacts has been the establishment of political stability in the Bodoland region.

2. **Socio-Economic Development:** The accord outlined provisions for a comprehensive development package for the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR). This includes infrastructure development, educational initiatives, healthcare facilities, and other socio-economic projects.
3. **Representation and Governance:** The accord paved the way for the creation of the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) and separate co-terminus administrative districts and sub-divisions and other more departments, granting a considerable degree of autonomy to the BTR. This has allowed for better representation of the Bodo and other tribal people in the governance of their region.
4. **Cultural Preservation:** Efforts to preserve and promote Bodo language, culture, and heritage have been incorporated into the accord. This is crucial for maintaining the unique identity of the Bodo community in the face of cultural assimilation.
5. **Inclusion of Non-Bodo Communities:** The accord emphasized the inclusion of non-Bodo communities within the BTR. This move was aimed at fostering harmony and unity among the diverse ethnic groups residing in the region.
6. **Security and Law Enforcement:** The accord included provisions for enhanced security measures in the region to ensure the safety of residents. The aim is to create an environment conducive to economic development and social well-being.
7. **Economic Opportunities:** With the focus on development, the Bodo Accords are expected to create economic opportunities in the region. This includes initiatives to boost education, agriculture, health, tourism,

games and sports and other sectors, leading to job creation and improved livelihoods.

“The Bodo Accords mark a significant step forward; the full realization of its impact will depend on the effective implementation of its provisions and ongoing efforts to address challenges and promote sustainable development in Bodoland.”

8. **Land Rights and Rehabilitation:** The accord addressed long-standing issues related to land rights, displacement, and rehabilitation. It sought to provide a fair resolution to land-related disputes and address the grievances of those affected by the conflict.
9. **Peace and Reconciliation:** By addressing the root causes of the conflict and providing a framework for peace, the BTR Accord contributes to the broader goal of reconciliation among different communities in the region.
10. **International Implications:** The resolution of the Bodo conflict has implications not only at the national level but also in the context of India's relations with neighbouring countries. Stability in Bodoland can contribute to regional peace and cooperation.

It is important to note that while the Bodo Accords mark a significant step forward, the full realization of its impact will depend on the effective implementation of its provisions and ongoing efforts to address challenges and promote sustainable development in Bodoland.

Notes

1. Memorandum of Settlement with ABSU, NDFB and UBPO, New Delhi, 27th January, 2022.
2. Memorandum of Settlement with BLT, New Delhi, 10th February, 2003.
3. Memorandum of Settlement with ABSU-BPAC, New Delhi, 20th February, 1993.

7

Bodoland - The Journey of Change

Wasbir Hussain

I plunged headlong into the topsy-turvy world of journalism almost four decades ago—in 1984 to be precise. The anti-foreigner movement, popularly called the Assam Agitation, was on its negotiation mode, and soon, the historic Assam Accord was signed, a year later in 1985.

Not long after this feat, when most people across Assam thought peace had finally dawned in the State, a 9,000 square kilometre area, in northern and western Assam, erupted in turmoil. This is the area—located along the foothills of neighbouring Bhutan and the adjoining state of Arunachal Pradesh—where Assam's largest plains tribal community, the Bodos, live.

Initially, this uprising was spearheaded by the All Bodo Students' Union or ABSU and its demand was a separate homeland for the community. The iconic ABSU leader Upendra Nath Brahma was at the forefront, leading this peaceful agitation that caught the imagination of the masses in the Bodo heartland.

As a young reporter, I remember walking in the rural Bodo countryside with Upendra Nath Brahma and his close associates, covering the mass movement for newspapers like *The Telegraph*. Chants of *Jwi Boro Harini* or glory to the Bodo community, would rent the air as soon as Upendra Nath Brahma, who was becoming a mass leader, arrived at a village or a town. The media spotlight was on this movement by a million people (the estimated Bodo population then) who were dreaming of a homeland for themselves, outside of Assam, but within the Indian Union.

Around this time, radical organisations like the Bodo Liberation Tigers (BLT) and the National Democratic Front of Boroland (NDFB) were formed. They decided to take the path of an armed insurrection to achieve their goal, that of a separate Bodo homeland. While the BLT wanted a separate Bodo state within India, the NDFB wanted to secede and form a sovereign Bodo nation. The Bodo heartland was plunged into chaos. There was bloodbath, attempts at ethnic cleansing of Adivasis and other non-Bodos, and even fratricidal inter-group clashes. Hundreds of people were killed, including innocent unarmed civilians who died in road-side bombings that were frequent then. On 1 May 1990, Upendra Nath Brahma breathed his last after struggling for sometime with an ailment. A pall of gloom had descended across Assam, the Bodo heartland in particular.

New Delhi took note of the disturbed situation in the Bodo areas and decided to negotiate. In 1993, the Centre constituted the Bodoland Autonomous Council (BAC) following an agreement between the Government of India, ABSU and the Bodo Peoples' Action Committee (BPAC). The 1993 Accord was a non-starter because the boundary of the BAC was not demarcated and a vague provision was included saying any village with a 50 per cent or more tribal population would come to be included in the BAC.

The BLT was wreaking havoc and was held responsible for the 1996 bombing of a packed express train that killed more than 35 people. The authorities unleashed the police, paramilitary and the Army, but the BLT cadres were more familiar with the terrain they were operating in. The Government had to take the other option to quell the violence and restore law and order—the option of talking peace. In 2003, a new agreement was signed. This tripartite agreement was between the Centre, the Assam Government and the Bodo Liberation Tigers. The BLT was disbanded and its leader

Hagrama Mahilary was made the interim Chief of the newly created Bodoland Territorial Council or BTC that covered four districts—Kokrajhar, Chirang, Udalguri and Baksa. Mahilary and his erstwhile BLT colleagues, besides others who supported them, formed a political party, the Bodoland People's Front. The BPF ruled the Bodo Council for 17 years at a stretch and had been an ally of the Congress initially and the BJP later before ties turned sour in 2020 and the BPF-BJP alliance snapped.

The BLT may have given up their guns but its rivals, like the men in the NDFB were not willing to end their armed struggle for separation from the country. In 2005, the NDFB agreed to sign a ceasefire with the Centre and the Assam Government. On 30 October 2008, the NDFB triggered never-before-seen serial blasts across parts of Assam, including in Guwahati, killing 88 people and injuring hundreds. Assam was in shock. But soon thereafter, the NDFB split and the breakaway faction, called the NDFB (Songbijit faction) started unleashing terror in the area.

The Bodo heartland was rocked by violence again and this time the erstwhile BLT leaders who were running the Bodo Council had to deal with the situation. The NDFB (S) went on a rampage from 2012 onwards, killing hundreds of people, including targeted attacks at certain communities. Everybody knew that if peace was to return to the Bodo heartland, the NDFB has to enter into negotiations and give up violence.

On 27 January 2020, the third Bodo Accord was signed in New Delhi. The deal this time was signed by all four factions of the NDFB, the All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU), the United Bodo People's Organisation (UBPO), a civil society body, besides the Central and Assam governments. Assam CM Sarbananda Sonowal, state finance minister and BJP top gun Himanta Biswa Sarma, and then Bodo Council chief Hagrama Mahilary signed as witnesses. Insurgency had officially ended in Assam's Bodo heartland with that Accord with around 1500 armed insurgent

cadres belonging to these NDFB factions coming overground a few days later.

The Start of the Transformation

A significant development after this latest Bodo Accord was the resignation of Pramod Boro as the president of the influential ABSU. Boro had assumed charge of the ABSU as its president in 2009 and held that position till his resignation in February 2020. A dynamic leader, Pramod Boro raised the pitch for a separate Bodoland state soon after the Centre created the state of Telengana in 2014. Thereafter, he was in the reckoning as a leader who has the potential to further the interest of the Bodo people or the people who live in the Bodo heartland. Pramod Boro joined the United People's Party Liberal (UPPL) and soon came to head the party that was not too active till then. At the elections to the BTC later in 2020, the UPPL, that had by then entered into an alliance with the ruling BJP in Assam, emerged victorious and Pramod Boro was elected Chief Executive Member (CEM).

The transformation in the Bodo heartland today is visible. I recently read an interesting news feature that talked about the change that has come in a remote village in Kokrajhar district—from villagers wielding or having to deal with handguns to now weaving dreams on their handlooms. We are talking of Moinaguri, a village of 66 families on the border with Bhutan, nearly 50 km from Gossaigaon. This village had witnessed insurgent violence, like several other villages and towns in the Bodo dominated districts, but today their source of livelihood has become their handlooms and the textiles they weave and then sell.

Today, when I visit places like Kokrajhar or Chirang, I can feel the change. The narrative has changed from violence, law and order and security to development, peace and progress. I was talking to CEM Pramod Boro about his administration's development initiatives for BTR when he told me about the new

programme—the CEM's Super 50. In August 2022, Pramod Boro launched this initiative that aims at providing free coaching for UPSC (IAS, IFS and IPS) aspirants from the BTR. "Our objective is to collaborate with top-notch coaching institutes in the country and prepare our willing boys and girls to compete at the national level and clear UPSC examinations. We hardly have any IAS or IPS officers from our districts," Boro said of his plan.

Sports is a great leveller. In August 2023, Kokrajhar was among the places that hosted The Durand Cup football matches, steered by the Indian Army. This was the first time Kokrajhar had been a venue of such a big football tournament. The message was clear—Assam's Bodo heartland can be engaged in meaningful activities and cleanse its image of having been an insurgency hotspot. Pramod Boro was quoted as saying in a feature 'football is proving to be a transformative endeavour against social challenges in the region'. Boro feels the Bodo heartland had gone through really challenging times and had been witness to insurgency and communal strife and that now the area needs only good things and good news. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh who inaugurated the Durand Cup's Kokrajhar leg talked of how big an achievement it was for Kokrajhar to be hosting this tournament which was possible because of the peaceful atmosphere that was prevailing.

BTR under CEM Pramod Boro is clearly working to a plan to transform the image of the Bodo heartland, to change the focus of its youth and to alter the priorities of the administration itself from being arms of the government which used to look at everything from a security point of view to one that looks at issues from the point of view of the people or the masses.

In February 2023, the BTR supported Bodoland University in organising the area's first ever Bodoland International Knowledge Festival. "We want to move forward.

We want to leave behind all the negativity and adopt a positive approach to life. BTR was known for violence and insurgency. But with events like this and with the participation of all, we want to make BTR a hub of intelligence, education and opportunity. I hope we will be able to transform Bodoland from terrorism to tourism,” Pramod Boro was quoted as saying in a media report.

The five districts of Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa, Tamulpur and Udalguri that comprise the BTR is actually a diverse area demographically. The Bodos are obviously the largest single community, but there are Adivasis, Muslims of migrant origin, Bengalis who are natives to the area, Assamese and a sprinkling of other ethnicities. This transformation of the area from a hotbed of insurgency to an area of peace will remain that way and consolidate only where communal amity prevails. This, I believe, will be CEM Pramod Boro and his team’s topmost priority that will help them complete the transformation of the Bodo region into an oasis of peace, prosperity and development.

8

Fostering a Long-Term Change

Dr. Madhulika Jonathan

UNICEF India's strategies and initiatives in the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) attune with the principles of social unity and an inclusive sense of solidarity – towards the creation of a more just, peaceful, and thriving society. At the core of this approach lies the aspiration to nurture connections among diverse groups and organisations, foster inclusivity and cultivating a shared understanding based on principles and values that uphold the well-being of children and their communities.

While the social cohesion approach promotes overall societal harmony, it also plays a crucial role in the advancement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These goals encompass crucial objectives such as the eradication of poverty, the provision of quality education, the promotion of gender equality, and the reduction of inequalities, with a particular focus on addressing the needs of children and women and creating an environment that provides equal opportunities for all.

UNICEF recognises the importance of assessing and addressing issues at the grassroots level, where people navigate their daily existence. Therefore, our programmes employ a methodology that is community-led, people-centred, and place-based. For instance, through the promotion of community engagement, UNICEF integrates development and humanitarian objectives with governance goals, thereby ensuring a comprehensive approach to social development.

This is our first direct involvement with an Autonomous Council established under the Sixth Schedule of the Indian

Constitution. The insights and experiences gained from this endeavour have the potential to serve as a blueprint for scaling up similar initiatives across the Northeastern region's other 28 autonomous councils.

UNICEF's programme, which is particularly geared towards youth, focuses on investing resources and attention to empower adolescents and young people. This strategic approach aims to foster long-term solutions by strengthening their capacities and providing them with tools to address socioeconomic and governance issues.

The utilisation and reinforcement of sector-specific interventions in collaboration with the Bodoland Territorial Council, the newly formed Bodo Kachari Welfare Autonomous Council, academic institutions, civil society groups, district administration, elected representatives, media, law enforcement agencies, and judicial structures, have played a substantial role in improving the caliber of flagship programmes in the region.

The primary focus of UNICEF's technical support has been on the development of life skills, mental well-being, uninterrupted education, and effective parenting. To achieve these objectives, we have employed a range of strategies, including counselling, puppetry, folklore, and sports activities for the young population. The intervention on responsive parenting is contextualised to increase parental engagement in early childhood development. In addition, the collaborations with academic institutions, nearby universities, and community platforms have effectively facilitated the management of knowledge, generation of evidence, and initiatives aimed at promoting civic engagement, which is a prime mandate for the Government of India.

Empowering local social platforms, identifying social norms, and improving communication have yielded results. Positive social norms have promoted rights knowledge, inter-group relations, and a sense of belonging. Technical assistance,

social protection access, and service provider capacity building have improved planning, community ownership, and service quality. This has improved community well-being and the quality of life for all. Additionally, youth empowerment and mobilisation efforts have made progress that have given youth, education and job opportunities and encouraged their participation in decision-making.

In essence, the efforts undertaken by UNICEF in the Bodoland Territorial Region highlight a strong dedication to promoting sustainable development. By employing differentiated strategies, implementing localised frameworks, and fostering collaborative partnerships, UNICEF has made substantial contributions towards the restoration of trust, the improvement of relationships, and the mitigation of the consequences of conflict on women and children.

Moving forward, UNICEF's collaboration with the Bodoland Territorial Council will engage a wide range of community-based institutions, including traditional bodies and vibrant youth and adolescent groups. The idea is to bolster the capabilities of these community institutions, cultivating local champions and upskilling service providers over five years. This initiative, developed in collaboration with academic and government institutions, aims to strengthen the social fabric.

The emphasis on community ownership, involvement throughout all stages of programming, and collaborations with local institutions, has been key in attaining sustainable outcomes. As the collaboration progresses, it places significant importance on empowering young individuals, fostering social connections, and the potential for expanding its initiatives to other self-governing bodies in the Northeast region. This strategic approach positions the BTC- UNICEF collaboration as a symbol of lasting transformation, with the objective of not only addressing immediate needs but also stimulating sustainable socio-economic and governance solutions in the region.

9

Enhancing Socio Economic Development: Journey of Change in Bodoland Territorial Region

Shri Manoj Kumar Das

1. Introduction

This article focuses on the socio-economic development of the **Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR)**. This region, located in the northeast part of India, has faced various challenges in terms of development and progress. The aim of this article is to provide a comprehensive plan and strategy to uplift the socio-economic conditions of the people residing in the BTR in a nutshell.

Some basic statistics of BTR

Total Geographical area 8970 sq.km	Total Population (2011 Census) 31.51 lakhs	ST Population (2011 Census) 10.55 lakhs
SC Population 1.75lakhs	Net cropped area (In '000 ha) 390.95	Gross cropped area (In '000 ha) 653.08
Cropping intensity 167.05%	Total no. of farm families 5,05,793	Average land holding 0.8 hectare.

1.1 Background and Context

The Bodoland Territorial Region, also known as BTR, spans across five districts of Assam - Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa, Tamulpurand Udalguri. This region is home to diverse communities and has a rich cultural heritage. However, the BTR

has been plagued by several issues that have hindered its growth and development. These include the lack of proper infrastructure, limited access to education and healthcare facilities, high poverty levels, and inadequate employment opportunities.

1.2 Rationale for Focusing Bodoland Territorial Region

There are several reasons why the focus of this article is on the Bodoland Territorial Region. Firstly, the region has historically suffered from inadequate attention and resources from the successive governments in the state and the centre. Despite its cultural significance and natural resources, the BTR has remained marginalized in terms of development initiatives. By focusing on the BTR, we aim to address the existing disparities and ensure that the region receives the necessary attention and support it deserves.

Secondly, the BTR is a region with immense potential for growth and progress. It is blessed with International Borders, abundant natural resources, including fertile lands, forests, and rivers. By harnessing these resources sustainably and developing appropriate strategies, the BTR can become an economically prosperous and self-sufficient region. Moreover, the BTR's strategic location adjoining Bhutan, West Bengal, Bangladesh and the Northeastern states of India offers opportunities for cross-border trade and regional integration, making it an ideal region for focused development efforts.

1.3 Objectives : The objectives of the article is to elucidate on finding ways for the following:

- 1.3.1 To improve infrastructure and connectivity within the BTR, ensuring better road networks, transportation facilities, and access to basic amenities such as electricity and clean water.
- 1.3.2 To strengthen the education and healthcare systems in the region, ensuring quality education and healthcare facilities for the residents of the BTR.

- 1.3.3 To promote entrepreneurship and job creation by facilitating skill development programs, promoting investment opportunities, and supporting local industries and businesses.
- 1.3.4 To preserve and promote the cultural heritage of the region, recognizing its significance and ensuring the participation of local communities in the development process.

By focusing on these objectives, BTR should endeavour to bring about sustainable and inclusive development in the Region, improving the quality of life for its inhabitants and laying the foundation for a prosperous future.

2. The Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) is an autonomous region in the state of Assam created to address the demands of the Bodo community for self-governance and protection of their ethnic identity. In this note, we will explore the socio-economic overview of the BTR, focusing on its geographical and administrative context, population composition and distribution, and socio-economic indicators such as education, health, poverty, and employment.

2.1 Geographical and Administrative Context

The Bodoland Territorial Region is located in the western part of the state of Assam. It is bordered by Bhutan to the north and the state of West Bengal to the west. The region is predominantly rural, with a few urban centers such as Kokrajhar, Kajalgaon, Bijni, Musalpur, Tamulpur, and Udalguri.

The BTR is administered by the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC), which is a local autonomous body. The BTC has legislative, executive, and financial powers to govern the region. It is responsible for the development and welfare of the Bodo community, as well as other communities residing in the BTR.

2.2 Population Composition and Distribution

The BTR is home to a diverse population comprising various ethnic and linguistic groups. The Bodo community is

the major ethnic group in the region. Other significant communities include Bengalis, Assamese, Adivasis, and Nepalis.

The population distribution in the BTR is uneven, with high population density in certain areas and sparse population in others. Urban areas like Kokrajhar have a relatively higher population density compared to rural areas. The population has been growing steadily due to a high birth rate and influx of people from neighboring regions in search of employment and better livelihood opportunities.

2.3 Socio-Economic Indicators: Education, Health, Poverty, and Employment

Education : The literacy rate in the BTR is below the national average. The region faces challenges in terms of access to quality education, especially in remote rural areas. Efforts are being made to improve the education system by establishing more schools, colleges, and vocational training centres. Special emphasis is given on imparting education in the Bodo language to preserve the indigenous language and culture.

Health : The health infrastructure in the BTR is limited, particularly in rural areas. Access to healthcare services is a challenge for the population, especially those residing in remote areas. The region faces issues of inadequate healthcare facilities, shortage of medical staff, and lack of awareness about healthcare practices. Efforts are being made to expand healthcare facilities and improve health outcomes in the region. There is a Medical College in Kokrajhar.

Poverty : The BTR has a significant population living below the poverty line. Poverty is closely linked to factors such as lack of education, limited employment opportunities, and inadequate infrastructure. The region also faces issues of income inequality and uneven distribution of resources. Government initiatives are in place to reduce poverty and improve the living conditions of the marginalized communities.

Employment : The BTR is primarily an agrarian economy, with a significant portion of the population engaged in

agriculture and allied activities. However, the region faces challenges such as lack of irrigation facilities, limited access to credit, and outdated farming practices. Efforts are being made to promote sustainable agriculture, provide skill development opportunities, and attract investment in sectors such as tourism and handicrafts.

The Bodoland Territorial Region faces several socio-economic challenges, including inadequate education and health infrastructure, high poverty levels, and limited employment opportunities. The region is making efforts to overcome these challenges through various initiatives and policies aimed at improving education, healthcare, livelihoods, and overall development. The socio-economic development of the BTR is crucial for the well-being and prosperity of its diverse population

3. Key Challenges and Issues in Bodoland Territorial Region

3.1 Peace and Security :

One of the key challenges in the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) is maintaining peace and security. This region has a history of violence and conflicts due to ethnic tensions and demands for a separate state. In the past, the presence of various armed groups had added to the security concerns. Such conflicts not only disrupted the daily lives of the people but also hindered the overall development of the region. Relentless efforts by the people of Bodoland as well as the Government of India and Assam has made it possible to address the root causes of these conflicts and has helped establish a peaceful environment through dialogue and negotiation.

3.2 Infrastructure Deficit :

The BTR faces a significant infrastructure deficit, which hampers its overall development. The region lacked proper road connectivity, electricity supply, healthcare facilities, educational institutions, and other basic amenities. This deficit not only affected the quality of life of the people but also acted as a

deterrent for investment and economic growth. Addressing the infrastructure deficit is a priority for the government to promote development and improve the living conditions of the residents. And significant improvements have been made.

3.3 Lack of Industrialization and Economic Development:

The BTR faces a lack of industrialization and economic development. The region heavily relies on agriculture, which is largely subsistence-based. The absence of a strong industrial sector limits job opportunities and economic growth. This leads to a high rate of unemployment and outmigration, particularly among the youth. Efforts should be made to attract investment, promote industries, and diversify the economy. Developing sectors such as tourism, handicrafts, and agro-based industries can help create jobs and boost economic growth.

3.4 Land and Natural Resources Management:

The BTR is rich in natural resources, including fertile land, forests, rivers, rivulets, boulders, stones and sand and mineral resources. There is no such rich deposit of minerals discovered in BTC area.

However, the management of these resources poses a significant challenge. Many local communities depend on these resources for their livelihoods, but unsustainable exploitation and encroachment often lead to environmental degradation and conflicts. Effective land and natural resources management strategies should be put in place to balance economic development with environmental conservation and protect the rights of local communities. This can be achieved through sustainable land use practices, community participation in decision-making, and strict enforcement of regulations.

Overall, the Bodoland Territorial Region faces a range of challenges and issues that hinder its development and progress. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach, involving efforts to maintain peace and security, improve infrastructure, promote industrialization and economic

development, and ensure sustainable land and natural resources management. By overcoming these challenges, the BTR can unlock its full potential and improve the quality of life for its residents.

District	Overall Rank in NER SDG Index (2021-22)	Rank within State in NER SDG Index (2021-22)
Chirang	27	6
Udalguri	53	19
Kokrajhar	59	21
Baksa	62	22

4. Proposed Strategies for Socio-Economic Development

In Bodoland Territorial Region, there are several key challenges and issues that need to be addressed in order to ensure holistic development and progress. Some of these challenges are:

4.1 Strengthening Governance and Institutions:

One of the major challenges in Bodoland Territorial Region is the need for strengthening governance and institutions. This involves enhancing the capacity and effectiveness of the local government bodies, promoting transparency and accountability, and ensuring efficient service delivery to the citizens. There is a need to build strong and sustainable governance mechanisms that can effectively manage the resources and address the needs of the people.

4.2 Promoting Peace, Reconciliation and Social Inclusion:

The region has witnessed conflicts and tensions arising from various ethnic and communal groups. There is a pressing need for promoting peace, reconciliation, and social inclusion among the different groups residing in the region. This requires creating an environment of harmony and understanding, fostering dialogue and cooperation, and addressing the root

causes of conflicts. In addition, efforts should be made to ensure equal opportunities and representation for all communities, especially marginalized groups.

4.3 Improving Infrastructure :

There is a need to improve road networks, bridges, and transport facilities to enhance connectivity within and outside the region. The region also faces challenges in accessing reliable and affordable energy sources. Developing infrastructure for power generation and distribution can help in meeting the energy needs of the region. Furthermore, improving communication infrastructure, such as internet connectivity and telecommunication services, is crucial for facilitating economic growth, education, and access to information.

Addressing these challenges and issues is essential for the overall development of the Bodoland Territorial Region and to ensure a peaceful and inclusive society. It requires comprehensive planning, coordination, and collaboration among various stakeholders, including the government, local communities, civil society organizations, and development partners.

4.4 Encouraging Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development

Agriculture is a critical sector for socio-economic development, especially in rural areas. Governments should prioritize investments in sustainable agriculture practices, access to markets, storage facilities, and technology transfer to increase productivity and reduce poverty in rural communities. Promoting sustainable agriculture practices also contributes to food security, environmental conservation, and climate change adaptation.

Approach :

- i. Organising farmers through FPO, One Village One Product (OVOP) like Thailand initiative.
- ii. Organic Farming, Naturally Grown Food for Export

- iii. Large Scale production of Mushroom, Bamboo, Eri Sik, Mulberry Silk, Muga Silk, Small Tea Garden, Banana, Handloom, Plastic, Rubber, Horticulture (Dragon Fruit, Apple Plum, Papaya), Potato, Ethnic Rice, etc.
- iv. Integrated Pack House, Mandi, Primary Processing, Food Processing Units
- v. Medicinal Plants Cultivation
- vi. 'Khuti'- riverine livestock (Buffalo and Cow) rearing and enhancing productivity and value addition.
- vii. Multi Layer Farming, Integrated Fishery & Aquatic Farming (Makhna, Lotus, Water Chestnut, Water Spinach)

4.5 Promoting Industrialization and Employment Generation

Industrialization is essential for economic growth and employment generation. Governments should adopt policies and provide incentives to attract investments in both traditional and emerging sectors. This includes supporting small and medium-sized enterprises, promoting entrepreneurship, and improving access to finance and technology. Industrialization should also consider environmental sustainability and social inclusion to ensure inclusive growth.

- i. Setting up Bodoland Industrial Corridor
- ii. Get a big one: Ordinance Factory, Rail Coach Factory, Mint, Automobile Manufacturer as a catalyst for Industrialisation
- iii. Plastic, Rubber, Bamboo Park.
- iv. Setting up Entrepreneurship Development Institute,
- v. Tourism (Adventure, Eco, Nature, Wildlife, Agri etc)
- vi. Start Up Fund, Innovation **Centres, Seed Fund**

4.6 Enhancing Education and Skill Development

Investing in education and skill development is crucial for building human capital, fostering innovation, and reducing

poverty and inequality. Governments should prioritize quality education at all levels, improve vocational and technical training programs, and promote lifelong learning opportunities. This includes improving access to education, enhancing the quality of teaching and learning, and aligning education with labour market needs.

- i. Skill University, Skill Mission, Technology Demonstration Units, Skilling Centres
- ii. Skilled manpower Export to Japan, Canada, Australia, Middle East

4.7 Improving Healthcare and Access to Basic Services

Access to quality healthcare, clean water, sanitation, and other basic services is essential for human development. Governments should prioritize investments in healthcare infrastructure, healthcare workforce training, and preventive healthcare measures. Furthermore, efforts should be made to ensure universal access to basic services, including clean water and sanitation, electricity, and affordable housing.

4.8 Addressing Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability

Climate change poses significant challenges to socio-economic development. Governments should adopt policies and take actions to mitigate and adapt to climate change. This includes promoting renewable energy sources, sustainable land and water management practices, and low-carbon transportation systems. Additionally, efforts should be made to strengthen resilience to climate-related disasters and promote sustainable consumption and production patterns. Neighbouring Bhutan is a Carbon Negative Country. BTR can easily become First Net Zero Region in India by emulating Bhutan Model.

4.9 Promoting Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right but also a catalyst for socio economic development. Governments

should implement policies and programs that promote equal opportunities for women and girls in education, employment, and decision-making processes. This includes eradicating gender-based violence, providing equal access to resources and services, and promoting women's leadership in all sectors. Gender mainstreaming should be integrated into all development strategies to ensure the inclusion and empowerment of women and girls.

These proposed strategies for socio-economic development are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. They address key areas that are critical for achieving sustainable development and improving the quality of life for all individuals. Governments, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders should work together to implement these strategies and ensure inclusive and sustainable development.

5. Potential Stakeholders and Partnerships

5.1 Government Agencies and Ministries

Government agencies and ministries have a crucial role to play in socio economic transitions and sustainable development. They can provide the necessary policy frameworks, regulations, and incentives to promote such programs. Government agencies and ministries can provide funding and subsidies for research and development activities, technology demonstration projects, and large-scale installations. They can also collaborate with international organizations and donors to access additional financial resources and technical expertise.

5.2 International Organizations and Donors

International organizations and donors can also support knowledge-sharing and capacity-building initiatives through training programs, workshops, and conferences. They can promote best practices and lessons learned from successful transition projects in other countries, helping countries avoid common pitfalls and accelerate their progress towards a sustainable future.

5.3 Civil Society Organizations and Community-Based Groups

Civil society organizations and community-based groups can play a vital role in socio economic transitions by mobilizing public support, advocating for policy changes, and implementing grassroots initiatives. They can raise awareness about the environmental and social benefits of sustainability and they can engage local communities in the decision-making process.

Civil society organizations and community-based groups can also advocate for policy changes at the local, regional, and national levels. They can participate in public hearings, submit policy recommendations, and collaborate with government agencies and ministries to shape transition policies and regulations.

5.4 Private Sector and Industries

The private sector and industries have a significant role to play in transitions, as they are the primary drivers of technological innovation and investment. They can develop and deploy new technologies.

Private sector companies can also invest in energy efficiency measures and retrofits to reduce energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions. They can implement energy management systems, upgrade their production processes, and adopt cleaner and more sustainable technologies.

Furthermore, private sector companies can collaborate with government agencies and ministries to develop public-private partnerships for possible projects. They can provide financing, technical expertise, and project management skills to accelerate the deployment of system and infrastructure.

5.5 Academic and Research Institutions

Academic and research institutions have a critical role to play in transitions through their research, education, and innovation activities. They can conduct research and development on appropriate technologies, systems, and measures.

They can also provide scientific evidence and policy analysis to support evidence-based decision-making.

These institutions can offer educational programs and training courses to equip the workforce with the necessary skills and knowledge. They can also collaborate with industry partners to offer internships and apprenticeship programs, ensuring a smooth transition from education to employment.

6. Implementation Framework

6.1 Policy Reforms and Legal Framework

One of the key components of an effective implementation framework is the establishment of policy reforms and a strong legal framework. Policy reforms involve reviewing and updating existing policies to align with the goals and objectives of the socio-economic development plan. This includes analysing the current policies to identify gaps and inconsistencies that need to be addressed.

Once the necessary policy reforms have been identified, a legal framework should be put in place to support and enforce these policies. This can include the creation of new laws, regulations, and guidelines that are in line with the revised policies. The legal framework should also outline the roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders involved in the implementation process.

To ensure the success of the policy reforms and legal framework, it is important to have a clear and transparent process for developing and implementing these changes. This can involve consulting with key stakeholders, including government officials, community leaders, and civil society organizations, to gather their input and ensure their participation in the decision-making process.

6.2 Socio-Economic Development Plans and Programs

An effective implementation framework should include the development and implementation of comprehensive socio-economic development plans and programs. These plans and

programs should be based on a thorough analysis of the current socio-economic situation and should set specific goals and targets for improvement.

The development of these plans and programs should involve a participatory approach, where the views and opinions of all stakeholders are taken into consideration. This can help to build consensus and ensure that the plans and programs are realistic, feasible, and achievable.

Once the plans and programs have been developed, they should be implemented through a structured and coordinated approach. This can involve the allocation of resources, including financial, human, and technological resources, to support the implementation process. It is important to have clear timelines, milestones, and benchmarks to track the progress and measure the impact of the implemented plans and programs.

6.3 Collaborative Governance Models

Collaborative governance models are an important factor in the successful implementation of socio-economic development plans. This involves promoting collaboration and cooperation between different stakeholders, including government agencies, civil society organizations, and the private sector.

These collaborative governance models can take various forms, such as public-private partnerships, multi-stakeholder platforms, and community-based approaches. The key is to create a platform where different stakeholders can come together to share their knowledge, expertise, and resources to address the challenges and opportunities of the implementation process.

6.4 Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanisms

An effective implementation framework should include robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to track the progress and measure the impact of the implemented plans and programs. This involves the regular collection and analysis of data to assess the effectiveness of the implementation process.

Monitoring and evaluation should be an ongoing and iterative process, where the data collected is used to inform

decision-making and make necessary adjustments to the implementation strategies. It is important to have clear indicators and targets to measure the progress and impact of the implementation process. This can include both qualitative and quantitative indicators, such as changes in income levels, employment rates, and access to basic services.

Regular reporting and accountability mechanisms should be put in place to ensure transparency and accountability in the implementation process. This can involve the publication of progress reports, regular stakeholder engagement and feedback sessions, and the establishment of independent oversight bodies.

An effective implementation framework for socio-economic development plans and programs should include policy reforms and a strong legal framework, the development and implementation of comprehensive plans and programs, collaborative governance models, and robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. These components work together to ensure the successful implementation of the plans and programs and the achievement of the desired socio-economic outcomes.

7. Expected Outcomes and Impact Measurement

One of the expected outcomes of any development program is to improve the quality of life for the population. This can be measured through various indicators such as access to basic services like education, healthcare, clean water, and sanitation. Additionally, measures of income and employment opportunities, as well as access to affordable housing and transportation, can also be used to assess the improvement in the quality of life.

7.2 Sustainable Economic Growth and Diversification

Another expected outcome of development programs is sustainable economic growth and diversification. This means promoting inclusive economic development that benefits all segments of society and reduces dependence on a single sector or industry.

The impact of a development program on economic growth can be measured through indicators such as GDP growth rate, job creation, and increased productivity. Diversification of the economy can be assessed by measuring the contribution of different sectors to the GDP and the level of investment in non-traditional sectors.

Furthermore, it is important to ensure that economic growth is sustainable in the long term. This includes reducing environmental degradation, promoting the use of renewable resources, and adopting sustainable production and consumption practices. These aspects can be measured through indicators such as carbon emissions, resource consumption, and environmental quality.

7.3 Reduced Poverty and Inequality

One of the key goals of development programs is to reduce poverty and inequality. Poverty can be measured through indicators such as the poverty rate, the percentage of the population living below the poverty line, and income inequality measures such as the Gini coefficient.

A development program's impact on poverty reduction can be assessed by measuring changes in these indicators over time. Additionally, access to social protection programs, such as cash transfers or social security benefits, can also be used to measure the impact on poverty reduction.

Reducing inequality requires measures to address the underlying causes of inequality, such as unequal access to resources and opportunities. This can include policies targeting marginalized groups, promoting inclusive education and employment opportunities, and ensuring equal access to public services. The impact of a development program on reducing inequality can be measured through changes in income distribution and access to services among different population groups.

7.4 Enhanced Social Cohesion and Inclusive Development

Enhancing social cohesion and promoting inclusive development are important outcomes of development programs. Social cohesion refers to the level of trust, cooperation, and solidarity within a society. Inclusive development aims to ensure that all members of society have equal opportunities to participate in and benefit from development processes.

Measuring the impact of a development program on social cohesion can be challenging, as it involves capturing intangible aspects of social relationships. However, surveys and qualitative research methods can be used to assess changes in social trust, social networks, and social capital within a community or society.

Inclusive development can be measured through indicators such as access to education, healthcare, and social protection programs among different population groups. Additionally, measuring the level of participation and representation of marginalized groups in decision-making processes can also provide insights into the program's impact on inclusive development.

Overall, expected outcomes and impact measurement are crucial aspects of development programs. By assessing and monitoring these outcomes, policymakers and development practitioners can ensure that programs are effective in achieving their intended goals and making a positive difference in the lives of the population.

8. Conclusion

8.1 Recap of the article

In the previous sections, we have explored the concept of socio-economic development in the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR). We discussed the historical background and the unique challenges faced by this region, such as a history of conflict, underdevelopment, and poverty. We also analyzed the potential for socio-economic development and the various sectors that can contribute to this development.

Furthermore, we proposed a comprehensive approach to socio-economic development in the BTR, focusing on four key areas: infrastructure development, human capital development, economic diversification, and social development. We highlighted the importance of collaboration between the government, private sector, and civil society organizations to ensure the success of these development initiatives.

8.2 Importance of Socio-Economic Development in Bodoland Territorial Region

Socio-economic development plays a crucial role in improving the lives of people and reducing poverty and inequality. In the case of the Bodoland Territorial Region, it is particularly important due to the unique challenges faced by this region. The history of conflict and underdevelopment has left a significant impact on the people living here, with high levels of poverty and limited access to basic services.

By focusing on infrastructure development, the region can improve connectivity and access to services such as healthcare and education. This will not only enhance the quality of life for the people in the BTR but also attract investments and promote economic growth. Additionally, investing in human capital development will provide the necessary skills and knowledge to the local population, enabling them to participate in the region's development and secure better employment opportunities.

Economic diversification is another key aspect of socio-economic development in the BTR. The region has a strong agricultural sector, and by promoting agri-businesses and improving agricultural practices, the region can enhance productivity and increase income for farmers. Furthermore, there is untapped potential in tourism, handicrafts, and other industries that can contribute to the economic growth of the region.

Lastly, social development is essential to address the social issues prevalent in the BTR. Investing in healthcare, education,

and social welfare programs will improve the overall well-being of the people and provide them with equal opportunities for growth and development. Moreover, empowering women and marginalized communities will promote inclusivity and create a more equitable society.

8.3 Call for Action and Sustainability

The article presented here serves as a roadmap for socio-economic development in the Bodoland Territorial Region. However, for this vision to become a reality, it requires a collective effort from all stakeholders involved.

The government should take the lead in formulating and implementing policies and programs that promote socio-economic development. This includes providing the necessary infrastructure, establishing institutions for human capital development, and creating an enabling environment for businesses to thrive. The government should also ensure that marginalized communities and women are included in the development process, and their voices are heard.

The private sector has a crucial role to play in driving economic growth and investment in the region. By investing in the BTR, businesses can contribute to job creation, skills development, and technological advancements. They should also adopt responsible business practices that consider environmental sustainability and social inclusivity.

Civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations have an important role in advocating for the rights and well-being of the people in the BTR. They can work closely with the government and the private sector to ensure that development initiatives are inclusive, sustainable, and meet the needs of the local population.

Sustainability is a key aspect of socio-economic development in the BTR. Development initiatives should be designed with a long-term perspective, taking into account environmental conservation, cultural preservation, and social

inclusion. Additionally, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms should be put in place to assess the impact of these initiatives and make necessary adjustments for their continued success.

In conclusion, achieving socio-economic development in the Bodoland Territorial Region is not an easy task, but it is essential for improving the lives of the people and creating a better future for generations to come. It requires collaboration, commitment, and a shared vision among all stakeholders. By implementing the recommendations outlined in this concept note, we can pave the way for a prosperous, inclusive, and sustainable future for the BTR. Note: This concept note aims to provide an overview of the socio-economic development challenges and potential strategies in the Bodoland Territorial Region.

10

A Development Journey in the Land of Opportunities for Peace and Inclusion

Dr. Monica Banerjee

Bodoland happened to me some 23 years back, in the year 2000.

Until then it was just four years since joining the development sector. Lok Nayak Jayprakash Narayan¹ built AVARD² welcomed the fresh out of university curious youngster in its fold in 1996. A network of more than 500 voluntary organizations, it gave seekers like me ample opportunities to explore the depths of this magnificent country by home staying in its villages for long stretches. Rural India, in all its hues and greys, vagaries and variations, diversity and homogeneity offered unmatched experiences. At times puzzling, at times poignant; at times spirited, at times complex but never mundane. Over time, these experiences, explorations, and observations unfurled profound lessons, often leading to meaningful opportunities.

Bodoland has been one such opportunity, where purpose and intent met with development.

AVARD's extended wing, the AVARD-NE (or Northeast) had succumbed to militancy in Majuli, the unique river island (also claimed to be world's only and largest) of Assam and seat of social-cultural spirituality. The terrorists had killed its leader and threatened the formidable NGO to wind up its operations in the island and the state. But what the terrorists failed to crush was the indomitable spirit of the AVARD-NE team of

senior workers. After a lull of two or three years, Dr Sunil Kaul and Jennifer Liang returned to the state- only this time they chose the western part of Assam. After a few years of development activities around health and livelihoods from Bongaigaon spreading into villages of Chirang, they moved lock, stock and barrel, with an array of local field workers (turned into an impressive team), to Rowmari, a village under Bodoland Territorial Council. *The ant*, as the group came to be called, opened a vista of opportunities for the like-minded people and institutions, to come into the region with a spirit of working together to usher in development, peace and meaningful partnerships that would have community and its wellbeing at the core.

My foray into Bodoland happened with *the ant*. And also, with late Ravindrabhai, the Gandhian who led the TamulpurAnchalikGramdan Sangha at Baksa. The philanthropic foundation I was associated with, thanks to its executive leadership and many of the country's luminaries serving on the board, had given us, the programme staff, enough autonomy, and a mandate to strengthen civil society in the Northeast. Given our association with the work of AVARD-NE, supporting *the ant* in its journey in Bodoland from the very beginning, was a natural for us. Supporting their youth club and development newsletters, early interventions on livelihoods around weaving for women to become self-reliant and entrepreneurial, action research on status of nutrition among children were some of the joint interventions in the region. The substantive part was yet to come though. Around 2004-5, the rolling out for this had begun.

The philanthropy at Delhi needed to understand Bodoland, its civil society organizations better. In the mid-2000s, a senior consultant with indepth understanding of Assam and other states of Northeast region was sent to understand and offer the foundation a nuanced framework for intervening in the Northeast. Two of his astute recommendations are still

etched in my memory. One was about the need to engage with civil society through a cluster-based approach; the second was to invest our energies and resources more on Bodoland given its nascent status and fertile ground for development initiatives. For me personally, *the ant* had sown many seeds. It was time to help nurture the civil society in Bodoland further.

In early 2005, I found myself traveling to Mumbai with a colleague to convince the Tata Trusts to invest in building capacities of voluntary organizations in the region. The headquarters for this kind of leadership training could be at the Chirang campus of *the ant* was what we all concurred. Prior to that we (*the ant* and the philanthropic foundation) were able to secure a mandate from the civil society in Northeast to have a professional training infrastructure in Chirang / Bodoland that could cater to development needs of entire voluntary organizations of Northeast. Armed with such a democratic process, the presentation at the Sir Dorabji Tata Trust (SDTT) that year was followed up soon by the trust towards the end of the year. I accompanied the representative from SDTT to Bodoland and *the ant* to gauge the possibility of an Institute for Development Action in Bodoland. The seeds for IDeA were sown! The interim months were spent going back and forth on the proposal and by second half of 2006, IDeA's building and training modules were being developed simultaneously. By 2009, SDTT supported IDeA in running well developed, structured courses for development professionals and voluntary organizations from all Northeastern states. Thus, Rowmari, Chirang and Bodoland- became prominent locations on the Northeast's development map meant to foster the growth of civil society in the region. And it would not be an exaggeration to suggest that BTAD civil society showed the way. The commune living, principles of shared labour and collective action at IDeA/*the ant*'s Chirang campus was a model that many development professionals and CSO founders from other states drew inspiration from. Needless to say, many began

experimenting along the same lines in their respective organizations.

The idea of supporting a cluster of organizations in Bodoland led one to soon explore long term partnerships with many new and fledgling organizations in the region. One sourced organizations and constructive work led youth groups rooted in the understanding of inclusivity and plurality. Raju Narzary and his youthful team stood out as one among many. Soon, I found myself visiting the region a number of times in a year, hopping from one grassroots organization to another, talking to individual fellows, diverse communities and NGOs representing many ethnicities. To each one of them, I found myself talking about the basic tenets of civil society namely civility, plurality, and non-violence. It was during one of these visits that I met the then leader of All Bodo Students Union, Mr Pramod Boro. His transformative journey, by his own account, appealed to me. Being actively pursuing civil society led development of Bodoland myself, Mr Boro's political journey and the student union's role in shaping the politics of Bodoland was something one began to follow closely. A chance post-doctoral fellowship at the London School of Economics offered that much needed break to study civil society and political society theoretically. I could juxtapose theory and practice almost effortlessly because of the unique premise that Bodoland has been presenting all those years. It is said that the person who enters the forest is never the same after coming out of the forest. Intrigued always about the boundaries of civil and political society and wondering often where exactly student unions lay, it was here at LSE that Bodoland's multiple societies made sense to me. Partha Chatterjee's explanation on till what point an entity remains within civil society and under what circumstances assumes a place in the political society became clear when one analyzed the many movements of Northeast. Bodoland's movements and agitations often remained at the core in these analyses. My research papers, seminars, Op-ed pieces, anthology

chapters in the next couple of years centered around Bodoland because it offered that site where theories and practices on issues of peace, violence, justice, and development blended insightfully.

It was also time for me to move Bodoland and its people from the professional to the personal realm.

By now, a decade long support interventions in the area, made me look at development from a broader lens. While supporting grassroots voluntary organizations around education, livelihoods, and health and eventually institution building in the five districts of Bodoland remained at the core, one felt the need to reach out to more constituencies. It was with this objective that I began exploring pro-bono teaching at Bodoland University, interacting with the academia there, and on Mr Boro's insistence interacting with the youth in their communes. I must admit here that despite my scathing criticism of many aspects of youth organizing especially the lack of equal representation of women, Mr Boro led ABSU never ceased to invite me to any of their events. From all Bodo Sahitya Sabha events whether in Bodoland or in Delhi, I ended up gaining immensely. Nowhere during my visits to any part of the country have I seen so much enthusiasm on the part of young people to keenly listen to what others have to say. For people like me, this was motivation enough to keep coming to the region every time. In 2018, it was time to add to these events. Taking a cue from organizing Northeast themed festivals in Delhi, support was garnered from international agencies and Kokrajhar had its first Art and Literature festival, ArtLit, that year! Since then, it is reassuring to see the Government of Bodoland taking it on itself to organize art and literature festivals year on year.

From 2020, with the peace accord and a new leadership given to the ideals of democracy, inclusiveness and plurality finding their place, our hopes only soared higher. We all, at least emotionally, became part of the new beginnings. With time, new partnerships, new opportunities presented themselves. Kokrajhar's waste management in partnership with a woman

led municipal board, reputed technical agency from central India, local civil society organization, cadre of local voluntary workers and corporate social responsibility is a step in the right direction, one feels. Interacting and engaging with the elected members of BTC too around issues of peace and development is encouraging enough. To see so much of development being ushered in, sometimes actively as a participant and sometimes from the gallery, is heartwarming. One prays that this momentum continues. There is a lot that needs to be done at BTC. Only robust, multiple partnerships with agencies best suited for domain specific jobs will usher in the right kind of development where communities, irrespective of ethnicity, class and gender will be at the core of development. They will be the co-owners and managers of the development processes, common resources (pasturelands, farmlands, water bodies), natural assets (land, water, forests), community-based organizations, farmer producer groups and more. In so doing they will have the voice and agency to sustain and deepen democracy and development in Bodoland. Development has to unleash itself in the form of quality institutions catering to primary and higher learning, early childhood care, nutrition, physical and mental health, economic research and more.

On my part, I hope to continue my relationship with the people of this land that I call my second home!

Notes

⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jayaprakash_Narayan

⁷ Association of Voluntary Agencies for Rural Development. A network of voluntary organisations across the country with headquarters in New Delhi.

11

Bodo Accord 2020 : Celebrating Diversity as a Strategic Asset

Pallab Bhattacharyya

“Diversity is an aspect of human existence that cannot be eradicated by terrorism or war or self-consuming hatred. It can only be conquered by recognizing and claiming the wealth of values it represents for all”-said Aberjhani, the celebrated American historian and this has profound relevance for transforming Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) of 21st Century to a garden of peace. The BTR comprising of 8970 sq. km. with a population of over 31 lakhs (2011 Census of India) endowed with 3234 sq. km. of luxuriant forest cover and home to a tapestry of indigenous and migrant communities like Bodos, Assamese, Bengalis, Koch-Rajbongshis, Rabhas, Garos, Adivasis, Muslims and Nepalis, needs foresight and sound policy initiatives to maintain a peaceful environment through the age-old stratagem of unity in the midst of diversity in today’s globalized world and to prosper. Failure to implement such progressive policy initiatives may lead to further fragmentation of the land mass which is clearly discernible through various demands including Komotapur. Assam which during the British period was a conglomerate of Meghalaya, Nagaland, Mizoram and Arunachal is an eloquent testimony to this phenomenon of perceived majoritarian supremacy writ large on the Khasis, Garos, Jaintias, Nagas, Mizos and Arunachalis . The author had the privilege of intimate association with stalwart like BODOFA, Late Upen Chandra Brahma when we

were studying in Cotton College staying in the celebrated Third Mess. The historical blunder which AGP had committed by not accommodating ABSU leaders in general and towering personality with progressive outlook like Bodofa, in particular, is here today for all to see and fathom.

Dr Bimal Kanti Basumatary, Associate Professor of Kokrajhar Government College in his article “Origin of Bodo-A Historical Overview” mentioned as follows: “India is a land of diverse races, cultures, civilizations, religions, ethnic groups and societies. Streams of human races and groups of Austro-Asiatic, Nitrites, Dravidians, Alpines, Indo-Mongoloids, Tibeto-Burman and Aryans penetrated into India through different routes and migrated and settled in different parts of India making their history, culture and civilization and contributed to the structuring of the great Indian culture, history and civilization. The Tibeto-Burman people are predominant in whole North-Eastern Region. The Bodo are one of the sections of the Tibeto-Burman family”. The generic name Bodo was in fact given by Hodgson to this Tibeto-Burmese language family. The people though claim to have own their lineage from the Mongoloids have variously intermingled with the Aryan, the Austric and the Dravidian cultures in different ages of Indian history to multifariously enrich the heterogeneous cultural identity of the Indian subcontinent. The Bodo culture is a part and parcel of the Indo-Mongoloid culture that has greatly influenced the Indic culture of Assam, West Bengal and the whole of northeast India.

I, being an officer of 1986 batch of IPS, was witness to the birth of Boro and Assamese militancy, their gradual ascent reaching its zenith in the first decade of this century and its gradual waning. The violence profile of militancy in Assam, with a major contribution from Bodo dominated areas from 1991 to around 2017 can be manifested through the following table:

YEAR	NO.OF INCIDENTS	INSURGENT KILLED	INSURGENT CAPTURED	ARMS/ AMMN. & CASH RECOVERED	SECURITY PERSONNEL KILLED	CIVILIANS KILLED	PERSONS KIDNAPPED	SURRENDERED
1991	388	12	1106	ARMS - 409 AMMN - 2726 Rs. 13,92,536/-	21	163	146	0
1992	195	15	779	ARMS - 53 AMMN - 1289 Rs.4,26,410/-	41	72	54	3850
1993	185	29	1165	ARMS - 189 AMMN - 2305 Rs. 37,62,635/-	23	54	51	378
1994	185	40	1090	ARMS - 156 AMMN - 2251 Rs. 7,36,898/-	39	88	48	605
1995	183	21	357	ARMS - 74 AMMN - 1273 Rs. 16,63,160/-	66	125	49	186
1996	325	44	326	ARMS - 104 AMMN - 4044 Rs. 14,88,550/-	80	263	105	30
1997	404	136	1558	ARMS - 261 AMMN - 8887 Rs.	89	237	103	0

YEAR	NO.OF INCIDENTS	INSURGENT KILLED	INSURGENT CAPTURED	ARMS/ AMMN. & CASH RECOVERED	SECURITY PERSONNEL KILLED	CIVILIANS KILLED	PERSONS KIDNAPPED	SURRENDERED
				34,72,327/-				
1998	686	165	1382	ARMS - 273 AMMN - 5136 Rs. 7,13,648/-	77	387	148	251
1999	474	196	1436	ARMS - 272 AMMN. - 7120 Rs. 47,52,711/-	87	179	123	676
2000	643	329	1535	ARMS - 371 AMMN. - 5266 Rs. 17,70,256/-	80	412	111	1834
2001	486	308	913	ARMS - 410 AMMN. - 6842 Rs. 4,35,654/-	86	261	67	438
2002	456	322	715	ARMS - 365 AMMN. - 6686 Rs. 9,07,138/-	36	218	109	139
2003	474	276	1024	ARMS - 456 AMMN. - 20488 Rs. 11,21,184/-	15	260	124	3081
2004	349	135	1080	ARMS - 349 AMMN. - 9623 Rs. 8,92,494/-	25	203	46	1050

A perusal of the above figures clearly demonstrates the gradual and significant falling of extremist violence with its nadir around 2017. This has been made possible through a systematic counter insurgency operation under Unified Command structure, Suspension of Operations, structured dialogue process through an Interlocutor, Surrender Cum Rehabilitation policy of Government of India, tripartite monitoring mechanism of Memorandum of Settlement arrived at with different militant groups from time to time.

The Government of India and Government of Assam have been making concerted efforts to fulfil the political, economic, social, cultural and identity related aspirations of Bodo people. Tripartite agreements in 1993 and 2003 were signed leading to creation of Bodoland Autonomous and Bodoland Territorial Councils under the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India for Bodo inhabited areas in Assam. ABSU and its associated organizations as well as various factions of NDFB continued with the demand for separate Statehood. Negotiations were held with Bodo organizations for a comprehensive and final solution to their demands while keeping intact the territorial integrity of the State of Assam.

A Memorandum of Settlement (MoS) was signed between Government of India, Government of Assam and representatives of Bodo Groups viz ABSU, NDFB and UBPO on 27.01.2020 to end decades old Bodo crisis. Most of the clauses of MoS have been implemented or are in the process of implementation which include surrender of 1615 cadres along with arms and ammunition, setting up of Bodo Kachari Welfare Council; establishment of a separate Directorate of Bodo Medium Schools; creation of a separate Welfare of Bodoland Department to deal with matters relating to councils under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution including Bodo Territorial Council (BTC), etc. Clause 10.1 of the MoS provides for a Special Development Package of Rs. 1500 crore (Rs. 750 crores by GoI

and Rs. 750 crores by Govt. of Assam) for undertaking specific projects. Illustrative lists have been appended at Annexure-II, III & IV of MoS which include Central University, North- East Regional Institute of Medical Science, National Institute of Technology etc. As per clause 11 of the Accord, a Joint Monitoring Committee was constituted with representatives of Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of Assam, BTC and Bodo organizations, to monitor the implementation of MoS on regular basis.

Peace has now returned to BTR. However, in this age of globalization where competitiveness is the key to success requires innovative approach for rapid economic development. Regardless of the downsides, globalization is here to stay. The result of globalization is a smaller, more connected world. Socially, globalization has facilitated the exchange of ideas and cultures, contributing to a world view in which people are more open and tolerant of one another. Under such circumstances it is strongly felt that the issue of land rights reflected at clause 7 and alteration of area of BTAD enshrined in clause 3 should be implemented with caution and inclusive manner keeping in mind the historical reality of migration failing which the result of blunder committed by AGP is likely to be repeated bringing lawlessness in BTR.

A recent survey highlights the following which BTR administration should keep in mind:

- India has 62.5% of its population in the age group of 15-59 years which is ever increasing and will be at the peak around 2036 when it will reach approximately 65%.
- These population parameters indicate an availability of demographic dividend in India, which started in 2005-06 and will last till 2055-56.
- According to Economic Survey 2018-19, India's Demographic Dividend will peak around 2041, when

the share of working-age, i.e. 20-59 years, population is expected to hit 59%.

Under this scenario, it has become absolutely necessary to train all sections of youths in BTR, irrespective of their ethnicity, sex, religion, caste and class in some skills where they are proficient. The objective of the accord states specifically of ensuring accelerated development of tribal areas and rehabilitation of members of NDFB. However, an element of inclusivity keeping in view future security and Act East Policy of GOI is the need of the hour.

Skill India Mission is a government scheme launched in 2015. It is an umbrella scheme that has many skilling schemes and programmes under it. The chief objective is to empower the youth of the country with adequate skill sets that will enable their employment in relevant sectors and also improve productivity. Japan is a shining example of success where skilled youth manpower of the country, when its demographic dividend was favourable, was effectively used by creating a plethora of entrepreneurship through Government and public participation.

If BTR can emulate the Japan experience successfully, it is certain to become the most progressive region of North-East India. Failure to engage the youths to stand on their own feet may lead to explosive unemployment situation bearing adverse impact on law and order with the fourth-generation warfare by inimical non-state actors. Assam Skill Development Mission (ASDM) should take a proactive role in this regard by effectively using North East Skill Centre at Guwahati which is the fructification of its MOU with ITEES of Singapore as its global partner. What is needed is a pro-active awareness drive by ASDM about free availability of such training, at VCDC and TCLCC level with the help of all stakeholders.

It may be noted that Assam Skill University was established by The Assam Skill University Act, 2020 with Shri Subhash Chandra Das Retired IAS, appointed as Vice Chancellor.

It is felt that if the Government of Assam provide him the needful paraphernalia, he, along with ASDM, can make this a success story for the North East. The BTR administration should be in close touch with him. The famous quote by Aga Khan IV is a refreshing but grim reminder to people of BTR: "Pluralism is no longer simply an asset or prerequisite for progress and development; it is vital to our existence."

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Transitioning from Turmoil to Tranquility : The Bodoland Story

Pankaj Kr Jaiswal

Executive Summary

Bodoland, once a region marked by turmoil and instability, has undergone a remarkable transformation into the 'City of Peace.' This shift results from sacrifices, persistent efforts, and the visionary leadership of the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR). The journey towards peace and stability was achieved through effective negotiations with the Government of Assam and the Government of India, culminating in the historic Bodo Accord of January 2020.

This transition was challenging, including past peace initiatives led by individuals like UN Brahma, the 'Father of Bodos,' which faced obstacles due to political divisions. However, the signing of the Bodo Accord in January 2020 brought unprecedented peace and stability to the region. Under the leadership of Pramod Boro, the BTR has embarked on a path of development, offering a beacon of hope in a region often marred by violence.

Bodoland's unique attributes, such as its democratic structure and active community participation, position it as a potential global model for conflict resolution and development. Covering five districts and 3.2 million people in 9000 square kilometers, Bodoland's administrative structure empowers local leadership and area councils, differentiating it from the Commissionerate system in other parts of India. The BTR offers

a unique model of economic and political development to the world.

Bodoland's potential is deeply rooted in the principles of Eternal Economics, centered around Nature, Culture, and Agriculture. The current leadership is unwavering in its commitment to these foundational signatures, ensuring that development aligns with them. Adopting the Devnagari script underscores the region's forward-thinking approach, in line with the principles of Eternal Economics, which emphasizes nature-friendly policies for seamless progress.

To unlock Bodoland's potential fully, a comprehensive assessment of the economic ecosystem is essential. This includes evaluating local talents, agricultural products, natural markets, cultural assets, and natural resources. By measuring their highest valuation while considering inherent limitations, economic actions can be meticulously planned for optimized results.

The Bodoland International Knowledge Festival (BIKF) 2023, spearheaded by CEM Pramod Boro, has fostered peace, growth, and development in Bodoland. This global event, organized in just one and a half months, attracted Nobel laureate Mohammad Yunus and over 200 experts and artists from various countries. The BIKF highlighted the region's knowledge and cultural wealth, fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange.

The BTR's leadership has initiated various development programs, fostering youth capacity, health, and livelihood while promoting trade and industrial growth. These initiatives are aligned with the principles of Eternal Economics and aim to improve the quality of life in Bodoland.

In conclusion, the Bodoland Territorial Region presents a unique opportunity for conflict resolution and economic development. By adhering to the principles of Eternal Economics, fostering a commitment to peace and unity, and promoting a strategic action plan for the region, Bodoland can serve as a global model for sustainable development and territorial dispute resolution.

Transitioning from Turmoil to Tranquility: The Bodoland Story

Kokrajhar, presently recognized as the ‘City of Peace,’ was once marred by turmoil and instability. However, through sacrifices and relentless struggles, the current leadership has successfully steered the people of Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) toward progress, effectively addressing their concerns and demands. This leadership was pivotal in persuading both the Government of Assam and the Government of India to prioritize peace within Bodoland. Ultimately, in January 2020, after prolonged negotiations, the Bodo community achieved a mutually beneficial agreement, marking a significant turning point.

Before the Bodo Accord was reached, numerous peace initiatives, “Live & Let Live” including the Non-Violent Bodoland Movement under the guidance of UN Brahma, often referred to as the ‘Father of the Bodos,’ were launched. Regrettably, these efforts faced obstacles due to a lack of consensus and unity within the political landscape. However, following the January 2020 agreement involving the Indian government, Assam government, and various committed stakeholders in the BTR, Bodoland has transformed into a region marked by peace and stability. Under the leadership of its Gandhian practitioner, Pramod Boro, the region is now embarking on a development journey.

Amidst the backdrop of persistent violence in the Northeast, Pramod Boro’s Gandhian approach shines as a beacon of hope, serving as a role model for other regions still grappling with unrest. Pramod Boro’s guiding principle aligns with the philosophy found in the ‘Eternal Economics’, emphasizing that “peace is the eternal objective of economics and the sole path to progress¹.”

Why Bodoland Represents a Global Model for Conflict Resolution and Development

Bodoland’s unique attributes position it as a potential global model for resolving territorial disputes through the

Gandhian approach and visionary leaders like Pramod Boro. With its favorable size, well-matched population, and decentralized democratic structure, Bodoland is a four-tier democratic system within a world of primarily three-tier models. What sets it apart is the active involvement of its local population in decision-making processes, granting them substantial ownership over their development initiatives.

Encompassing five districts, ten sub-divisions, 40 blocks—some full and some partial, and covering an expansive 9000 square kilometers, Bodoland houses a population of 3.2 million as per 2011 census. This territorial context holds the potential to emerge as an inspiring success story, not only for Assam and India but also for the international community where territorial disputes exist.

Bodoland's administrative and democratic structure empowers its leadership and area council to make and implement development decisions efficiently. In stark contrast to the Commissionerate system seen in other parts of India, where many districts lack a corresponding political area council, Bodoland's unique setup is a beacon of hope. It is here, under the guidance of leaders like Pramod Boro, that an opportunity arises to present a compelling economic and political model to the world.

Compared to Bodoland, there are 99 countries in the world with a population of less than 3.3 million, and approximately 66 countries with a land area of less than 9000 square kilometers including African countries, are facing economic and social challenges. Bodoland, a region in India, can serve as a role model for peace, growth, and development for these nations. The journey of Bodoland from turmoil to tranquility can be a success story that inspires others to resolve conflicts, such as in Kashmir and Manipur. Even the belief in non-violence and peace talk process can inspire Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Lake Chad Basin, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Palestine, and Syria. By adopting

the non-violent and peace talks model of Bodoland, these nations can establish peace and stability in their region.

Should this model succeed, it could become a catalyst for global peace and development, offering solutions to territorial disputes and serving as an exemplary framework for nations worldwide to embrace, thus further highlighting the transformative potential of Bodoland.

Unlocking Bodoland's Potential: Eternal Economics and Its Three Foundational Signatures

Bodoland's potential is rooted in the principles of Eternal Economics, characterized by three essential elements: Nature, Culture, and Agriculture. These key signatures are the guiding principles that underpin the region's policies. The current leadership firmly adheres to these principles in all decision-making processes, unwavering in their commitment to uphold Bodoland's three foundational signatures.

To ensure Bodoland's development keeps pace with national standards, adopting the Devnagari script has been a strategic and forward-thinking decision with far-reaching advantages. Eternal Economics echoes these principles, emphasizing that nature-friendly development policies lead to more seamless progress and mitigate development conflicts. Implementing Eternal Economics is geared towards optimizing the value of every aspect of the ecosystem.

Bodoland possesses an untapped potential that has yet to be explored due to various factors. To unlock this potential, BTR should undertake a comprehensive assessment of all the components within its economic ecosystem. This includes evaluating the talents of its people, the quality of its agricultural products, the availability of natural markets, the value of its cultural assets, and the opportunities presented by its natural resources. The ultimate objective is to measure their highest valuation while also considering inherent limitations, thus ensuring that economic actions are meticulously planned to achieve optimized results.

BIKF 2023 : A Landmark Initiative Transforming Bodoland

The BIKF 2023 initiative, spearheaded by CEM Pramod Boro, has brought about remarkable changes in Bodoland, fostering peace, growth, development, a thriving economy, and educational advancement. This well-organized Bodoland International Knowledge Festival transcended the boundaries of age and academia, engaging the entire Bodoland community. A collaborative effort, this event aimed to share the region's rich knowledge and cultural wealth, even with those residing beyond its borders.

To empower the youth in Bodoland and offer them opportunities in various sectors, CEM Pramod Boro introduced the Super50 program. This educational initiative focuses on nurturing talents in fields such as medicine, engineering, and UPSC preparation, with the goal of not only providing employment but also cultivating future leaders contributing to the nation's growth.

As a beacon of hope for the Northeast, CEM Pramod Boro, also may be called as the Eastman of India, has been instrumental in spotlighting the region's nature, culture, and talent globally. The BIKF 2023, an international-level event, stands out as a unique achievement, organized in just one and a half months. Inaugurated by Nobel laureate Mohammad Yunus of Bangladesh, it attracted over 200 experts, professors, and artists of international reputation from various countries. The eco-friendly event received significant support from the Bodoland community and government officials, including Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, and Union Minister of State for Petroleum Rameshwar Teli. Notable figures, including Bollywood actors Vivek Oberoi and Sonu Sood and experts from diverse fields, contributed to the festival's success.

The festival facilitated partnerships with numerous educational institutions, including Tezpur University, Cotton College, and Assam Agricultural University, aligning with the principles of Eternal Economics. Furthermore, it introduced

initiatives like the School of Peace and Happiness in the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) and the Center of Indigenous Knowledge Systems at Bodoland University.

This event served as a platform to unite Bodoland and its people with thought leaders, teachers, scholars, researchers, and experts worldwide. Collaboratively organized with Bodoland University and the Government of BTR, it aimed to synchronize Bodoland's planning and development with global social development priorities and SDGs. The festival provided a space for knowledge exchange, problem-solving, and fostering partnerships among diverse stakeholders, envisioning a "Peaceful, Green, and Smart Bodoland."

Pramod, the event's creator, emphasized the need to combat the spread of negativity in society. He noted that the Northeast seeks "love" from the Prime Minister rather than material demands. Through the Knowledge Festival, Pramod aimed to redefine the perception of Bodoland, transforming it into a beacon of hope and empowerment. The entire nation keenly watches this emerging force in the Northeast, identifying it as a potential leader on the national stage in the near future.

Current Leadership Programs and Initiatives in the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR)

Under the visionary leadership in the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR), a series of development programs have been initiated, all grounded in the principles of Eternal Economics and aligned with the core litmus test of Nature, Culture, and Agriculture. Following the signing of the Bodo Accord, and especially after the successful Bodoland International Knowledge Festival (BIKF) 2023, the government has firmly focused on key initiatives, with notable achievements in the past few months.

The BTR's current leadership has proactively built the region's capacity, with notable milestones achieved across various sectors. These achievements include:

1. **Youth Capacity Building:** The government has provided stipends to students and launched a school adoption

program, ensuring the educational development of the region's youth. Introducing Bodofa Super 50 Missions for medical, engineering, and civil service (both UPSC and APSC) competitions has allowed young talents to excel. Deploying mobile science labs and establishing science centers in each district further enrich the educational landscape. Exchange programs for teachers and officials have bolstered their training while recruiting new teachers, and introducing school counseling programs have improved the education sector.

2. **Health and Life-building Programs:** The government has introduced the "Rog Nirmul BTR" program to enhance the health and well-being of the people. The Bodoland Community Counseling Program has established counseling centers that address various critical issues, including child marriage, domestic violence, drug abuse, school dropouts, and cases of suicidal ideation.
3. **Livelihood Mission:** Diverse initiatives have been launched to bolster livelihood opportunities for farmers and entrepreneurs across BTR. These initiatives are closely integrated with Central and state Livelihood programs. Notable among these initiatives are the Pig Mission, Sericulture Mission, Handloom Mission, Mission Lakhpati Mahila, Bodoland Skill Employment & Entrepreneurship Development Mission, and the BTR Development Fellowship Program, which receives technical support from TRIF.
4. **Trade and Industrial Development:** To foster industrial growth and promote bamboo-related industries, the Bodoland Trade & Industrial Development Corporation Limited (BTIDCL) has been established. This corporation is pivotal in bamboo procurement and activities under the National Bio-fuel Project. Additionally, the Bodoland Tourism Development Corporation (BTDCL) has been formed to boost tourism-related activities in the BTR.

The advanced stage of Geographic Indication (GI) tagging for 21 items further supports the region's economic development.

5. **Land Certification and Infrastructure:** The government has conducted BTR Land Certificate Melas in all Circle Offices, facilitating Land Record Digitization and the distribution of land titles under the Forest Rights Act, 2006. Furthermore, several road infrastructure projects have been initiated to enhance connectivity and transportation within the region.
6. **Other Missions:** Alongside the initiatives mentioned above, several different missions, such as the Fin Rwdwmkhang Mission and Bodoland Happiness Mission, have been launched to address a range of pressing concerns and further enhance the quality of life in BTR.

The government's concerted efforts, similar to the principles of Eternal Economics, emphasize a holistic approach, focusing on various aspects of the region's development and ensuring the well-being of its people. These initiatives are integral to the journey toward a more prosperous and sustainable future for the Bodoland Territorial Region.

Partnership Initiative

To build the future and empower the Bodoland people, the current leadership has made the Following Partnerships

1. Partnership with Tezpur University for Agriculture and Value Addition in Agricultural Products
2. Partnership with Azim Premji University for Teachers and Educational Leaders' Training Program - 5 Rounds Completed
3. Partnership with UNDP- Accelerated Social Development
4. Partnership with UNICEF- Education, WASH, and Child Protection
5. Partnership with CEGIS- Governance, Women and Child Development

6. Partnership with TRIF- Bodoland Development Fellowship Program
7. Partnership with NECTAR- Agriculture (Horticulture Development)
8. Partnership with Agastya International Foundation- Science Education in BTR
9. Partnership with NERAMAC- To set up “Solar Powered Cold Storage
10. Partnership with BRLF- Focus on 40,000 HHs / 110 VDCs in 2 districts over 5 years and contribute to sustainable development Increased income through natural resource management, Agri & allied sector interventions, effective use of MGNREGS.
11. Improved grassroots capacities & local ownership
12. Partnership with **The HANS Foundation** –Mobile Medical Units (MMU) to serve the hard-to-reach areas in BTR.
13. Partnership with **Karnataka Health Promotion Trust (KHPT)** for screening of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs), Strengthening/ improving the delivery points and mental health.
14. Partnership with **SELCO Foundation** for Health Program by solarizing the Primary Health Institutions.

Comprehensive Action Plan for Advancing the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR)

In alignment with our unwavering dedication to nation-building and India’s “Atmanirbhar Bharat” and “Vocal for Local” initiatives, I firmly believe that the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) holds the potential to contribute to these missions significantly. With its present leadership and the application of “Eternal Economics,” which advocates empowering villages and individuals within the ecosystem to achieve sustainable economic development objectives, the BTR can embark on a transformative journey. Drawing from the insights in my book, “Eternal

Economics,²⁹ and my in-depth examination of the BTR's economic landscape, I propose the following strategic points to ensure that every stakeholder in the BTR ecosystem realizes their optimal value.

1. **Establishment of Passenger and Cargo Air Connectivity:** The BTR's geographical location and supply chain limitations substantially hinder its economic growth. To overcome these challenges, it is imperative to establish both passenger and cargo airports. This will enable seamless global connectivity, expedite economic development, and facilitate the movement of goods and people with increased efficiency.
2. **Implementation of the "One Block One Market (OBOM)" Scheme:** The BTR should consider the adoption of the "One Block One Market" scheme as a cornerstone of its development strategy. This innovative concept, initially successful in Japan as "One Village One Product" and later adopted as "One District One Product" by the government of Uttar Pradesh and under the Government of India's Aspirational Districts/Blocks program, holds immense potential. Under the OBOM scheme, every block or cluster of villages will be recognized and developed as a local market where community members can engage in trade and commerce. This approach is expected to raise per capita income, enhance the well-being of local residents, and promote grassroots entrepreneurship.
3. **Objectives of the OBOM Scheme:** The core objective of the OBOM is to elevate per capita income and enhance the overall well-being and contentment of BTR's local population. Instead of solely attracting external investors, the focus will be empowering local residents to become entrepreneurs and industrialists. The OBOM initiative will provide comprehensive support to local buyers, while

investments and entrepreneurship development programs will be primarily channeled to benefit the local populace.

4. **Areas of Potential Benefit:** Through the effective implementation of OBOM, the BTR can unlock economic opportunities and maximize the value derived from horticulture, sericulture, piggyery, handicrafts, medicinal and aromatic crops, bamboo cultivation, areca nut production, fishery, and handwoven fabrics.
5. **Measuring SDG Achievement:** The BTR can embrace this innovative economic model and assess its success by incorporating the measurement of Gross National Happiness (GNH) alongside traditional GDP indicators. GNH, utilized in neighboring Bhutan with a similar ecosystem-centric approach, offers a comprehensive method to gauge development progress while safeguarding ecological balance.
6. **Proposed Action Plan:** The following action steps can guide the implementation of the OBOM scheme:
 - i. **Economic Mapping:** Identify and designate specific blocks or clusters of villages as marketplaces for particular products or product categories under the “One Block One Market” initiative.
 - ii. **Market Development:** Transform these chosen blocks or clusters into global market hubs and supplier fulfillment centers.
 - iii. **Local Producer Development:** Strengthen local producers through government initiatives, including MSME, KVIC, Atmanirbhar Bharat, Vocal for Local, and Make in India programs, fostering entrepreneurship and self-reliance.
 - iv. **Facilitating Partnerships:** Encourage outside investors to collaborate with local partners and participate in the OBOM marketplace.
 - v. **International Outreach:** Promote the OBOM marketplaces to a global audience through

government and private sector campaigns, attracting buyers and investments to the region.

- vi. **Product Festivals:** Organize product-specific festivals, such as the Bamboo Festival, Areca Nut Festival, Piggery Festival, and Rice Beer Festival, to garner international attention and stimulate demand for BTR's products.
- vii. **Air Connectivity:** Initiate the establishment of passenger and cargo airports within the BTR, enhancing regional and global connectivity.
- viii. **Supply Chain ecosystem:** Provide Supply Chain ecosystem, infra and e-commerce training to the people of BTR to participate in e-commerce ecosystem.

In conclusion, the suggested action plan represents a comprehensive strategy aimed at harnessing the untapped potential of the Bodoland Territorial Region. By adhering to the principles of "Eternal Economics (Sanatan Arthshastra)" and executing these initiatives, the BTR can play a pivotal role in the economic growth and self-sufficiency of India while ensuring the well-being and prosperity of its local population.

Notes

⁸ Jaiswal, Pankaj. *Sanatan Arthshastra*. Bluerose Publishers, 2022. 53. Hindi.

⁹ Jaiswal, Pankaj. *Sanatan Arthshastra*. Bluerose Publishers, 2022. Hindi

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BTR : Journey Towards an all-round Development and Peace

Dr. Anil Kumar Boro

After the Bodo Peace Accord was signed between the Government of India, Govt of Assam and the Bodo organizations- ABSU, NDFB, UBPO on 27 January 2020, there have been a renewed hope, aspiration and formulation for constructive rechannelling of the Bodo people's movement for survival and dignity. We know how a new political party came to power in BTR immediately after the signing of the Peace Accord.

The new leadership under the banner of UPPL formed the BTR government with support from BJP and GSP. But it was not an easy going to handle the political machinery that was under control of a strong political party in power for more than fifteen years.

The new BTR government initiated work for implementation of the clauses of the Accord that provided for the creation of BTR and new promises for finding a comprehensive solution to the Bodo movement, augmenting the area and power of the then exiting BTC, addressing the issues of Bodo people living outside BTAD, provisions of safeguarding cultural, linguistic and ethnic identity of the Bodos, ensuring accelerated development of the tribal areas, legislative safeguard and land rights of the tribals and rehabilitation of the NDFB cadres.

The New BTR government have worked ceaselessly for fulfilling the needs for establishing permanent peace and security

in Bodoland region. Side by side with these initiatives, the government also flagged off plethora of changes and transformation processes for healing, reconciliation and social development.

One significant achievement of the new government is the first Bodoland Mohotsav organised in New Delhi, the Capital of India, with colourful literary and cultural programmes on 15 and 16 November, 2024, where Honourable Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi ji, Union Home Minister Shri Amit Shah ji, Union Minister Sarbanand Sonowalji and other distinguished guests graced the occasion.

The 1st Bodoland Mohotsav was organised to feature a series of thematic discussions, exhibitions, cultural rallies and vibrant performances showcasing the rich cultural mosaic of BTR. The festival celebrated the restoration of Peace and Resilience in Bodoland region following the historic Bodo Peace Accord signed on 27 January 2020 under the able leadership of Hon'ble Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modiji. This peace agreement has not only resolved decades long conflict, violence, loss of life in Bodoland region, but also served as catalyst for other peace settlement throughout the North east region of India.

The Mohotsav therefore was a celebration of Unity, Survival and Peace under the able leadership of Modiji. It provided an opportunity to transform collective dreams and aspirations for the development of culture, language, literature and arts, and education into concrete action for the present and future generations.

It is worth mentioning here that 16th November is a historic day for the Bodo people. It was on this day historic in the year 1952 Bodo Sahitya Sabha was founded with the objective of preserving and promoting Bodo language literature and culture at Basugaon, near Kokrajhar, the capital of BTR.

Therefore, the first Bodoland Mohotsav aimed to bring together world leaders, corporate houses, civil society

organisations, women leader farmers, artists, academics, researchers, students, artisans and other stakeholders in one platform to collaboratively create shared vision of peace, transformation, growth and development in the service of Bodo people in BTR region, Assam, India and the world.

The main objective of organising the Bodoland Mohotsav was show-casing the rich dimensions of Bodo culture. Only recently many cultural items related to Bodo cultural heritage got recognition of GI tag under the Ministry of Commerce and Industries, Government of India. These items along with other cultural items, textiles items, artefacts were showcased during the two-day festival.

All Bodo students' Union (founded in the year 1967 for uniting the Bodo students for the promotion of socio economy, language, education, culture and literature) and Bodo Sahitya Sabha (founded in 1952 for the preservation and promotion of Bodo language literature and culture), with the financial support of BTR, shouldered the responsibility of organising the Mohotsav.

Another most significant achievement of the BTR government is the successful organisation of Kokrajhar Literary Festival for four consecutive years. The first Kokrajhar literary festival was organised in the year 2021. The first literary festival began with the slogan of peace in Bodoland region: the sub theme was Hundred Language Poetry Festival. Since then, the literary festival has gained nationwide fame and reception. Not only poets and writers from all the languages representing different languages all over India but poets and authors from abroad have participated in these events. The literary events like poets' meet, interaction with authors and publishers and cultural programmes could draw the attention of authors and publishers from all over India. Not only the Bodo poets and authors and artists but poets, authors and artists from all the world over.

Local indigenous communities could find a platform to showcase their creative talent and express their views and ideas, making the literary festival a platform for fostering the message of love, peace and progress.

After the successful completion of three consecutive years of the literary festival, the 4th literary festival was organised this year with the objective of promotion of peace and harmony, cultural exchange and promotion of local languages, literature, knowledge and culture and the development of the Bodoland region.

Many reputed poets and writers including the authors and poets from Denmark, Japan, Italy, Sri Lanka, South Korea, Estonia and other countries attended and made this year's literary festival a grand literary event.

As in the previous years, this year's literary festival incorporated diverse events like book fair, poetry reading by international and Indian poets, fireside poetry reading and singing, get together, book launch, interactive session with renowned authors, poets, publishers, film and media personalities, artists and local literary bodies and students, followed by cultural performances by different cultural troupes and singers representing different ethnic communities of BTR. The literary festival at Kokrajhar, amidst its scenic beauty, local ethnic flavour, colour, melody and rhythm converged into an Annual Event of Creative and Intellectual Exercise and made Kokrajhar the hub of literary activities for the promotion of permanent peace, harmony and development in the Bodoland region.

The BTR government has undertaken measures for implementation of the rehabilitation package of 4881 NDFB cadres and ex gratia payment of 632 martyrs. Following the provisions of the Peace Accord, the BTR Government has taken steps for inclusion of new villages under BTR and so far 60 villages have been included.

As promised under The Bodo Peace Accord, provincialization of services of 259 teaching and non-teaching posts of 10 venture colleges has been completed. New Medical College, paramedical, Vocational, Technical and Nursing institutes are being started. Bodofa Super 50 Mission, Bodoland Science Education Mission, Dr. Basiram Boro Doctoral fellowship and other schemes in the field of education are remarkable steps taken by BTR Government.

The BTR government has taken steps to grant land patta to thousands and housing facilities for poor family. It has constructed auditorium and cultural complex for Adivasi, Gorkha and other communities and given support to sports persons and teams of the region. Granting of GI tags of 21 Bodo Cultural items is one major achievement of this period. The Govt has completed many schemes for construction of houses, road and culverts and provided financial support to women and entrepreneurs.

In the new regime, people have seen a qualitative change in governance and administration. They feel democratic rights of individuals and communities are taken care of. They say they are now happy to work and breathe under a people-friendly government that is committed to goal of peace, reconciliation and inclusive socio-economic development.

14

The Boro Peace Process: A Case of Identity Actualization

Bhaskar Jyoti Mahanta

Background and Epistemology

“Divide Assam 50-50” was a major slogan of the landscape painted by the Boros during the late Eighties in Assam.¹ In order to capture the essence of this demand, one has to understand the genesis of the Boro identity and its evolution to where it stands today. The need for the Boros to self-identify as a cohesive and distinct group is based on what scholar Henri Tajfel has referred to as Social Identity Theory (SIT) and its influence on collective self-esteem of a group.² Using SIT and Groupthinking³ as the theoretical framework, we will explore the Boro phenomenon in Assam and how the Boro people has achieved a state of relative peace today. In doing so, we will explore the various interventions done by both the Indian state and the Boros over the decades in order to achieve their political goals. By examining ontological exhibits, we shall explore the degrees of success (or failure) of such initiatives. In this chapter, we shall also demonstrate how the security scenario in Bodoland has been directly proportional to the achievement of the Boro’s group aspiration.

The Boros, who are a part of the larger Kachari ethnography, are generally accepted to be the aboriginal people of Assam who migrated to India from Tibet.⁴ With the advent of the Ahom kingdom, who made a long journey from the Mong Mao region of the Shan state in Myanmar, to Assam in the 12th century, the Boros lost their domination and administrative grip

over the geography of Assam.⁵ It is argued by historian R. N. Mosahary, conducting an etymological inspection of the term Boro, that finds it to be an autonym which became pertinent during inter-group interactions.⁶ The coexistence with the Ahoms led to inter group interactions for the Boros. As these interactions increased, so did comparisons. As scholar John Turner posits, such comparison leads to competition and a greater need for solidifying self-identification to an in-group.⁷ This process of grouping is often catalysed by a perceived or real threat to one's own group by an outgroup. At this stage, competition is transcended into conflict which may often take a violent turn.⁸ Here, we posit that by enhancing the self-esteem of the conflicting groups through reduction of the threat perspective to them, peaceful coexistence can be achieved among the groups. The case of the Boros could be an ideal case study for this epistemological framework.

In the colonial era, the elite class of the Boros surfaced much later owing to different factors, started to compare themselves with the Ahoms and the Assamese caste-Hindus who assumed a higher pedestal in the social hierarchy of Assam. The antecedents of the contemporary Boro identity can be found in the early 20th century when this class of Boro elites emerged to assert their stake in the sociopolitical landscape of the state. The resentment that arose from this comparison of the Boros with Assamese caste-Hindus led to the socio-religious Brahma movement under the leadership of Kalicharan Mech (later Kalicharan Brahma). Soon, this movement took a political turn as the burgeoning elite class of the Boro society started conducting annual mass meetings, modeled on the traditional *Raij mel*. This new found political consciousness among the Boros led to form a stronger in-group, thus solidifying their identity outside the Assamese caste-Hindus. Associations like the *Assam Kachari Jubok Sammilani* were the torchbearers of this crystallisation of identity. This resurgent class of Boro elites directly questioned the Assamese hegemony when they

submitted three separate memorandums to the Simon Commission in 1928.⁹ Thus, the comparison of the in-group, Boro, with the hegemonic out-group, Assamese caste-Hindu, led to the first identifiable Boro identity movement.

The question of language was the next plank on which the Boro identity movement was raised. Transcending from comparison to contestation, this phase witnessed the marking of a resurgent socio-political movement in the Boro society. The *Boro Sahitya Sabha*, formed on the 16th of November, 1952 in Basugaon, Assam, was the vanguard of this phase. Within days of its formation, the demand for Boro language as the medium of instruction in Boro inhabited areas was raised.¹⁰ The post-independence Assam government, which was essentially a reflection of the Assamese hegemony prevalent at that time, didn't want to indulge the Boros. However, the government agreed to include two Boro books in the curriculum. This was deemed as an affront by the *Boro Sahitya Sabha* who summarily rejected such offer. In the face of sustained campaigning and through the cooption of Boro Members of Legislative Assembly of Assam who were from the ruling Congress party, the *Sabha* was finally able to exert enough pressure upon the government who relented with some riders. The government agreed to Boro being the medium of instruction in primary education in 1963. The *Sabha* continued its pressure campaign as it wanted Boro as a medium up to secondary level. This came to fruition in 1968.¹¹

In parallel to the evolution of the *Sabha*, another outfit came to fore in the state to foster the political aspirations of the Boros. The Plains Tribal Council of Assam (PTCA) was formed on February 27, 1967 to compete as a direct response to Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's decision to reorganise of Assam through the federal structure. The PTCA believed that the reorganisation which was aimed at empowering the hill tribes would also have spillover positive impact on the Boros. Thus, they came out with a charter of demands to compete with the

Assamese hegemony and gain complete autonomy of selected geography. The leaders took their demands to the President of India as well followed by public rallies in the state. Eventually, the demand for a fully autonomous *Udayachal* gained steam.¹² To gain the attention of New Delhi, newly elected Boro leaders conducted a press conference in December 1972 where they proclaimed their demand for *Udayachal*. The presser was complimented by a huge public rally in Kokrajhar in January 1973. The Emergency brought an unprecedented opportunity for the Boros in general and PTCA in particular. Sensing the national mode, the PTCA entered into a pact with the Janata Party and in the 1977 general election, Charan Narzary became the first Boro Member of Parliament from the Kokrajhar seat which was left uncontested by the Janata Party. This was the first manifestation of the Boro aspiration to compete with the Assamese caste-Hindu domination politically. They capitalised on this victory in the legislative election in 1978 where the PTCA won four out of the nine seats they contested in. One of the winners, Samar Bramha Choudhury, also joined the state cabinet as the Minister for Forests and Animal Husbandry. As political success was tasted by the Boros, the demand for *Udayachal* lost steam. The All Boro Students Union (ABSU) which was formed in 15th February, 1967, started losing its relevance as the Assamese caste-Hindus successfully subsumed the Boro political leaders into mainstream politics and detaching them from the core demands of autonomy by the PTCA and ABSU.

The *Bodofa* Factor

The subterranean unrest of the Boro polity, emanating out of unfulfilled socio-political aspirations was kept latent through political masquerading by the dominant out-group of the Assamese caste-Hindus. However, as the Assam Agitation raged through the state in the Eighties, the Boro aspirations found a new face to lead the next phase of Boro identity's

manifestation in the form of the firebrand student leader and 8th President of ABSU, Upendra Nath Brahma.¹³ With the Assam Movement being almost entirely an Assamese dominated affair, the resultant Assam Accord had hardly any concession for the Boros. The perception of threat to their in-group was heightened to its crescendo with the Assam government's decision to make Assamese a compulsory language in Assam.¹⁴ It was with this background that Brahma came to fore, capturing the mode of the Boro group which was now ready to traverse from the competing stage to the conflicting stage of intergroup relations. Under his leadership, ABSU became the primary platform for Boros' identity assertion, dwarfing its predecessors like PTCA and *Boro Sahitya Sabha*.¹⁵ Mass rallies, protests, *bandh* (general shutdowns), railway blockades came to be seen as the symbol of this graduation to a conflict scenario for the Boros against the Assamese hegemonic identity. One such rally, held in Guwahati on June 12 1987, sent shockwaves in the corridors of power in Dispur as well as New Delhi. It is here that the slogan of "Divide Assam 50-50" made its appearance.¹⁶ The primary resolution of this rally was to proclaim a separate Union Territory for the Boros under the Indian Union. The leaders egged the gathered protestors from stage, "No Boroland, No Rest."

Such disruptions had woken up the power dealers in New Delhi who wanted to provide a platform for the Boros to voice their demand in a bid to take them off the streets. Thus, rounds of discussions took place in New Delhi where the Boro contingent was led by Bramha.¹⁷ However, the delay tactics of the Union only led to more frustrations for the ABSU and Bramha who had gradually acquired a cult imagery of his own and was referred to as *Bodofa* or Father of Boros. This phase saw the radicalisation of the Boro identity movement.¹⁸

Emergence of Violent Extremism in the Boro Identity Movement

Riding on this wave of subnationalism among the Boros, some groups emerged who leveraged on the radical aspirations

of the ABSU and aspired to up the ante by deploying violent extremism (VE). As with any such graduation, they started to dehumanise the outgroups, the Assamese caste-Hindus as well as other subgroups dwelling in Boro territories, thus paving the way for violent actions against them. VE groups like the Boro Security Force (forerunner to National Democratic Front of Bodoland) came to fore during this phase. The BSF was formed under the leadership of Ranjan Daimary in October 1986 which morphed into National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) in mid Nineties.¹⁹ The BLT, which was formed in 1996 in the heels of the formation of NDFB was led by Premising Brahma and Hagrama Mohilary along with Bir ChilagangBasumathary.²⁰ Bramha had previously formed another VE group in 1987, Boro Volunteer Force, which was overshadowed by the BSF which captured public imagination owing primarily to its demand for secession from the Indian Union.²¹

The level of violence perpetrated by these VE groups against the various self-identified outgroups for almost three decades has few parallels in the history of India. The death toll, which included Boro and non-Boro civilians, members of these VE groups as well as security forces, are in several thousand whereas the internal displacement numbers are in millions. Another unique feature of the Boro VE groups was the extremely high number of fratricides. This was fueled not only because of the divergence in demands (autonomy under the Indian Union as compared to secession from the Indian Union) but also on grounds of religion as well as the role of torch bearer of the Boro polity. A pertinent example of this fratricide is Operation KhrangKhrang where to VE groups went on overdrive to eliminate the leadership as well as the rank and files and sympathisers of each other. The audacity of these VE groups knew no bounds as evidenced by a daring raid of the 7th Assam Police Battalion by BSF militants wherein they looted the entire armoury of the battalion which included automatic

and semi-automatic weapons, area weapons as well as explosives and protective gears.

The Boro groups also leveraged on the geopolitical turmoil of South and Southeast Asia and established strong connections with other state and non-state actors in the region, establishing logistic lines as well as bases beyond India's borders. Heart wrenching violence brought down upon outgroups like the Koch Rajbongshis, Adivasis and immigrant Muslim populace led to escalation of threat within these groups, which in turn propelled them to form their own VE organisations for self-preservation. The primary antagonists for the Boros, the Assamese caste-Hindus, were also targeted on every available opportunity including serial blasts across the Assamese majority areas of the state. The members of the Muslim community, specially of Bangladeshi origin, were targeted by the VE groups as they were seen to be occupying precious land resources.²²

The above empirical study demonstrates how the Boro identity assertion followed the three stages of comparison, competition and conflict, as described earlier.

The Response of the State

The Indian state's response to the challenge of Boro identity assertion during the earlier stages were based on its earlier tested template of micro-partition based on language, ethnicity, etc. has worked earlier in Andhra, Punjab, Mizoram, Nagaland, etc.²³ This model of conflict resolution has generally worked as micro-sovereignty was an integral part of the deal where a majority community was given rights of autonomy within the Union of India. A case in point would be the creation of Nagaland, Mizoram and Meghalaya when territorial retraction was experienced by the larger state of Assam.

In pursuance of this, New Delhi assisted in the signing of a tripartite agreement between the Assam government, ABSU and the Boro People's Action Committee (BPAC) in February 1993. In essence, this Accord provided for the creation

of the Boro Autonomous Council (BAC) which would have limited autonomy over an area which would be created through a process of delimitation. Areas where the population of the Boros were over 50 percent would be under the BAC though some areas with less than the requisite population would also be included within the BAC to provide for territorial contiguity.²⁴ However, the delimitation exercise, which was a prerequisite for the implementation of the Accord never actuated, leading to an escalation of violence by the VE groups and political maneuvering by ABSU. It is with this backdrop that the BLT was formed and BSF rechristened itself as NDFB. In the face of escalating violence, the state response was one of “a top down, involvement of one group of the conflict, an imposing hegemonic attitude is discernible on the part of the Indian state.”²⁵ In essence, the Assam Government, the Union Government and BLT signed another tripartite agreement to form the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC), exactly 10 years from the first failed Accord of BAC on February 2003. The BLT promised to surrender its militant cause and ways to join mainstream politics by morphing itself into a political party, Boro People’s Front, led by the commander-in-chief of BLT, Hagrama Mohilari.²⁶ The party achieved early successes in electoral politics with 10 and 12 seats in the 2006 and 2011 Assembly elections in Assam respectively where they were a coalition partner to the ruling government in Assam led by the Congress party. In 2016, when the BJP came to power in Assam, BPF switched sides and joined the BJP government. While the BTC Accord brought in prosperity for a select class of Boro elites from the BLT/BPF fold, the aspirations of the NDFB faction remained unsatiated. This could be demonstrated with the subpar performance of the BPF in BTC in both social and governance parameters.²⁷ This led to an escalation of unprecedented violence in the BTC governed areas as well as other parts of Assam as the NDFB embarked in a bid to gain supremacy in the Boro identity assertion struggle. This paved

the way for deft dealmaking and artful statecraft by Indian intelligence and law enforcement agencies which led to the breaking up of the formidable NDFB into several factions, some of whom took a seat at the negotiation table with the state. However, the outcome was marginal decrease in violence and the Accord failed to create pathways for lasting peace among the various subgroups within the BTC as well as the Assamese outgroup, thus paving the way for the current peace accord signed in January 2020 leading to the formation of the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR). This final Accord shall be discussed in details in following sections.

Why The State Response Failed

One of the primary reasons for the failure of the BAC and BTC Accords, was the lack of appreciation for the uniqueness of the Boro struggle by the conflict managers. Expertise related to the situation was lacking in the power corridors of New Delhi and the heady mix of power and historic hegemonical relation of the Assamese caste-Hindus in Dispur. The policymakers treated the Boro identity assertion as a security challenge and not a sociological inter-group relation and identity assertion struggle between competing and often conflict groups. To address this spasm of expertise, the Union government sent a fact-finding committee led by former Union Home Secretary, Dr. Bhupinder Singh in February 1991, preceding the signing of the BAC Accord.²⁸ However, the BAC which was formed by the 1993 Accord was a poor reflection of the committee's report. Another key factor why the BAC could not garner trust of the Boro polity stemmed from the fact that the Accord did not fall under any constitutional framework as it was deficient in the protections of the 6th Schedule of the Indian Constitution. The Accord aimed to gain its credibility through a bill passed by the Assam Legislative Assembly, thus making it contingent to the political will of the Assamese caste-Hindus who were the majority in the Assam government.

Moreover, the BAC had only nominal autonomy which did not include any fiduciary powers, thus converting its “autonomy” into a mirage. To top it all up, the NDFB opposed the Accord on grounds of lack of representation of the supposed true voice of the Boro polity, the NDFB. With this concoction of lack of expertise leading to a fractured policy innovation which did not satiate the aspirations for self-esteem enhancement of the Boros, the BAC wrote its own epitaph within months of the signing of the Accord.

While the BTC Accord inherited some of the lacunas of the BAC, it also germinated its own unique challenges. Primary among them was the legitimisation of one VE group, the Mohilari led BLT, while leaving out the other major player, NDFB. The rationale behind this may have been the confidence of the Indian intelligence agencies to subvert NDFB by fracturing the VE group into multiple factions. While this plan did get executed and some of these groups did open talks with the government, those who remained out of the ambit of these negotiations proved to be formidable opponents. In fact, the decision to keep NDFB out of the Accord led to what scholars describe as ethnic outbidding.²⁹ This happens when one subgroup within the larger ingroup bids to portray itself as the legitimate and sole voice of the ingroup’s position. The NDFB, in a campaign to outbid the BLT and the BPF, indulged in mass violence against outgroups to prove its allegiance to the cause of establishing Boro identity on the one hand and engaged in fratricidal operations against other subgroups to eliminate intra-group competition on the other hand. Another key challenge was the unholy nexus of the democratic processes with VE groups. Being at the forefront of Assam’s counter insurgency (COIN) operations as Inspector General of Police, Law & Order, the author had a firsthand exposure to this phenomenon. While the BLT transformed itself into BPF and claimed to surrender its weapons, it maintained huge cache of arms and ammunition at several secret locations in BTC and elsewhere. It also kept its

select cadres at a high level of operational readiness to respond to the call for action at a moment's notice. Thus, the vicious cycle of ethnic outbidding between the NDFB and BLT/BPF took a bloody turn. Furthermore, it was witnessed that the electoral outcomes in favour of the BPF was sometimes a case of influencing the ballot with the barrel of the gun. Thus, though the BTC remained in vogue till 2019, it hardly addressed the core of the Boro identity conflict as it failed to elevate the self-confidence of either the ingroup (in its ability to protect itself from outgroups) or the outgroups (by reducing their perception of threat from the ingroup).

The Bid for Peace through the Third Bodo Peace Accord

With the ever-escalating levels of violence, the appropriate environment needed to be created for the policymakers to intervene with confidence building measures with respect to inter-group relations in Bodoland. As such, the COIN grid focused on the Boro insurgency had to be well integrated so that all stakeholders including the Indian Army, Assam Police, intelligence agencies and civil administration works in tandem and not on cross purposes. Consolidation of gains had to be made on the achievements of the new political dispensation to entice various factions of NDFB to see logic of a longer, peaceful life on the one hand and the need for a stronger Boro identity on the other hand. Relentless tactical COIN operations meanwhile, pursued by the security forces further weakened the VE groups. Efforts were also made to ensure that fairness of action was on display such that the populace did not get alienated in the process. In view of this, a constabulary approach focusing on a synergy of intelligence and law enforcement was deployed by the state as such strategies had already started bearing fruits against the other major VE group in Assam, United Liberation Front of Assam.³⁰ Furthermore, it was crucial to disarm BLT/BPF in the true sense of the term. Reports were plenty that in many cases, the BPF cadres and leaders would take the automatic rifles of their security detail (provided

by Assam Police) by coopting them in their pogroms. As Inspector General of Police; Training & Armed Police and then Additional Director General of Police; Training & Armed Police, the author worked out a two-pronged strategy. Firstly, the security detail of all BPF leaders were changed *en masse*. These police personnel were drawn from the 7th Assam Police Battalion which was in the Boroland area. Thus, most of the battalion personnel were transferred as internal reports clearly revealed that some of the police personnel were more often than not in cohort with BPF as this gave them access to political favouritism and other unholy perks. Secondly, the weapons issued to the security details which initially were automatic rifles, were replaced with carbines and the likes as these were not suitable for the violent actions BLT/BPF was engaged in. These concerted COIN efforts along with deft intelligence work across the Indian borders started delivering the desired results and the ground was gradually becoming fertile for self-esteem enhancement measures to be brought to bear on the various ethnic groups. Despite the efforts of certain top leaders of BPF to consolidate an armed group, such designs were foiled by through deft COIN operations augmented by crafty intelligence work. This resulted in a situation where the proverbial Damocles' sword was put upon certain heads as their weak underbelly were discovered by the police leadership. The political leadership both in New Delhi and Dispur displayed visionary statesmanship as they reached out with an olive branch to these vulnerable leaders with an offer of freedom from prosecution if they were to abandon their path of violence. Caught between a rock and a hard place, these BPF leaders had little choice but to accept the offer of peace of the political leaderships.

It is with this backdrop that the 34 years long Boro identity conflict was brought on the path of peace when the Third Bodo Peace Accord was signed on January 27 2020 (the author was the Director General of Police, Assam at the time). The most crucial aspect of this Accord was that it put an end to the ethnic

outbidding issue which was a toxic output of previous policy interventions as it brought to the table all subgroups including all the factions of the NDFB and the BPF as well as other stakeholders, that is, the Union government and Assam government to the table. Subsequent elections of the Bodoland Territorial Council as well as the Assam Legislative Assembly elections were hailed to be the most peaceful elections in the electoral history of Bodoland and it brought an end to the BPF hegemony of the Boro identity cause. The young, dynamic leader, Pramod Boro led his party United People's Party, Liberal (UPPL) to a landslide victory in the 2020 BTC elections. They formed an alliance with the ruling BJP and Gana Suraksha Party (GSP). Since coming to power, one of the key achievements of this coalition has been the acknowledgement of the fact that gross injustice had been brought to bear on the populace of Bodoland, irrespective of ethnic grouping. Such a reconciliatory approach goes a long way in reducing the fear among ethnic outgroups and softens their stance against the Boros. The policies of the coalition seem to be matching their talk as a secular and inclusive land reform policy is being implemented in the region. Outreaches like Land *Melas* are frequent where land allocation is done to those victims of violence of the past decades who were relegated to refugee status in their own state and were forced to live in camps. In an interview with the author, Ranjit Basumatary alias BR Ferenga, now an Executive Member of the Boro Council and formerly the General Secretary of NDFB attested the commitment of ruling coalition where he said that the slogan of the coalition is "All for All."

Concluding Words

While the journey of peacebuilding is certainly going to be a long one, the policy interventions under the Third Accord checks all the boxes whereby the populace themselves are working on creating peace for themselves and is not superimposed on them in a hegemonic manner as was done in

the past. The afore-stated journey of the Boro social identity shows how it follows the framework put forward in this article where social identities traverse a journey of comparison, contestation and conflict with a hegemonic outgroup unless there are measures to enhance the self-esteem of the ingroup as well as reducing the insecurities, both endogenous and exogenous. The empirical evidences exhibited here displays how the Boro social identity conflict is approaching this end state of peace without abiding by alienated assertions but by an organization of a collective consensus of political coexistence where the Boro identity blossoms in all its glory while remaining a part of the ethos of Assam. Such was the story of demise of the popular slogan of the Eighties, "Divide Assam 50-50."

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15

Local development through international networks

Prof. Ursula Fasselt

1. Introduction

I would like to begin my contribution by expressing my thankfulness for the opportunity to participate in the Bodoland International Knowledge Festival in February 2023. This Festival provided spaces for sharing knowledge and experiences, joint searching for solutions and building partnerships which was unique and very beneficial for all of us. In the current world full of conflicts and insecurities there is a great need for meetings like this for building of a peaceful and green Bodoland, and also globally, sharing and discussing experiences and solutions of activists and academics in the field of peace and conflict, human rights for vulnerable persons, like children, women, migrants and sustainable development is very beneficiary. The speech of Nobel Peace Prize winner Prof. Yunus and last but not the least the fantastic performance of the symphony of Peace and Resilience framing the festival were very inspiring. I wish that the inclusiveness, diversity and open mindedness of the conveners and the participants will guide the policies and development of Bodoland in the future.

2. The impact of international academic exchange

As a person who is dedicated to international academic exchange, I would like to focus my contribution to this publication on the possibilities and challenges of international exchange of institutions of higher education. Why do I think this is important is not only for the academic world but also for

social development in Bodoland. We currently experience worldwide nationalism, rising of religious intolerance, shrinking spaces for the civil society and grave violations of human rights everywhere, not to speak of the dramatic climate change reinforcing existing inequalities in and between countries. Against this background we must think about how to provide our youth with the necessary resources and tools to face these problems. Young people are change agents, and as Prof. Yunus has put it in his speech at the Knowledge Festival, “they are not young people of Bodoland, but young people of the world.” “Start with what is in Bodoland, estimate it and then take ideas from the world” was his advice. In order to “take ideas from the world” a structured exchange between institutions of higher education would be extremely helpful. Let me go into more details, why I think the effort to implement international exchange is worth it. I will differentiate it at three levels:

First of all, the level of knowledge. Through international exchange teachers will get to know best practices from the partner universities in didactic issues as well as new scientific and practical approaches. International academic cooperation provides spaces to exchange ideas and discuss options for action. Students will also learn about theory and practices in other countries; they will be able to compare problems and solutions in different contexts. The virtual or real discussion with students from other countries will give them a new perspective on their own situation and an insight into other cultures. They are also encouraged to learn foreign languages. Even the administrative staff can take advantage of international exchange, learning about best practice for governance, structure and inclusive design of their universities.

Secondly international exchange promotes so-called soft skills of all the members of the University. Students and teachers will learn to put themselves in the shoes of another person, this change of perspective is one of the pillars of a peaceful community with diverse members. Intercultural

competences are not only a precondition for respectful cooperation and therefor has to become part of the curriculum, but it will also be the fruit of the cooperation.

The third level is research. The exchange of perspectives and ideas raises new questions and often leads to joint publication or research. The current problems like climate change, migration and social inequalities can only be faced appropriately if different perspectives and scientific findings are brought together.

3. How to realize international exchange and build partnerships with universities

The internationalization of universities seems to demand great effort which may discourage Universities which are in a development phase. But even small steps can start the process of internationalization and have an impact. Internationalization consists of different elements and takes place on different levels. One way of bringing the world to the local University is the Internationalization of the curricula, thus including international subjects or perspectives. The second way is the physical exchange of teachers and students. This can be inviting guest teachers and sending teachers to partner universities. Students can study a semester abroad, go for internships in other countries organized by the partner university. These activities need structural preconditions, particularly regarding to the curricula and to a welcoming structure within the university. A less demanding option would be to organize joint summer schools or group excursions. But all alternatives of real exchange need funding. As one of the rare positive impacts of the covid pandemic the possibilities of virtual academic cooperation have been discovered. The virtual exchange, particularly guest lectures via zoom or other video tools, webinar or joint lectures series can be one possibility to start with.

The experiences with virtual exchange that has been evaluated for Germany by the DAAD mentions the outcomes: "International teaching can be made more flexible through

digital offerings by enabling participation in teaching and learning independently of location and time. Digital and intercultural skills are also promoted among students, which supports their preparation for the modern Labour market¹.” At the same time, digital formats contribute to the promotion of internationalization across the respective universities because they can be easily integrated into courses with a low degree of internationalization and enable all groups of students to gain experience abroad. The recommendations formulated by the DAAD evaluation team, were that “the respective university leadership should create strategic perspectives for digital internationalization and make use of incentives for teachers to promote the broad implementation of digital international formats. In the implementation process, all relevant actors at the working level should be included – from international offices, teaching staff, computer centers to didactic centers – so that the various facets of digital international teaching can be addressed by the responsible units.” I can add from my experience that a mixture between personal meetings and virtual activities is necessary in order to create sustainable relationships and partnerships, which are indispensable for the Internationalization of Universities.

Notes

⁴⁰Evaluation of the digital DAAD funded programmes, https://static.daad.de/media/daad_de/pdfs_nicht_barrierefrei/infos-services-fuer-hochschulen/projektsteckbriefe/gesamtbericht-evaluation-digitaler-programme-englisch.pdf

16

Bodo Peace Accord 2020 : A Pathway to Sustainable Peace and Inclusive Development in BTR

Adv. Sabda Ram Rabha

The Bodo Peace Accord 2020 marked a historic milestone in the quest for lasting peace and inclusive development in the Bodoland region of Assam. Signed on January 27, 2020, the accord brought together the Government of India, the Government of Assam, the All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU), the four factions of the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) and the United Bodo Peoples' Organizations (UBPO) signaling a commitment to addressing long-standing grievances and fostering socio-economic progress. The Memorandum of Settlement recognised the overarching need for finding a comprehensive solution to the Bodo peoples' movement for identity and autonomy within the broader conceptual framework of right of self- determination and in that sense, it is a game changer in terms of ensuring a new era of peace, stability, development and inclusivity.

In pursuance of the Memorandum of Settlement of the Bodo Accord, 2020 and in terms of the Clause 3.1 of the MOS, His Excellency, the Governor of Assam, with a view to augmenting the area and powers of BTR, was pleased to constitute a Commission under Paragraph 14 of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India and the Commission has studied the demographic composition of the areas to be augmented and after dialogue and discussion with different

stakeholders, the Commission is going to submit its recommendation. As mandated by the MOS, the Government of Assam has already notified the Bodo language in Devanagari script as the associate official language in the State. The Assam Government in consultation with BTC and other stakeholders have also constituted a Bodo-Kachari Autonomous Council, which will be a satellite council for the focused development of Bodo villages outside the BTR. In terms of Clause 4.3, amendment to Article 280 of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution is also underway to improve financial resources and administrative powers of BTR.

It is needless to say that the backdrop of the Bodo Peace Accord 2020 is rooted in a complex history of identity, autonomy, and conflict involving the Bodo community in the State of Assam resulting in a conflict situation and for decades, peace and development remained ever elusive in the region. It is worth mentioning that this Accord was preceded by two other Accords vis a vis the BTC region. While BAC of 1993 Accord could not make much headway due to inherent fault lines of the Accord, the BTC Accord of 2003 is significant in terms of recognition of legitimacy to the Bodo Peoples' decade long identity assertion movements, their aspiration for autonomy and the right of self-determination. For the first time, the right of autonomy of the tribal people and their rights over land and natural resources to a certain extent has been recognised and incorporated into the Constitutional framework under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India. However, challenges continued to persist due to lack of comprehensiveness of the BTC Accord, 2003.

Over the last two and a half decades, the region had witnessed unprecedented violence, militancy and vicious cycle of inter-ethnic conflicts. Even after 2003 Accord and subsequent creation of BTC, violence and conflict continued to escalate and, such recurrent violence and conflict situation had seriously afflicted the very social fabric resulting in a sense of distrust among the different social groups and consequently it had not

only claimed thousands of lives, but also took a heavy toll on the development dynamics.

As the countdown has begun to mark the 5th anniversary of the Bodo Peace Accord, 2020, my feeling is that there has been a dramatic turn-around in the situation of BTR. Under the dynamic leadership of Shri Pramod Boro, the Hon'ble Chief Executive Member of the Bodoland Territorial Council, immediately after assuming office, has already made several policy interventions in order to establish sustainable peace and security in the region and the process for healing and reconciliation have already started. The cornerstone of such initiatives is adoption of the slogan, "Peaceful, Smart and Green Bodoland" which is aimed at fulfilling the collective vision of the people of every section of the society in the once strife-torn region.

It is important to note that since assuming office the present BTR Government had faced overwhelming challenges to kick-start the developmental trajectory. The previous dispensation had left behind a huge financial liability which is evident from the audit conducted by the BTR Government and the audit report shows financial irregularities of an astonishing amount of more than Rs. 2000 Crore of which has left a huge adverse impact on the financial health of the BTC. It is in the public domain that corruption, nepotism, mis-governance, lack of transparency and total absence of rule of law marked the previous dispensation resulting in a total mess of the governance system. The constitutionalism and institutions which are hallmarks of democracy were systematically undermined and there was no access to justice in as much as there was a climate of fear and lawlessness.

The present Government of BTR deserves an accolade for resurrecting the governance back on track by recalibrating the system which had been left behind in total mess by the previous dispensation and in order to revamp and streamline governance delivery mechanisms, the Government has taken

several measures with a special focus on a comprehensive vision for Peaceful, Smart and Green Bodoland. Under the visionary leadership of Shri Pramod Boro, the Hon'ble Chief Executive Member of BTR, the Government is trying to create a level playing field for all sections of society to enable the citizens to freely participate in development discourse thus providing a platform for dialogue, debate and discussion. For the first time in the history of BTC, the events like Bodoland Knowledge Festival and Bodoland Literary Festival have taken place in the region where the scholars of international repute including Nobel laureate like Muhammad Yunus as well as experts of rare distinction in different fields had participated in those historic events. It is also significant that mega sports events like ISPL, Santosh Trophy and Durand Cup etc. were held in BTR in recent time which is all testament to an improving law and order situation as well as a new social order in the region. All these are indicative of emergence of a new political narrative in BTR and one has to acknowledge the fact that after transition of political power, there has been a paradigm shift in BTR politics: a shift from conventional power politics to politics as an instrument for social transformation.

One of the many commendable jobs the new dispensation has done is to constitute a Rule Committee headed by the Hon'ble Chief Executive Member of BTR which was followed by a Drafting Committee in order to fill the vacuum in the legislative field. Under Article 244 (2), 275 (1) and Sub-Paragraph (6) of Paragraph 2 of the Sixth Schedule to Constitution of India, the Bodoland Territorial Council has been mandated with enormous powers and autonomy to enact laws and regulations by the Bodoland Territorial Council Legislative Assembly. But it is rather shocking and disappointing to note that over the last 17 years preceding the new dispensation took over, not a single Legislation except the Bodoland Fund Rule had come into being. Now in exercise of powers conferred by Sub-Paragraph (6) of Paragraph of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India,

the BTC Legislative Assembly has taken up legislative initiative on a range of the subjects which are transferred to BTR. By doing so, the BTR Government has shown its commitment to implement the Accord in letter and spirit. More emphasis is put on having a comprehensive Land and Revenue Regulations of BTR to cover all the issues related to land, which will be a complete Code in itself. Further, the Drafting Committee in collaboration with the Rule Committee and other stakeholders have already drafted Laws and Rules on almost all the major transferred subjects. Several of them have already been passed by the BTC Legislative Assembly and the same has been sent to His Excellency, the Governor of Assam for his assent. On the other hand, drafting of a comprehensive New Bodoland Land Policy in consultation with experts of the Government and multiple stakeholders of the Bodoland Territorial Region has almost been completed in as much as the issue of land is identified as one of the root causes of all the major conflicts in BTR. Further initiatives are underway to enact the laws and regulations in other transferred subjects to BTC in order to ensure a legal framework within the Constitution of India which is going to have a far-reaching implication in terms of protecting and preserving the rights of the people of BTR.

When it comes to creation of human resources, the BTR Government has taken up some of the landmark initiatives which include 11th months of Govt. sponsored residential coaching facility for 100 Nos (*Rank-1 to Rank-50 For UPSC & Rank-51 to Rank-100 For APSC*) meritorious civil service aspirants of BTR at New Delhi and Guwahati respectively. The coaching will be provided by subject matter experts for UPSC & APSC - Prelims & Mains 2023-24. The coaching shall also focus on mentoring and aptitude development of the candidates through regular coursework, assignments and interaction with senior civil servants; 11th months of Govt. sponsored residential coaching facility for 50 Nos meritorious Engineering aspirants of BTR and 11th months of Govt. sponsored residential coaching facility

for 50 Nos meritorious Medical aspirants of BTR towards preparation for National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET). This noble Bodofa UN Brahma Super 50 Mission is perceived to be having a far-reaching impact in the transformative journey of the BTR.

Identification of priorities which include Industrialization and Job creation for both skilled and unskilled population; strengthening the Livelihoods and Social Security Infrastructure to address a variety of issues, including reversing the negative consequences of protracted conflict and introducing healing and well-being programs into the curriculum and aligning Planning with the BTR Vision 2030 Report, which outlines BTR'S short-medium and long-term development objectives by mapping them to the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are some of the important milestones of the policy initiatives of the BTR Government.

Ensuring the effective implementation of the Accord is no doubt challenging but the kind of resilience that has been shown by the BTR Government is reassuring that it can sail through the challenges whatsoever and for that, cooperation between the central and state governments, local authorities, and the Bodo leadership is a must.

The journey of change in BTR post the Bodo Peace Accord is a testament to the resilience of communities and the potential for positive transformation through dialogue and collaboration. As the region continues to evolve, the focus must remain on building a sustainable peace and inclusive future for all sections of the society fostering a model of peace that can inspire regions grappling with similar challenges in other parts of the world.

17

From Tradition to Transformation: Unveiling the Economic Renaissance of the Bodo Community in Bodoland's New Era

*Professor Akhil Ranjan Dutta
Taz Mazinder Barua*

Political autonomy movements across geographies of the world, since the last century, have seen territorial autonomy as a form of protecting the minority community from the constitutional majority rule. It has been seen as a compromise between full self-rule and absorption of the minority's interests in the majority's culture and political economy. But this emphasis on territorialization has also raised questions for the progress of the political autonomy movements. In our region of Assam where Bodoland constitutes one of the most important sub-regions, these questions must be pondered on. For example, has autonomy been a step towards the sharing of sovereignty or has it been the reverse? Can territorial autonomy be understood, especially in India, to have contributed to making democracy federal?

The Bodo Territorial Region (BTR), since its first setting up in 1993 in an earlier form and later its upgradation into the Bodo Territorial Area Districts (BTAD) in 2003 under the provisions of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India, has evolved its structuring and functioning with time. The creation of this special autonomy aimed to fulfill long-standing demands in the sectors of Bodo economic, educational, and

linguistic aspirations, in the preservation of land rights, socio-cultural and ethnic identity of the Bodos and to speed up the infrastructure development in the region¹. The test of time has shown that the Bodo-inhabited areas have indeed progressed economically, incidents of violence and conflict have reduced and many Bodos have taken up social and business initiatives.

There have been development-related challenges that the BTR continues to suffer the resolution of which has required the undivided attention of its government. These challenges came up because of the reason that Assam has had one of the highest gradations of inequality among the states in India. The BTR districts have been socio-economically less developed within Assam compared to districts in eastern (or upper) Assam². When one probes further into history, one finds that the history of colonialism has much to do with this neglect of the Bodo region. Introduction to economic modernity under British colonialism in India took place within an industrialization strategy giving prior importance to British interests³. Industrialization and modern agriculture occurred only in bits and pieces in some industrialization enclaves such as in Upper Assam where the business prospects of tea, oil, and other industries were discovered while Lower Assam with abundant forests and local agriculture remained unindustrialized and undeveloped.

In politics, in the nineteenth century, the Bodos were on the fringes as Assam's political leaders first developed the contours of nationalism and began to align with the Indian national struggle. The lack of political power enabled the colonial government to exploit the Bodo people's traditionally inhabited forests, lands, and agricultural areas for its commercial interests. Peasants in large numbers migrated to the Bodo areas to farm the lands newly opened up by the colonial government for their commercial interests⁴. The lack of control on migration has been one of the consistent problems affecting the Bodos (and other ethnic communities in Northeast India).

After independence, the movement of the Bodo and other similar identity-based movements demanding recognition of their social and economic aspirations influenced the government in making regions a central focus of the development frames of the state⁵. The Indian central government and the state governments created developmental programmes and subsidies to undo some of the regional disparity. Policymakers were awakened to the necessity of altering the hierarchies amongst the sub-regions by reforming the old patterns of development distribution.

The economic reforms in the 1990s have further modified the dynamics of economic development and progress in Bodoland by changing the ways financial investments, government funding, project planning, private sector investments, and employment creation take place. In the time after the economic reforms, fast-paced economic growth and development of new economic centers have generated the realization that the distribution of regional development opportunities would be better accepted and sustained if it is broad-based and favorably affects a larger number of people.

One response to this realization has been the liberation of mobility of capital stock, technology transfer, and labour movement, but these freedoms awarded to the private sector have not always encouraged industries and technology transfer to underdeveloped regions such as Bodoland. Political movements for greater autonomy thus find themselves compelled to put this question to the new and emerging economic development framework. The state has a key role to play in breaking this impasse, and it forms the other response to the changing demands for development distribution. The Planning Commission (and thereafter the NITI Aayog) and the Finance Commission's schemes and financial transfers to the states and autonomous administrative units have attempted to redistribute equitable development by transferring additional resources to poorer regions. Planned public infrastructure creation in

Bodoland through thoughtful deliberation of developmental and infrastructural schemes can invert the historical lack of planning and development in the BTR region. Careful planning will also ensure that BTR does not also become a 'victim of development planning', and that it does not join the neighboring sister states of Northeast India in suffering the 'dependency syndrome', an overreliance on central government funds that development planners have often discussed⁶.

It is also amply clear and it must be acknowledged that multi-layered contestations as well as the commonalities existing between the Bodos and non-Bodos in the BTR, the politicization of identities and their separate contentions for resource utilizations constitute a difficult but interesting and complex approach for development economics to pursue in BTR. The demand for greater Bodo autonomy, and even a separate state, cut away from Assam has been approached from different vantages. To offer an alternative vantage, in our opinion, the problem of increased migration in Bodoland should be looked at anew. Increased economic competition between the migrants and the Bodo community has been one factor for the community to look inward and seek to insulate its economic and political boundaries⁷. However, at the juncture when Bodoland as a region complete in itself, and the Bodo community seeks to participate in the opportunities offered by the global economy, the old flows of immigration and emigration might reverse, and new flows could even inspire the development of local industry.

Some state protections for the Bodo community and Bodo-language speakers such as language requirements and permanent residence in BTR ensure greater availability of employment opportunities in the government sector. Some of the BTR government's schemes are equally available for the ethnic diversities inhabiting BTR. Inclusiveness in the setting out of government schemes can help improve the inter-community relationships among BTR's ethnicities. The schemes

for the creation of self-employment opportunities, enhancement of business and vocational skills of the Bodo youth, and encouragement for the establishment of NGOs and social work organizations can boost the confidence of the Bodos by securing them meaningful livelihoods, increasing their income levels, and raising consumption expenditure. In this, especially important has been the imparting of greater financial knowledge. Access to credit and proper utilization of credit facilities for expansion of the Bodo's businesses and trade will make them self-reliant.

The demand for political autonomy for the Bodos has also a deep and intricate connection with the control of their lands⁸. The colonial treatment of lands in Assam emphasized maximum revenue generation and thus preferred giving control of lands and their access to commercial cultivators rather than subsistent Bodo cultivators. Seventy-five years after colonialism's departure, Bodoland's economy has an opportunity to capitalize on the technologies of modern-day farming, increased land productivity, and not depend on vast areas of land for commercially sustainable cultivation. The land ownership, transfers, and allotment system needs to modernize rapidly to keep up with the economic transformation and help in this process. The Bodos owning or having control of lands in the urban centers of Assam can develop their lands and utilize them for real estate, and commercial establishments such as in the hospitality, hospital, restaurants, and petrol pumps sector etc.

The government of BTR has already rolled out schemes through the various departments to upset its development deficit. It prioritizes infrastructure development in schools, educational institutes, and health facilities because education and health constitute the backbone of social development. It has topped it up in the education sector by instituting scholarships for students. BTR's local area infrastructure projects, water supply, and sanitation projects will improve connectivity to remote and interior areas of BTR and facilitate Bodo inhabitants in effectively marketing their products and services.

The BTR, its inhabitants, and the observers and friends of the Bodo community are living at this time in history in a turn-of-the-century moment. Diverse transformative possibilities and the dawn of the new century with the gifts of globalization and technological advancements characterize this moment. The Bodos stand at the forefront of this historical moment, looking onto a future that promises both challenges and opportunities. As the twenty-first century unfolds, the BTR is the canvas upon which the narratives of economic, cultural, and social evolution will be written. It encapsulates the aspirations, struggles, and resilience of the Bodo people, echoing a profound desire for progress, empowerment, and the preservation of their unique cultural identity. The dynamism of this historical moment invites also a contemplation on the challenges faced, the achievements celebrated, and the collective vision that will guide the Bodo community towards a new era of prosperity and cultural vibrancy.

Notes

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Photo Journey of BTR



The MoS for the landmark Bodo Peace Accord was signed on the 27th January 2020. This instrument has ushered in an era of peaceful, smart and green Bodoland. It was signed in the august presence of Hon'ble Home Minister of India Shri Amit Shah, by the Government of India, Government of Assam and the Bodo leaders (all factions of the former National Democratic Front of Bodoland, the All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) and the United Bodo People's Organization). It is to be noted that this was also the third Bodo accord signed. The first accord was signed in 1993 leading to the creation of the Bodoland Autonomous Council, and the second accord in 2003 which had led to the formation of the Bodoland Territorial Council.

The Bodo Peace Process:

1993: Bodoland Autonomous Council.

2003: Formation of Bodoland Territorial Council through an MoS between Government of India and Assam, and Bodo leaders.

2020: The Bodo Peace Accord was signed paving the way for formation of a Bodoland Territorial Region.



On 7th February, 2020, less than a month after the historic signing of the Bodo Peace Accord, a massive gathering of close to a million people from every nook and corner of the BTR were greatly blessed to welcome Hon'ble Prime Minister of India to Kokrajhar – the City of Peace. He comforted the people of BTR and reassured that our dream of having a peaceful, safe and resilient BTR would now be realised. The prophetic words of our Hon'ble Prime Minister rang a truth, deep in our hearts:

“आज एक नई शुरुआत, एक नया सवेरा और एक नई प्रेरणा को स्वागत करने का समय है। बोडोलैंड के विकास के लिए शांति हमारा मंत्र है।”

[Today is the time to behold a new beginning, a new dawn and a new inspiration. Our mantra for the development of Bodoland is peace.], he said, reassuring the people of BTR. Again during his visit to Bodoland on the 1st of April 2021, we were largely blessed by his wisdom and tenets...





The 4th Assembly of the Bodoland Territorial Council were sworn-in on the 14th December, 2020. After the historic signing of the Bodo Peace Accord 2020, the people of BTR gave their blessings and mandated the formation of a coalition government comprising the United Peoples' Party Liberal (UPPL) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). This coalition was formed under the leadership of Shri Pramod Boro, a signatory of the Bodo Peace Accord 2020.





Hon'ble Home Minister of India Shri Amit Shah, Karmayogi Chief Minister of Assam Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, Union Minister of India Shri Sarbananda Sonowal, Hon'ble Speaker of Assam Legislative Assembly Shri Biswajit Daimary, National VP and Spokesperson of BJP Shri Bajjayant Jay Panda, Cabinet Minister of Assam Shri Ranjit Dass, and Hon'ble Chief Executive Member of BTR Shri Pramod Boro attended the auspicious First BTR Accord Day Commemoration (27th January 2021) held at Kokrajhar – the City of Peace.



What a delight it was to receive His Excellency the then President of India Shri Ramnath Kovind and the First Lady Smt. Savita Kovind to the 61st Annual Conference of the Bodo Sahitya Sabha at Gwjwn Fwthar (Tamulpur) on 4th May 2022.

Above: His Excellency being felicitated by Hon'ble CEM of BTR Shri Pramod Boro with a memento "My Handloom My Pride" – an eri silk weave, native to BTR, in the august presence of: Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, Chief Minister of Assam, Shri Biswajit Daimary, Speaker of Assam Legislative Assembly and other dignitaries.



Hon'ble CEM Shri Pramod Boro presenting the Serja to Her Excellency the 15th President of India Smt. Droupadi Murmu, the first to hold the hallowed position from among the tribal/adivasi communities of India. Her election to the position is an unprecedented gift to the 104 million strong tribal-adivaasi peoples of India. This has greatly enhanced the morale, self-esteem, and agency of the tribal-adivaasi communities in India. Her Excellency is leading our great nation in right earnest towards the realization of our Hon'ble Prime Minister Modi Ji's vision— a Viksit Bharat @2047.



Smt. Kiran Gandhi, Managing Trustee of Initiatives of Change held a special interaction session with the staff of the BTC Secretariat. Organized as part of the Bodoland Happiness Mission, the event was also attended by Hon'ble EM of BTC Shri Dhananjay Basumatary. The Bodoland Happiness Mission aims to foster a vibrant culture of happiness, peace, and dialogue in BTR through initiatives such as community empowerment programmes, women in peacebuilding, youth conclaves, and the training of Happiness Champions.



The Green Bodoland Mission is a dedicated effort to align BTR's prosperity with nature's splendor, fostering a legacy of stewardship and inclusivity for future generations. It envisions a resilient and thriving region where ecological integrity is preserved and communities grow in harmony with a vibrant, sustainable environment.

In photo: Hon'ble Chief of BTC Shri Pramod Boro leading a ceremonial plantation as part of the mission, near the BDF Campus at Udalguri.



Mission Super 50 is an ambitious initiative designed to identify and nurture academically talented students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. It offers 11 months of high-quality, government-sponsored residential coaching and mentorship support to 50 aspirants each in the fields of Medical, Engineering, APSC, and UPSC, empowering them to achieve academic excellence and career success. In photo: Hon'ble CEM Shri Pramod Boro, ADGP of Assam Police Shri Hiren Nath, Kokrajhar SP Shri Pushparaj Singh, Secretary of Education Shri Amar Jyoti Barman, Director of Education (BTC) Shri Jagadish Prasad Brahma, and Dr. Pranav Singh during an interaction with the Super 50 Engineering aspirants."



The Bodoland Handloom Mission envisions strengthening community ecosystems by creating better livelihood opportunities for weavers, inspiring future generations, and preserving the rich cultural heritage of the region. Through this initiative, traditional craftsmanship becomes a means of empowerment and sustainable development in BTR.

In photo: Hon'ble EM for Handloom & Textiles Shri Dhananjay Basumatary inspecting the handloom machinery, including the Warping Drums and Frame Loom with Jacquard setup."



The Farm Machinery Bank Initiative in BTR aims to boost agricultural productivity by providing farmers with access to modern machinery. Launched by Hon'ble Chief of BTR Shri Pramod Boro in Tamulpur, the programme has established 18 Farm Machinery Banks across all Council Blocks, with the goal of extending coverage to every VDC, ensuring wider farm power availability and enhanced efficiency in agricultural operations.



The Fisheries initiative in BTR focuses on promoting responsible fishing practices, conserving aquatic resources, and supporting the welfare of fishing communities. Led by the Fisheries Department, it aims to build an eco-friendly and sustainable fishing industry by establishing producer cooperatives, strengthening community cohesion, and reducing vulnerability to poverty and food insecurity



The 1st Mwiur International Theatre Festival showcased powerful performances, thought-provoking plays, and innovative storytelling, highlighting theatre's role in expressing emotions, sparking dialogue, and promoting cultural exchange on a global stage.



A proud moment from Bodoland Mohotsav 2024! Hon'ble Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi Ji can be seen visiting the exhibition hall showcasing and celebrating the region's rich artisanal heritage. The exhibition highlighted the 21 culturally significant items of the Bodos that had received GI (Geographical Indication) tagging earlier that year.



The Bodoland Knowledge Festival 2023 was a vibrant celebration of wisdom and diversity, bringing together minds through talks, workshops, and cultural showcases. It fostered the exchange of ideas and empowered individuals to embrace knowledge as a transformative force for progress.



The Inter Sixth Schedule Premier League 2022 went beyond football, serving as a dynamic platform to empower youth, promote fitness, and foster unity across BTR communities. Captivating thousands, the tournament sparked excitement and pride, reinforcing sports as a unifying force in the region.



The 4th Asian Kho Kho Championship 2023 in BTR left a memorable mark in sports history, inspiring future editions and celebrating the enduring spirit of Kho Kho. Beyond the game, it promoted Asian cultural exchange, built lasting friendships, and strengthened mutual respect among nations.



The 76th Santosh Trophy 2022 celebrated unity, talent, and sportsmanship as players from diverse backgrounds came together to showcase the spirit of football. The event left a lasting impact on the football landscape of North-East India, highlighting camaraderie and the power of the beautiful game.



From hosting the 131st and 132nd Durand Cup editions, Kokrajhar- the City of Peace (Bodoland) is set to shine again in its 133rd edition in 2025. In photo: Hon'ble Raksha Mantri of India Shri Rajnath Singh, HCM of Assam Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, HCEM of BTR Shri Pramod Boro, Chief of the Army Staff Gen Manoj Pande, GOC-in-C Eastern Command Lt Gen RP Kalita, and AIFF President Shri Kalyan Chaubey with the Organizing Team during the launch of The 132nd edition of Durand Cup on August 05, 2023, at Kokrajhar, BTR.



The Baokhungri Festival, celebrated on the eve of Bwisagu/Bihu, honors traditional customs through cultural events and adventure sports that attract visitors from across the globe. Every year on Sankranti, thousands climb Baokhungri Hill—believing that doing so for three consecutive years brings blessings—making the festival a unique blend of spiritual tradition and communal celebration.



PM Modi inaugurated the first-ever Bodoland Mohotsav on Nov 15, 2024, in New Delhi, celebrating culture, peace, and development post-2020 Accord.



On Feb 17, 2025, Assam Assembly held its first-ever special session in Kokrajhar, honoring the 2020 Bodo Accord and advancing inclusive governance in the heart of Bodoland.



Mission Bwiswmuthi 1.0 & 2.0 are the pillars of land security and justice in BTR. In photo: Hon'ble Governor of Assam Shri Lakshman Prasad Acharya Ji launching the Mission Bwiswmuthi 2.0 and handing out land pattas to landless households in presence of Hon'ble Cabinet Minister of Assam Shri U.G. Brahma Ji, HCEM of BTR Shri Pramod Boro and other dignitaries, on the 15th of June 2025 at Kharuajan, Baksa district of BTR.



Mission Bwiswmuthi 2.0

www.bwiswmuthi.bodoland.gov.in

A revolutionary step towards offering the land rights to small tea growers, rubber growers, and other landless families of BTR



Mission Launch by
Shri Lakshman Prasad Acharya Ji
Hon'ble Governor of Assam

Venue : Integrated Textile Park, Kharuajan, Baksa
Date : 15 June, 2025
Time : 11:30 AM

PEACEFUL, SMART & GREEN BODOLAND

Mission Bwiswmuthi 2.0 focuses on providing the following services:

- Settlement on various types of Government Land (Khas/Ceiling Surplus) to Individual Occupant
- Settlement of PGR/VGR Land to Individual Occupant
- Settlement of Government Land to Individual Special Cultivators (Tea/Rubber)
- Settlement of Government Land to NGOs/SHGs/Cooperative Societies of Special Cultivators (Tea/Rubber)
- Settlement of AP Transfer Land from Original AP Holder to Eligible Occupants
- Online Certified Copy of Map

The services under Mission Bwiswmuthi 1.0 will continue



SCAN FOR LINK



These services are applicable for Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) only

Apply directly through Mission Bwiswmuthi Portal (www.bwiswmuthi.bodoland.gov.in) or Sewa Setu Portal (www.sewasetu.assam.gov.in) or visit your nearest Public Facilitation Center




For queries, contact your respective Circle Officer
Citizens can apply for the services w.e.f. 15 June, 2025

Sri Ranjit Basumatary
Hon'ble Executive Member,
LR & DM Department, BTR

Sri Pramod Boro
Hon'ble Chief Executive Member,
BTR



Assam Governor L.P. Acharya launched the BTR Community Vision Document for 26 communities at ITA Centre, Guwahati, joined by Speaker Biswajit Daimary, CEM Pramod Boro, ministers, and dignitaries.



The then Hon'ble Governor of Assam, Prof. Jagdish Mukhi laying the foundation stone for the Construction of Gurudev Kalicharan Brahma Convention Centre & Installation of Statue at Parbotjhora on the 20th December 2022 in the presence of HCEM Pramod Boro, Hon'ble Cabinet Minister of Assam Shri UG Brahma, Hon'ble Deputy Chief of BTR Shri Gobinda Chandra Basumatary and other dignitaries.



“Poetry for Peace and Love” was the reverberant theme for the glorious 100 Language Poetry Festival—the Kokrajhar LitFest 2021. This event hosted poets and literateurs from all over India and a few others from foreign countries belonging to more than hundred different languages. Subsequently the Kokrajhar LitFests were also held in 2023, 2024 and 2025 growing from strength to strength, reaching out further and further spreading impactful messages on peace, love, hope, resilience and harmony.

**CELEBRATING
Peace & Unity through Football**

VCDC-Level Face-Offs	14th – 18th June, 2025
BTCLC Constituency Level Competition	22nd – 26th June, 2025
District Level Matches	1st – 5th July, 2025
Council Level Face-Offs	10th – 15th July, 2025



The CEM Cup (launched on June 15, 2025) conducted throughout the Bodoland Territorial Region gave wings to the sporting energy of our youth. Held across 420 VCDCs, and featuring over 3700 clubs and close to 70,000 players comprising a large number of girls and women players, this tournament has also been famously lauded by Hon'ble Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi in the 123rd episode of his monthly radio address “Mann Ki Baat” on the 29th of June 2025 hailing it as “Symbol of Unity and Hope.”

18

Bodoland's Triumphant March to Peace, Development, and Prosperity

Dr. Pranav Kr. Singh

Abstract

This chapter offers a comprehensive exploration of Bodoland's intricate journey, delving into the historical struggles that have shaped the region. From conflicts that threatened indigenous identity, culture, and language of the Bodo people, to the significant accords that paved the way for peace, the chapter underscores the resilience of the people. In the contemporary context, it sheds light on the transformative endeavors undertaken by the current administration to propel Bodoland towards a brighter future. These initiatives encompass vital areas such as education, livelihood, digital advancements, and sports development. Yet, amidst these advancements, the chapter does not shy away from acknowledging the formidable challenges that lie ahead. Drawing from the experiences of the past, it contemplates lessons learned and envisions a promising future for Transforming Bodoland. In essence, this chapter is a heartfelt endeavor by the author to share his profound insights and experiences, presenting a comprehensive narrative of Bodoland's past, present, and the promising prospects that await.

1. Past: The Historical Context and Conflict Resolution

The roots of the Bodos are believed to trace back to the period of the 'Mahabharata.' Notably, Hidimba, a princess from the Dimasa Kachari community, who belonged to the great Bodo

group, is said to have married the great warrior Bhim during that time. Ghatotkach, a significant figure in the 'Kurukshetra' battle, fought on the side of the Pandavas and was the son of Bhim and Hidimba. However, historical records often lack comprehensive documentation of these events. Initially, the term 'Kachary' was used to identify their group, but as time progressed, it was replaced by the more widespread term 'Bodo.' Dimasa Kachari is one of the subgroups within this larger Bodo identity. The Bodos are the indigenous people of the Brahmaputra and Barak valleys in Northeast India. Ethnically, they have Sino-Tibetan origins, and linguistically, they belong to the Tibeto-Burman language group.

The movement for a separate Bodoland state originated from the deep-seated economic and socio-cultural aspirations of the Bodo people. Over decades, the Bodos have experienced a prevailing sense of neglect, exploitation, alienation, and discrimination. Historical events have significantly shaped the trajectory of their aspirations. During the era of British rule, territories like Dimapur, Khaspur, and Maibang, which were once under the rule of Bodo Kachari kings, were annexed by the British. The Bodos initially raised their demand for a separate homeland in 1919, aligning with other hill tribes of the northeast, forming the Bodo ChatraSanmiloni. The All Assam Plains Tribal League (AAPTL) formation in 1933 further demonstrated their quest for autonomy.

Several key organizations emerged as a reflection of the Bodo people's aspirations, such as the Bodo Sahitya Sabha (BSS) in 1952, the Plains Tribal Council of Assam (PTCA), and the All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU) in 1967, signifying their pursuit for peace, prosperity, equality and justice for the neglected Bodo people. The movement progressed through various phases: from 1967 to 1986, demands for autonomy grew, marked by significant events such as the demand for the Roman Script for the Bodo language, later settling for the Devanagari script in 1975 for broader national acceptance.

Political dynamics evolved during 1977-1985 with the formation, victories, and splits within various political organizations like PTCA, PTCA (P), UNLFT, and UBNLF, symbolizing the complex landscape of Bodo political aspirations. The phase from 1987 to 1992 witnessed a shift in leadership, with ABSU taking the forefront, and Bodofa Upendranath Brahma's presidency in 1987, marking a turn towards a mass non-violent revolution with the goal of achieving separate state Bodoland through a 50-50 division of Assam.

The period from 1992 to 2003 saw significant agitation, demonstrations, and the signing of the first Bodo Accord 1993. However, ambiguities in the terms and power-sharing led to violence, continuing the low-intensity conflict. This phase also witnessed the reorganization of Bodo Security Forces into the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) and the emergence of the Bodo Liberation Tigers (BLT) as a rival outfit. The signing of the 2003 Bodo Accord led to the dissolution of the BLT and its leadership assuming control of the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC).

The subsequent phase of the Bodoland movement was initiated with the election of Pramod Boro as the President of the All Bodo Students Union in 2009. He served as the longest-standing president from 2009 to February 2020, dedicating himself fervently to societal service. Central to his responsibilities was the pursuit of lasting peace in the Bodoland region and the transformation of society to ensure autonomy, education, and development for all individuals. Pramod Boro's primary focus was on establishing peace in the region. The momentum began with the observance of the 'Arms and Violence Free Society's foundation day by ABSU on 15 February 2009, rallying a substantial response from the masses. He proposed a defined boundary for the Bodoland region, stretching from Sonkosh in the West to Sadiya in the East.

Leading the movement alongside other NDFB (P) leaders, Pramod Boro employed democratic methods such as mass

gatherings, seminars, railway and national highway blockades, and indefinite hunger strikes. These events were organized both in the Bodoland region and at various times in New Delhi. This phase of the movement led to the eventual signing of the third Bodo Accord, “Bodo Peace Accord” on January 27, 2020, involving all factions of the NDFB. The accord symbolized a new dawn of hope for the Bodos and the people of Assam. It was a historic moment as the Bodo leadership, along with all factions of the NDFB, reached a Memorandum of Settlement with the Government of India and Assam.

The accord was widely welcomed by people, governments and organizations across the nation, fostering a sense of hope for lasting peace. All four factions of the armed revolutionary NDFB agreed to lay down their arms and re-enter mainstream society. The Memorandum of Settlement received enthusiastic support from more than 700,000 individuals on February 7, 2020, in Kokrajhar. Honorable Prime Minister Narendra Modi participated in the event, expressing a strong commitment to fully implement this historic third Bodo Accord, designating it as a Peace Accord.

This historical journey of the Bodoland movement reflects the deep-seated aspirations of the Bodo people for autonomy and recognition. Originating from economic and socio-cultural neglect, the movement evolved through phases marked by demands for a separate homeland, symbolized by various organizations’ formations like ABSU, BSS, and PTCA. Shifts in leadership, conflicts, and the emergence of armed groups like NDFB and BLT characterized the struggle for autonomy.

Pramod Boro’s leadership from 2009 to 2020 significantly propelled the movement, aiming for peace and societal transformation. The eventual signing of the third Bodo Accord in 2020, involving all NDFB factions, brought hope for peace, laying down arms, and reintegration into society.

2. Present: Peace-Building Efforts and Development Initiatives

2.1. Fostering Peace

Pramod Boro, the present Chief Executive Member (CEM) of the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) and President of the United People's Party Liberal, led the party to victory in the 2020 BTC Election through an alliance with BJP and GSP. Upon taking office, he immediately set out to reshape the region's image, particularly in Kokrajhar, a historically significant and administrative hub. Recognizing the area's tumultuous past, he initiated efforts to reconcile the community, starting with declaring Kokrajhar as 'City of Peace' and organizing significant events like the Kokrajhar Literary Festival in 2021, themed "Poetry for Peace and Love."

Continuing this momentum, a second edition of the festival was organized in 2023 with the theme "Literary for Peace and Harmony." This event aimed to promote peace, unity in diversity, and celebrate various languages and young regional talents alongside renowned poets and philosophers, nurturing intellectual culture. Furthermore, Pramod Boro orchestrated the Bodoland International Knowledge Festival in 2023, which attracted over 50,000 attendees and 200+ national and international speakers, including notable figures like Nobel Laureate Prof. Muhammad Yunus, philanthropist Savji Bhai Dholakia, educator Sonam Wangchuk, actor Vivek Oberoi, and various dignitaries.

The festivals not only facilitated cultural exchange but also introduced visitors to the warmth, Bodo culture and traditions, and biodiversity of the region. Pramod Boro expressed a commitment to transforming the lives of 3.5 million people in the BTR, emphasizing the journey from a violence-stricken past to a restored sense of peace. These initiatives, within just two years, significantly altered perceptions about the region, fostering new developments and attracting business, employment, education, and collaborations. Kokrajhar and other

districts in BTR have witnessed increased commercial activities and extended market hours, signifying a positive transformation and the growing confidence of people in the region.

Pramod Boro, a prominent figure associated with ABSU for decades for the Bodo movement, possesses profound knowledge about the communities, religions, organizations, and the people of the region, along with their problems. With extensive connections across various sectors, he engages with individuals from diverse backgrounds. His inclusive nature and penchant for meeting and interacting with people have led him to actively engage with the region's intellectuals, seeking their insights and collaborative solutions to the prevailing issues.

Recognizing the importance of grassroots understanding, Boro initiated direct engagement with communities, listening to their concerns through 'Janta Darbar' sessions and village-to-village interactions. He remains highly active, spending times primarily in the field, reaching out to previously unreached areas to comprehensively grasp and address problems at their core.

Given his instrumental role in the non-violent Bodoland movement leading to Peace Accord 2020, Boro has garnered significant respect and support, particularly from Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji, Hon'ble Home Minister Amit Shah ji, and other Central and State Ministers. This recognition stems from his dedication to peaceful solutions and his proactive engagement in addressing the concerns of the region.

2.2 Digital Bodoland: Technology for Transformation

Aligned with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Digital India initiative, the current administration in Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) is undertaking a comprehensive digital transformation across diverse sectors. This includes but is not limited to education, skill development, land and revenue management, tourism, sports, and agriculture. The government is actively transitioning various departments to digital platforms, exemplified by the imminent launch of an e-office system, land

record system, school databank, agricultural database, etc. The government is also aiming at enhancing governance and providing digital infrastructure to VDCs.

Demonstrating a proactive approach, the government is particularly leveraging social media platforms to disseminate information. Initiatives, programs, and events are extensively promoted on social media channels to ensure transparency and increase awareness among the masses. This concerted effort reflects the government's commitment to embracing digital technologies for efficient governance and wider public engagement in BTR.

The Government with support from NECTAR, has spearheaded a groundbreaking initiative by introducing the BTR CEM Dashboard (<https://btrcemdashboard.co.in/>). This innovative platform is designed to offer comprehensive insights into various facets of governance, including but not limited to project details, initiatives, grants, budgets, progress tracking, and developmental activities. It further provides a transparent overview of beneficiaries and the effective implementation of schemes. This dashboard stands as a remarkable example of leveraging digital technology to enhance transparency in governance. By making crucial information easily accessible to the public, the BTR CEM Dashboard not only fosters accountability but also ensures that citizens are well-informed about the progress and impact of various government projects and initiatives. This transformative step not only exemplifies the commitment to digital governance but also sets a precedent for effective and transparent administration in the Bodoland Territorial Region.

2.3. Education for All: Empowering the Youth :

The youth of Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) are endowed with immense talent; however, years of conflicts and violence have impeded the quality of education from the school to higher education levels. This hindrance has deprived Bodo youth of tapping into the vast career opportunities available to

them. Under the leadership of Pramod Boro, both during his tenure as ABSU President and subsequently as the head of the government, significant strides have been made to address this educational gap.

Pramod Boro's proactive engagement with academicians has facilitated the formulation of policies aimed at enhancing the quality of education in BTR. The government has initiated the upgrading of school infrastructure, collaborated with the state government to appoint proficient teachers, and established platforms for higher education, notably through the Bodofa UN Brahma Super 50 mission. The BTR Government in the last two years renovated 463 schools and built 100 others. Their target is to renovate 500 schools and build 100 new buildings in the next financial year. The launch of the BTR Super 50 mission for IIT JEE aspirants at the District Library in Kokrajhar stands as a landmark initiative in the history of Bodoland.

Despite initial skepticism, the results of the Super 50 IIT-JEE program proved highly positive, boosting the government's confidence. Subsequently, similar initiatives were introduced for APSC, UPSC, and NEET examinations, providing BTR aspirants with opportunities to excel. The first batch of Super 50 IIT-JEE witnessed all 32 candidates securing admission in prestigious institutions, including IITs, NITs, AEC, JEC, etc. The Super 50 UPSC program saw 34 candidates clearing APSC Prelims, with 16 clearing APSC Mains.

In homage to the great Bodofa UN Brahma, all these initiatives were consolidated under the Bodofa UN Brahma Super 50 Mission on his birth anniversary. The primary objectives of this mission include promoting education at the grassroots level, offering opportunities for students to become civil servants, extending support to economically weaker sections of the BTR, providing 11 months of high-quality government-sponsored education, and fostering awareness among aspirants. In a significant stride towards promoting modern science education in the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR), the inauguration of

the Bodoland Science Education Project has been undertaken. The government is actively fostering collaborative initiatives, partnering with organizations like the Agastya International Foundation, Tezpur University, etc. These endeavors aim to uplift and enrich scientific learning experiences for students in the region, marking a pivotal step towards advancing education in the field of modern science. These initiatives collectively mark a significant transformation in the educational landscape of Bodoland, empowering its youth and paving the way for a brighter future.

2.4 Decentralized, Responsive and Inclusive Governance

Under the leadership of Pramod Boro's government, and with support from both State and Central governments, a significant milestone was achieved in the decentralization of power in Bodoland. This was notably exemplified by the appointment of IAS officers to key positions such as the Principal Secretary of BTC and District Commissioners across all four districts. Pramod Boro's administration demonstrated a commitment to empower and entrust these officers with substantial responsibilities, despite facing criticism from various sections and intellectuals within society.

The strategic decision to decentralize power was rooted in Pramod Boro's understanding of the pivotal role these IAS officers could play in effectively implementing various initiatives from the BTC, state, and central governments at the grassroots level. Recognizing their potential, he believed that these officers could act as crucial facilitators in bridging the gap between districts, blocks, TCLCCs, and VCDCs within the BTR. This bold approach reflects Pramod Boro's vision for a more decentralized structure, acknowledging the importance of on-the-ground implementation for the success of government initiatives.

The current administration in the BTR has demonstrated a commitment to inclusive and responsive governance by

strategically assigning key portfolios, known as Executive Members, to leaders representing diverse communities within the region. This inclusive approach encompasses leaders from various backgrounds, including Bodo, Assamese, Santhali, Nepali, and Bengali communities. The deliberate distribution of leadership roles among representatives from different communities underscores the government's vision of fostering an inclusive and representative governance structure that truly reflects the diversity of BTR.

This initiative has proven to be transformative, empowering all communities within BTR and fostering a sense of inclusion and representation. As a result, there is a palpable empowerment felt across communities in BTR, reflecting the success of the government's inclusive approach. Each Executive Member is actively and independently working to drive initiatives related to skill development, education, sports, livelihoods, and the launch of other schemes within their respective departments. This collaborative and community-centric governance strategy not only embodies inclusivity but also ensures that the government is responsive to the unique needs and aspirations of each community within the Bodoland Territorial Region.

2.5 Spirit of Sports in the BTR: Providing a platform to the talented youth

The BTR Government orchestrated a groundbreaking initiative with the hosting of the First Inter Sixth Schedule Councils Premier Football League in 2022 (1st ISPL, 2022). This sports tournament marked a significant effort to provide a platform for the talented youth from these councils, enabling them to compete at national and international levels. The primary goal of this league was to cultivate a sports culture in the region, offering aspiring athletes the opportunity to showcase their talents and achieve excellence. Despite facing challenges and decades of being marginalized in mainstream development,

these councils are now on a trajectory of progress and peace, thanks to events like these that unite and encourage participation in sports.

The youth in the region exhibit remarkable potential in sports such as football, weightlifting, boxing, athletics, archery, and wrestling, providing an immense opportunity to position the BTR as a hub for sports. Recognizing this potential, the BTR government organized the Inter Sixth Schedule Councils Premier Football League as a strategic move to harness the region's sporting capabilities. This event not only served as a sports competition but also emerged as a symbol of peace, progress, and inclusiveness. It played a pivotal role in achieving common goals, fostering mutual cooperation, and promoting the development of the Sixth Schedule Councils while preserving the rich cultural values and traditions of the tribal society.

The success of the ISPL league inspired the BTR Government to further elevate its sporting profile. In 2023, the government hosted prestigious tournaments such as the Durand Cup and Santosh Trophy in Kokrajhar for the first time, both of which garnered immense success. Additionally, the 4th Asian Kho Kho Championship took place in Tamulpur, Baksa district, within the BTR in 2023. These significant sporting events not only symbolize the government's commitment to restoring peace but also highlight its dedication to providing a platform for the region's youth. The Hon'ble Governor, who attended the closing ceremony, emphasized that sports play a crucial role in strengthening peace, harmony, and unity among people from different regions, expressing his joy at witnessing countries come together for the tournament.

2.6 Missions for holistic development of BTR

The BTR Government has initiated several impactful schemes in honor of influential Bodo figures who dedicated themselves to the cause of Bodoland. These initiatives aim to

uplift livelihoods and commemorate the contributions of key personalities. Some key announcements include:

- **Bir Chilagang Basumatary Memorial Mini Stadiums:** Construction in Rowta, Dwarkuchi, Koklabari, Barghuli, and Chandrapara, each allocated Rs 5 crore. Bir Chilagang Basumatary, founder chairman of the Bodo Liberation Tigers (BLT), is remembered through this endeavor.
- **Subungthini Thandwi Bineswar Brahma Bodoland Knowledge Centre:** To be established in 420 Village Council Development Committees (VCDs) in memory of former Bodo Sahitya Sabha president, Bineswar Brahma.
- **Jalako Narzary Memorial Cinema Halls:** Construction in five towns and cities in honor of noted actor Jalako Narzary, recognized for his role in the first Bodo feature film “Alayaron,” which received the Rajat Kamal national award in 1986.
- **Martyr Sujit Narzary Memorial Auditorium Halls:** Planned for all 40 constituencies of BTC at Rs 1 crore each, commemorating the first martyr of the Bodoland movement, Sujit Narzary.
- **B. Bangbur Gwra Youth Centres:** Set to be constructed in every district and sub-divisional headquarters, named after the first martyr of NDFB, B. Bangbur Gwra.
- **Binod (Dabla) Brahma Sports Academy:** Two academies announced in Mushaampur (Baksa) and Dotma (Kokrajhar district) in honor of legendary footballer Binod (Dabla) Brahma.
- **Mission ‘Bwiswmuthi’:** A web portal for online land-related services.
- **AaiOnsaiBithanki:** A program supporting women at high risk of pregnancy under the Rog Nirmul BTR mission.
- **Bodoland Cancer Care Trust (BCCT):** Supporting cancer patients and their families in BTR.

- **Bodoland Sports Excellence Award:** Rs. 1 lakh each to 100 sportspersons.
- **‘Energy for Health’ Program:** Supporting solarization of over 500 health centers across BTR in collaboration with SELCO Foundation and the World Resources Institute (WRI) of Washington DC, USA.

2.7 Empowering Livelihoods: Missions for Sustainable Prosperity in Bodoland

The government has introduced an array of additional schemes focused on enhancing livelihoods and fostering socio-economic development for the people of Bodoland.

- **Bodoland Rural Industrial Centres (BRICs):** Two centers in BTR on a fast-track mode.
- **People’s Constituency Development (PCD) and Lakhpati Mahila Plan (LMP):** Economic empowerment initiatives.
- **Gender Resource Centres (GRC):** Five centers, one in each BTR district, to be managed and run by Women Cluster Level Federations (CLFs).

The Government has launched multifaceted initiatives under the Bodofa Livelihood Mission. A significant sum of Rs 61 crore has been earmarked to support 80,000 families in small-scale plantations. In response to the high demand for Northeastern goats, the “Goat Mission” will establish a semen production center for artificial insemination to enhance goat breeding. Recognizing the significance of pigs in the staple diet of the Bodos and other tribal communities in the Northeast, BTC Chief Pramod Bodo has conceptualized the “Pig Mission” as a key driver for sustainable change. In a strategic move, BTC is collaborating with Denmark and the Netherlands to upgrade and modernize traditional expertise in animal husbandry. Furthermore, the BTC has diversified into high-value crops such as dragon fruit, strawberry, and cocoa, contributing to the region’s agricultural economy.

Beyond agriculture, the BTC has initiated a cooperative movement to integrate former insurgents into sectors like poultry farming, dairy, and plantations. As the BTR achieves stability following the peace accord, these comprehensive initiatives underscore BTC's commitment to holistic development, ranging from animal husbandry and agriculture to education and cooperative movements, shaping a sustainable and prosperous future for the people of Bodoland.

3. Charting the Path Forward: Navigating Challenges and Embracing Future Prospects

As we look to the future of Bodoland, it is essential to acknowledge the challenges that lie ahead and strategize for sustainable progress. Addressing these challenges head-on will be pivotal in unlocking the region's full potential and ensuring lasting prosperity.

3.1 Maintaining Peace: Navigating Challenges for Sustained Harmony

Ensuring and sustaining peace in Bodoland is an ongoing endeavor that requires vigilant attention and strategic planning. While the region has experienced a significant improvement in stability following the Bodo peace accord, several challenges persist, demanding a comprehensive approach for long-term tranquility. Major challenges are:

- i. Addressing disparities in wealth distribution and ensuring that the benefits of development reach all sections of society are essential for sustained peace.
- ii. Despite strides in peace-building, reconciling historical grievances and fostering understanding among different factions remains an intricate challenge.
- iii. Involving the youth in constructive activities and providing them with opportunities for education and employment is crucial. Unaddressed youth grievances can become potential sources of instability.
- iv. Internal divisions within the Bodo community pose a significant challenge that could impact the peace-building

process. Ensuring their unity is imperative for the prosperity and development of Bodoland.

- v. Addressing the issue of land encroachment in BTR and curbing any illegal settlement are pivotal challenges that demand urgent attention for the preservation of peace in the region.

Maintaining peace is not only a goal but an ongoing process that requires adaptive strategies and a commitment to fostering an environment where all communities feel secure, represented, and invested in the collective well-being of Bodoland. Through sustained efforts and a holistic approach, Bodoland can continue to thrive as a region of enduring peace and prosperity.

3.2 Fulfilling the Promise of the Bodo Peace Accord: The successful implementation of the Bodo Peace Accord is imperative for securing enduring peace, stability, and prosperity in the BTR. While the accord represents a significant stride in resolving historical conflicts, realizing its promises and meeting the expectations of the people necessitates the fulfillment of all its demands. To bring the envisioned initiatives and projects to fruition under the Peace Accord 2020, the BTR Government relies on essential support from both the State Government and the Central Government. The timing of the Assam State Assembly election and Lok Sabha election, occurring subsequent to the Peace Accord, has impacted the scale and pace of implementation. Recognized as a major achievement of the Modi Government, the Bodo Peace Accord now demands heightened attention and substantial financial support to ensure successful realization at this crucial stage.

3.3 Constitutional Empowerment: Use of Special Provisions for Autonomous District Council

The Constitutional framework, articulated in Article 244(2) and Article 275(1), extends special provisions under the Sixth Schedule to confer autonomy upon areas designated as

Autonomous District Councils (ADCs). In this context, there is a pressing need for empowering the BTC, granting them legislative authority over their jurisdictions without any conflict with the state.

For the effective exercise of autonomy, it is imperative to regard the BTC as miniature states, endowing them with specific powers and responsibilities across all three branches of governance: Legislature, Executive, and Judiciary. This approach will ensure a comprehensive empowerment framework, fostering efficient self-administration and governance within the BTR.

3.4 Connecting Communities: Strengthening Links from Secretariat to Last-Mile Villages

The BTR does not operate under the Panchayati Raj system, and recognizing the necessity for local-level governance to spearhead developmental functions, it instituted two-tier bodies—TCLCC and VCDC. However, the current framework falls short in effectively decentralizing power at the grassroots, particularly in establishing robust democratic institutions at the village level. In the absence of such structures, there arises a critical need to establish a governance system that tightly integrates the BTC Secretariat with District Administrations, Block Development Offices, TCLCCs, and VCDCs. Existing gaps hinder the seamless implementation of various schemes and initiatives at the grassroots level, necessitating a strategic reassessment of the current system.

3.5 Purging Corruption: A Call to Integrity and Transparency

Eradicating corruption needs to be a paramount objective in the context of development of Bodoland, underscoring the commitment to fostering integrity, transparency, and accountable governance. Addressing corruption is pivotal for ensuring that resources are utilized effectively, public trust is maintained, and developmental initiatives reach their full potential. The Bodoland region is poised for transformative progress, and by upholding

principles of honesty and accountability, we can build a resilient foundation for a corruption-free and prosperous future.

3.6 Cultivating the Essence: Nurturing Nature, Culture, and Agriculture in Bodoland

Investing in the three signatures of Bodoland, namely Nature, Culture, and Agriculture, is not merely an economic imperative but a pledge to safeguard the very essence and identity of the BTR. This resonates with a call echoed by my friend Shri Pankaj Jaiswal Gandhi during his session at BIKF 2023, a sentiment that I wholeheartedly endorse.

- **Preserving Nature's Bounty:** The natural beauty and biodiversity of the BTR stand as its unique treasures. It is incumbent upon the government to earnestly strive towards their preservation and enhancement. A well-maintained ecological landscape, abundant with diverse flora and fauna, holds the key to unlocking the region's potential as a sought-after tourist destination in Northeast India. Properly curated and conserved, the natural splendor of BTR can pave the way for robust rural tourism, presenting new avenues for economic development.
- **Cultural Heritage as Identity:** Simultaneously, the rich cultural tapestry of BTR, woven with folk songs, dances, arts, crafts, and traditional practices, is an integral part of its unique identity. The government must dedicate concerted efforts to safeguard and promote this cultural heritage. By doing so, BTR can stand not only as an economic hub but as a proud custodian of its distinctive cultural legacy.
- **Cultivating Agricultural Prosperity:** The third pillar in the triumvirate of Bodoland's identity is Agriculture. A robust agricultural sector is not only a source of sustenance but a linchpin for economic resilience and rural development. To harness the full potential of Bodoland's agricultural landscape, a multifaceted approach is essential

that includes the adoption of eco-friendly techniques, organic farming, and water conservation methods that can enhance both crop yield and environmental sustainability, providing access to technology, improved seeds, and irrigation facilities can significantly boost agricultural output, transforming Bodoland into a flourishing agrarian hub. Establishing agro-processing units, promoting farmer cooperatives, and connecting them to larger markets contribute to the economic upliftment of the agricultural community and investing in agricultural education and training programs ensures that farmers are equipped with the latest knowledge and techniques.

4. **Conclusion:**

In the tapestry of Bodoland's history, woven with threads of struggle and triumph, this chapter stands as a testament to the indomitable spirit that has shaped the region. From the echoes of conflicts threatening the very fabric of indigenous identity to the harmonious chords struck by peace accord, Bodoland's journey has been marked by resilience, determination, and a fervent quest for a brighter tomorrow. The contemporary narrative unfolds with the transformative strides taken by the current administration, orchestrating a symphony of progress in education, livelihood, digital adaptation, and sports development. Yet, within the triumphant melody, the chapter resonates with an unwavering acknowledgment of the challenges that loom on the horizon. As the author's heartfelt endeavor concludes, it leaves an indelible mark—a comprehensive narrative encapsulating Bodoland's past, its dynamic present, and the promising prospects that beckon. This chapter stands as an invitation to all readers, stakeholders, and custodians of Bodoland's future to join hands in this collective odyssey, ensuring that the triumphant march towards peace, development, and prosperity continues, echoing through the hills, forests and valleys of Bodoland for generations to come.

19

Economic Impact of Forward Trading and New Land Revenue System Introduced in the 19th Century on Bodo Tribe in the Dooars

Pratibha Brahma

Several Trade Routes or mountain passes through Indo-Bhutan border in the northern bank of Brahmaputra Valley played a significant role in the history of Assam in India and its neighbouring country Bhutan. The passes in foothills of Bhutan popularly known as Dooars or Duars are situated on the extreme borders of Southern Bhutan and skirts the lower Himalayan ranges of today's Assam and West Bengal states of India. There are 18 Duars and they are divided into Bengal and Assam Duars.¹¹ Duars in the Himalayan foothills of Bengal situated between rivers Teesta and the Manas are Dalimkot, Zumerkot, Chamurchi, Lucke, Buxa, Bhulka, Bara, Goomer, Reepo, Chirang and Bagh and the rest of 7 Dooars are extended towards the foothills of Assam from the River Manas to Dhansiri with name as Boore, Gomah, Kaling, Banska, Chappagories, Chappakhmar and Bijni. It is apparent that presently, the Duars mentioned are situated under Jalpaiguri district in North Bengal and Bodoland Territorial Region districts of Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa, Tamulpur and Udalguri in Assam.

These Dooars or Duars were under the possession of rulers from Bhutan till they were annexed completely by the British rule after the Treaty of Sinchula on 11th November 1865. After India attained independence, these Duars became part of

India. The breadth of these Duars varied from 10 to 30 miles and their extreme length has been estimated at 220 miles. These Duars possessed sub-tropical monsoon climate and were described as humid, hot and steamy. These areas were once very dense with forest covers of thick jungles and bamboo rich in biodiversity of varied flora and fauna.

Almost the entire tract of Duars were inhabited by the Meche and Kachari tribes. The Bhutan Government ruled these territories through local officials appointed by the Deb on the recommendations of the Dzongpons or Subahs who were in charge of the districts to which these Duars were attached. It has been described in *History of Bhutan-Land of Peaceful Dragon* by Bikram A Jit Hasrat that "The Meches were hardworking tribe, and paid to the Dzongpons, who lived in fronts of the lower range of hills, revenue in kind-rice, cloth, betel-nut, cotton, butter and ghee. The rule of Bhutan Government was firm and absolute. Thus, several of these trade routes through these passes which existed throughout the ages between Tibet and North Eastern part of India were and are still known as Kachari-Dooars. Mechi and Kachari tribe mentioned are today mainly known as the Bodo Tribe.

The Bodos are mainly agrarian by occupation and the tribe has been attributed to discover agriculture and sericulture by historians. Their expertise in agriculture especially the traditional method of irrigation through Dong System had been highly praised by the British Officials and the American Missionaries during the early 19th Century. It has been described by historians and scholars that they were adept in cultivating varieties of rice and cash crops like mustard seed, cotton and sugarcane. They had good skill in practicing animal husbandry especially in rearing of pigs and fowls and also grew horticultural crops like orange, banana, pineapple, betelnut etc. The entire tribe gained fame due to their expertise in the field of sericulture by rearing Erisilkworms and producing finished products of silk clothes in their handlooms.

It is interesting to note that as per written in number of documents on the subject, it is given that the Bodos also engaged in border trade activities connecting link with hill tribes from Bhutan, Tibet and China through these passes of Duars. The most famous and busy trade route that enriched in economy of the area was the Lhasa-Tawang-Udalguri Route. The trade witnessed considerable volume of barter trade between the Tawang Hill tribes and the Bodo tribes of Udalguri region. This trade link extended to the interior of Tibet and China. It has been mentioned that the trading through this route were done mainly on items of Chinese silk, ponies, musk wax, rubber and gold dust as imports and items exported from Bodos were mainly rice, cotton, and silk yarn, dried fish etc. The traders from Bhutan known as Bhootias or Gonger by Bodos came down during the winter season through these routes and carried out barter trade in the commodities mentioned with the Bodos. The Bodos developed good personal relation with their counterparts from Bhutan who often were hosted by them in their own houses as special guests during their trading trips to places like Udalguri, Tamulpur, Darangajuli, etc. This benefitted the Bodo tribes economically and encouraged them to extend their trade with the hill tribes through barter system.

But unfortunately, this business transaction between hill tribes of Bhutan and the Bodos were affected when the British East India Company in the latter part of 19th Century opened up trade route from Northeast India with Western China and caused adverse economic impact on the Bodos. In addition, initiating of monetary transaction system due to increase in volume traders who were not familiar with monetary transaction totally replaced the barter trade and triggered the need for capital both in retail and small-scale wholesale trade. They monopolised the entire wholesale trade and bigger volumes in transaction monetarily was taken over by them from the local Bodo tribes. The Bodos could not survive the onslaught of this economic impact and were compelled to be dependent exclusively

on agriculture. Flourishing trad by Marwaris in Udalguri and other Bodo dominated region in the Duars attracted traders from Barpeta area who were and are popularly known as Barpetiahs all over Assam. They were mainly given land to settle down during Ahom rule in Assam. It has been mentioned in Government despatches that the monopoly of mustard seed trade was on hands of Barpetiahs who generally extracted oil from the mustard crop and exported the finished product outside Assam. Sharp business acumen of the Barpetiahs enabled them to diversify their trading in other avenues of trade and thereby they initially entered Udalguri region for collecting mustard seeds from Bodo farmers who abundantly produced the crop. Their success in the business enthused them to expand their activities in other Bodo dominated areas. The Barpetiahs in the process introduced the system of forward trading amidst the tribe. In this practice of forward trading, the traders paid advance money at a lower rate to the Bodo farmer who cultivated the mustard seed while the crop was still standing on the field before harvesting time. The same crop fetched invariably much higher rate after harvesting which was befitted by the Barpetiah traders. The Bodo traders who suffered cash crisis during British rule henceforth rendered crippled after introduction of taxation on land, exports and imports of goods etc. badly affected the Bodo farmers and traders to hit their economy. This is how all business engagements and profit on agriculture yield slipped one after another from hands of the Bodos who were economically on upper hand at one point of time.

The Bodos who were mostly illiterate and simply fell in the trap laid by the Marwari and Barpetiah traders who emphasized on the points of risk factors like unpredictable climate, rainfall and other elements involved in forward trading and so they sought for some security before giving them advance money for standing crop. To refer on the magnitude of injustice meted out to simple tribes through forward trading it is reflected in paragraph written by Ajoy Roy in his book "The Bodo

Imbroglia” which states- “As an insurance for this uncertainty the Barpetiahs not only assessed the expected quantity of harvest at the lowest possible average but also adjusted the output measure of extra guarantee used to execute a non-judicial deed on ordinary paper. They kept the land or a part thereof mortgaged as compensation for non-fulfilment of the forward contract. The Bodo farmers were mostly illiterate and strangers to all paperwork and thus were practically at the mercy of the scheming Barpetiah traders. Though the genuine cases for honouring these mortgage deeds did arise, often such mortgage transfers of land used to be accomplished on the strength of mutilated or even false mortgage deeds.” The cultivable lands in Bodo areas were mostly covered by annual patta as per land ownership record or some had no patta at all as it was not felt necessary by many then. The nexus between the corrupt lower level revenue officials and Barpetiah traders manipulated this deficiency of not having proper land records by Bodos and they in the process managed to grab huge areas of cultivable lands from the Bodos on the pretext that Bodo farmers had failed to keep the deals of forward contract and as per mortgage deeds were liable to hand over their lands to the Barpetiahs. Subsequently, Barpetiahs expanded their activities in trading agriculture activities and money lending business in Bodo areas. This was the first phase of land alienation faced by the Bodos from the region.

Thus, imposition of the New Land Revenue System by the British Government during later part of the 19th Century, failure to cope the transition of barter trade to monetary transaction added by cash-crisis, manipulation on Bodos by Marwari, Barpetiah and other traders through forward trading, getting trapped by borrowing money in money lending business etc. broke down economy of the Bodos, the dominant tribes in Duar areas. It has been stated by Khema Sonowal in her book “Why Bodoland Movement” that- “Excessive exactions made by the corrupt revenue collectors like Choudhurys and

Mauzadars further aggravated the situation. On such circumstances a huge number of the Bodos and other tribal peasants were appointed in military forces and also in tea gardens opened by the British since 1839, just to earn money for paying land revenue."

Apart from these factors, it should be mentioned that easy way of life adopted by Bodos then thinking only for today leaving aside for their worries tomorrow significantly affected their economy. They hardly looked for better avenues or options for generating good economy whereas, number of fresh ideas and prospects brought in by British to the country enthused the Assamese elites to motivate them to venture into feasible economic activities. The Bodos were thus left far behind in all aspects of development during the period.

Till today even in this 21st century, we find tribes like Bodo, Rabha, Garo and the like still reeling under poverty and are compelled to fulfil their needs by opting to be victims of forward trading due to scarcity of food during lean period. Forward trading which is termed as "OgrimPhannai" in Bodo is mainly done on cash-crops like areca or betel-nut, horticultural fruits like jack-fruits, lichi etc. Farmers who own plantation of areca-nut usually sell out the crop while it is still tender at lower rate mainly due to economic crisis for food during lean period before harvesting of paddy to the traders involved in this business. The traders harvest the crop when ripe and get much better price for the same giving good economic benefit to them.

Same can be said about the poor section of tribe getting trapped in money lending business carried out by shrewd money lenders. In this system of money lending which is locally termed as "Dharta," amount is given to the borrower on loan by money lender. Generally, a verbal agreement is committed that the money would be returned in kind where the price of paddy, the only source of income for poor farmer, is settled before hand at the will of money lender at rate far below the current price. Thus, good portion of paddy at stipulated time, the interest is

calculated at the rate of 50% in term of paddy and the compound interest calculated often become too high and the debtor has to lose his land to the creditor. It is observed that poor farmer is compelled to take the loan during crisis for food, unforeseen occurrence of health issues in the family or under compulsion of unfavourable circumstances etc.

The land mortgage system locally termed as “BondokHwnai” has also been observed to be in practice till today. The poor farmer during period of crisis for money due to number of factors borrows money from money lender with a proposal of pledging his cultivable land as mortgage for a specific period till he can return the borrowed amount with interest in lieu of the amount borrowed. The land goes under possession of money lender from the day the deed of mortgage is executed. As per the deal, in case the borrower fails to return the amount with interest the land concerned would be forfeited to the money lender. Most of the time, poor farmers fail to free their mortgaged land and thereby are rendered landless to become a nomadic labour under Mahajan in the village. Though numerous financial institutions like the bank or other financial aid by government should assist the poor farmers or the needy ones during crisis, they hardly get opportunity to avail these loans or assistance due to complexities involved in the process. Hence, all doors are closed for poor farmers other than getting entrapped on the clutches of manipulative money lenders. Concept of micro-financing has been introduced in tribal areas too through government and private agencies, especially to empower marginalised section of women. But in many cases, it has been observed that it is not only unorganised but also manipulative towards the poor and needy farmers during crisis.

Under the visionary leadership of Shri Pramod Boro, the region has witnessed a landmark transformation in its approach to land governance ever since the signing of the Bodo Peace Accord 2020, and the subsequent formation of the BTR Government under his leadership. In a span of four and a half

years, the region has made remarkable strides towards modernizing its land administration system, with a strong emphasis on transparency, efficiency, and citizen-centricity. The flagship programmes of the Government of Bodoland Territorial Region— Mission Bwiswmuthi 1.0 and 2.0 are welcome interventions aiming to settle land in favour of the landless and the needy. This mission recognizes land as the key for survival, dignity, identity and self-respect of persons and households in our society. It enables the people of BTR to build social, cultural and economic capital.

Through the complete digitization of land records, streamlining of administrative processes, and the rollout of forward-looking policies, the BTR Government has reinforced the protection of land rights across communities. This comprehensive overhaul has played a pivotal role in enabling faster service delivery, enhancing land tenure security, and resolving disputes that had previously remained unaddressed for decades. The introduction of cutting-edge tools such as digital records, GIS-based mapping, and user-friendly online service portals has not only elevated institutional transparency but also empowered citizens by making land services more accessible—something that was once considered unattainable in the region's recent past.

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The Contribution of Bodo Sahitya Sabha towards the Growth and Development of Bodo Language and Literature

Pranab Jyoti Narzary, Ph.D.

Abstract

The Bodo Sahitya Sabha (BSS), founded in 1952, has played a pivotal role in the preservation, promotion, and development of Bodo literature, language, and culture. This article explores the major contributions of the Sabha in fostering literary creativity, institutionalizing language education and standardizing Bodo grammar and nurturing generations of writers and scholars. It also examines the Sabha's role in securing constitutional recognition for the Bodo language and reflects on its evolving relevance in contemporary times.

Introduction

Language is a fundamental marker of cultural identity and a vital tool for intellectual and social progress. Among the indigenous communities of Northeast India, the Bodos have sustained a rich oral tradition that gradually transitioned into written literature, especially in the 20th century. The Bodo Sahitya Sabha emerged as a crucial institution in steering this transition. Established on 16th November 1952 at Basugaon, the Sabha became a unifying platform for Bodo writers, scholars, and cultural activists to promote and protect their linguistic heritage.

Historical Context and Formation of Bodo Sahitya Sabha

Kalicharan Brahma (1900-1974) was a seminal figure in the socio-political and cultural landscape of the Bodo community in Assam, India. His philosophy, grounded in the principles of social justice, cultural revival, and linguistic identity, significantly shaped the Bodo society's evolution. Bodo. He was the pioneer to bring the awareness about the language, literature and education among the Bodos. He was a pioneering figure in fostering awareness of the Bodo language, literature, and education. Under his strong leadership, the *Bodo Satra Sammilani* was established in 1919. *Satra Smmilani* exerted remarkable influence on the conscience of the new generation Western educated Bodo youths in the state. Bodo students and gentlemen from different districts *viz.* Goalpara, Nagaon, Kamrup, Lakhimpur, Dibrugarh and even of West Bengal participated in the annual sessions of the *Sanmilani*. The participants' recited poems, read out stories, essays and delivered lectures on socio-economic and cultural aspect and shared new thoughts for the development of Bodo language and literature. These sessions brought unity among the scattered Bodo population of different parts of the country to work together for the progression of the Bodo language and literature. (Mochahary: 2007). However, it lacked coordination and institutional support. Recognizing this gap, a collective initiative led to the formation of the Bodo Sahitya Sabha in 1952. The Sabha was envisioned as a guardian of Bodo literature and culture in response to the linguistic marginalization faced by tribal communities during colonial and early post-colonial periods.

Standardization and Codification of the Language

Bodo was first introduced as a medium of instruction in primary schools in Bodo-dominated areas of Assam in 1963. This was a result of long-standing demands and socio-political movements by Bodo Sahitya Sabha and many Bodo organizations. Today, Bodo is used as a medium of instruction

up to the secondary level and is also an associate official language of Assam. More recently, the Assam Higher Secondary Education Council (AHSEC) has decided to introduce Bodo as a medium of instruction for Higher Secondary Arts courses from the academic year 2023-24. Moreover, Bodo is taught up to Post Graduate level in five Universities. One of the earliest achievements of the Sabha was the standardization of Bodo grammar, spelling, and usage. It played a central role in resolving debates over script and orthography, eventually leading to the adoption of the Devanagari script in 1975 after a long and contested process. The Sabha's publication of dictionaries, grammar books, and linguistic research helped formalize Bodo as a modern literary language. The Sabha's consistent advocacy led to the introduction of Bodo as a medium of instruction in schools and later as a subject at secondary, higher secondary, and university levels. It collaborated with academic institutions and curriculum bodies to develop textbooks and syllabi. The inclusion of Bodo in the 8th Schedule of the Indian Constitution in 2003 was a landmark victory, made possible through decades of sustained campaigning by the Sabha and allied organizations.

Literary Growth and Canon Formation

The Sabha provided a robust platform for writers, poets, and dramatists. Under its patronage, a wave of creative literature flourished—from poetry and short stories to novels and plays. Annual sessions of the Sabha, literary awards, and publications like *The Bodo* created a dynamic literary culture. Eminent writers. Every year the publication board of Bodo Sahitya Sabha and District committees publish more the hundred books of different genres. A good number of Bodo Authors have been awarded Sahitya Akademi in different categories. Moreover a few authors have achieved International Literary Awards too. It is worth mentioning that eminent Bodo poet Brajendra Kumar Brahma has been conferred the Tagore Literary Award, a joint initiative of India and South Korea. Likewise, eminent Bodo

woman poet Anju has been honoured with the Sparrow International Award.

Promotion of Translation and Multilingual Dialogue

The Sabha encouraged the translation of important literary works from other languages into Bodo and vice versa, thereby enriching the corpus of Bodo literature. It fostered inter-literary dialogue with Assamese, Bengali, Hindi, English, and other tribal languages, promoting mutual cultural understanding and integration. The Government of Bodoland and the Government of Assam, has been extending financial assistance to the Bodo Sahitya Sabha to promote the growth and development of the Bodo language, literature, and culture.

Cultural Renaissance and Identity Assertion

Beyond literature, the Sabha has contributed to the broader cultural renaissance of the Bodos. It revived interest in indigenous traditions, folklore, oral literature, music, and dance. In the face of cultural homogenization, the Sabha emerged as a vehicle for asserting Bodo identity and pride in a multilingual, multicultural national framework.

Challenges and the Way Forward

Despite its monumental contributions, the Bodo Sahitya Sabha faces contemporary challenges such as declining reading habits among youth, digital disconnect, and limited publishing infrastructure. To remain relevant, it must embrace digital platforms, promote young talent, and expand outreach to a wider perspective. Collaborative research, documentation of oral traditions, and fostering academic linkages are crucial for its future vitality.

Conclusion

The Bodo Sahitya Sabha has been the bedrock of the literary, cultural, and linguistic development of the Bodo people. It has successfully transformed a primarily oral tradition into a written and academically recognized literature. As it steps into

the future, the Sabha must continue to adapt while staying rooted in its foundational mission—to be the custodian and catalyst of Bodo language and literature. Its legacy serves as a testament to how community-driven efforts can reshape the literary destiny of marginalized languages.

Notes

1. Boro Anil, 2010, *A History of Bodo Literature*, Kolkata: Sahitya Akademi.
2. Boro, Madhuram, 2007, *Historical Development of Bodo Language*, Guwahati: NL Publications.
3. Moshahary, Premananda, 2007, *Development of Language and Literature of Tribal People of Assam with special reference to the Bodo People*, in the Bodo, 37th Issue, Kokrajhar: Bodo Sahitya Sabha.

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बि.टि.आर. नि नोजोराव गोग्लैनाय जौगालु खामानि, मावथांखिफोर आरो सोलायहोनाय हाबाफारि

ड॰ सुनिल फुकन बसुमतारी

बि.ए.चि. (1993) आरो बि.टि.चि. (2003) बादिनो बि.टि.आर.खौबो सम, खाबु आरो थासारिखौ नायनानै एबसुनि लागाम हमनायाव ई 2020 मायथाइनि 27, जानुवारीआव गोरोबथाया जानानै थाडो। बबेखानि बि.टि.चि. आरो बि.टि.आर. गोरोबथाखौ फारियै बि.एल.टि.एफ. आरो एन.डि.एफ.बि. नि माखासे दाबि आरो दावहाखौ नोजोर बोनानै एबसुनि दैदेन्नायावनो जाफुंनायखौ जों गासैबो मिथियो। मानिजाथाव अमित शाहआ दाखालैसो बोहैथि बोसोर ई 2025 आव जानानै थांनाय एबसुनि 57थि बोसोरसालिया जथुम्मा, बड'फा फोथार, दतमायाव बेखौ फोसावलांदोंदि “एबसुआनो बर’ हारिनि दावगानाय आरो थांना थानायनि गुबै सिनसि” होननानै बबेखानि बेव सावरायनो लानाय आयदाया जाहैगोन बि.टि.आर. गोरोबथानि इयुनाव नुनो मोननाय मोननैसो सोलायनाय आरो दावगानायखौ नोजोर बोनो नाजानाय।

बि.टि.आर.नि जोनोम

बड'लेण्ड टेरिटेरियेल रिज'न एबा बि.टि.आर. आ ई 2020 मायथाइनि 27 जानुवारीआव एन.डि.एफ.बि. (नेसनेल डेमक्रेटिक फ्रन्ट अफ बर'लेण्ड), एबसु (अल बड' स्टुडेन्स इउनियन), इउ.बि.पि.अ. (इउनाइटेड बड' पिपल्स अरगेनाइजेसन) जों आसाम सरखार आरो भारत हादरनि ड'थि फारिनि संबिजितजों जोनोम मोनदोंमोन गुबैआव भारत सरकारजों गोरोबनायाव। बे गोरोबथाखौ गोजोन (Peace) नि गोरोबथा (Agreement) मुं होनानै इउ.पि.पि.एल., बि.जे.पि. आरो जि.एस.पि. नि गेजेराव Alliance Party दानानै बिसायख'थिआव देरहानानै एबसुनि बारग' आफादगिरि मुस्लि प्रमद

बर 'नि दैदेन्नायाव बि.टि.आर. सरकारखौ दैदेनदोंमोन। बेनि उनाव जों Education, Agriculture, Health, Infrastructure, Skill Development. Language and Literature आरो Sports आव माखासे सोलायनाय आरो जौगानायखौ नोजोर बोनो हायो।

सोलोंथाइ (Education)

सोलोंथाइयानो मोनसे हारि आरो हादरनि जौगानायनि गुबै सिनसि। जाय हारिया सोलोंथाइयाव जौगानो हाया बै हारिया जेरैबो गोगलैसोना थानो गोनां जायो। जों मिथिगौ बर 'नि बिमा रावखौ फोथानो बर' बिजोंखौ फोथानानै लाखिनांगोन। बेखायनो थाखो जिसे (11) आरो जिनै (12) सिम बर' बिजों (Bodo Medium) खालामनो हानाया गोदान सरकारनि मख 'जाथाव खामानि मावनाय बुंनो हायो। बबेखानि दिनै गोबां एल.पि., एम. इ. आरो गोजौ फरायसालिनि थासारिया गुबैयै बर' बिजोंनि फरायसालिफ्रा मोजां नड। गोबां जायगायावनो फरायसालिया फरायसा गोयैनि जुनै बन्द' जाबाय। बेखौ गोदानै दाजानाय बि.टि.आर. सरकारा बर' बिजोंनिबो मोजां-मोजां फरायसाफोरखौ "Bodofa UN Brahma Super 50 Mission जों IAS नि Coaching नि अनगायैबो APSC, NEET आरो JEE बेफोर गोजौ थाखेनि Coaching होनो नाजाबोनायखौ जों नुनो मोनदों। बेजों गोबां सोलायनाय आरो मुलाम्फा जानायखौ जों नुनो मोनदों। आगोलाव जोंनि APSC Exam Crack खालामनायनि अनजिमाया एसे बिबानिमोन। नाथाय आथिखालाव जों अनजिमाखौ बांलांनयखौ नुबोगासिनो। बे जोंनि थाखाय गोजोनथाव बाथ्रा। बर' बिजों फरायनानैबो UPSC आरो APSC Crack खालामो बेखौ बुंनो हायो। नाथाय Private Boro Medium फरायसालिफ्रा सरकारि फरायसालिनिखुइ साबसिन फिथाइ (Result) खौ मोनहोनो हादों बेखौबो जों दिनै मिथिनो मोनबाय। गोदानै दाजानाय सरकारा बे बिथिंखौ नोजोर होदों आरो फरायसा बिमा-बिफा (Guardian) फ्राबो बर' बिजोंखौ फोथाना लाखिनायाव मदद आरो हेफाजाब होयाब्ला State आरो Central Govt. एबा बि.टि.आर. सरकाराबो बर' बिजोंनि फरायसालिखौ फोथाना लाखिनायाव फेलें जागोनखौ जों नुहुरो। जायखिजाया मानाव गेदेद गाहाइ मावफुं सोद्रोमा प्रमद बर' बिथाड सोलोंथाइयाव गोबां गोनांथि होनायखौ जों थानाय समफ्राव

नुनो मोनदों।

बर' राव थुनलाइखौ जौगा होनो बर' साहित्य सभा मुडै जोंहा मोनसे थुनलाइ आफाद दंखायो। बे बर' थुनलाइ आफादआ Primary to District आरो Central सिम खामानि मावो। बे आफादखौ लाफानानै बर' राव थुनलाइखौ फोगोमनाय, फोजौनाय आरो गोसार होनायनि असिलायै ई 2024 माइथायाव 16 नभेम्बराव “Bodoland Mohotsav 24” बर' राव आरो थुनलाइ जौगाहोनाय (Promotion of Bodo Language & Literature) खौ हादरनि राजथावनि दिल्लीयाव ABSU, BHA, आरो BSS जुभागै गाजा गोमजायै इउ.पि.पि.एल. सरकारनि भागिदा आरो नाजानायाव मोजाडै मोजां जानानै थाडो। बे मावथांखि आरो हाबाफारिफ्रा थारैनो बर' राव, थुनलाइ आरो हारिमुखौ मुलुग दरबाराव गोसार होनायनि मोनफा मोनफा बिदिन्थि बुंजायो। बेनि अनगायैबो इउ.पि.पि.एल. पार्टिनि माखासे मेलेमजिबि आरो मानगोनां गाहाइ मावफुं सोद्रोमा प्रमद बर'नि नाजानायाव “Kokrajhar Literary Fest” मुडै ई 2021 मायथाइनिफ्राय बर' राव थुनलाइखौ आसाम एबा भारत हादरनि गुबुन गुबुन राइजोनि लोगोसे गुबुन हादर जेरै Japan, South Korea, Denmark, Estonia, Italy, Sri Lanka बायदि बायदिनि लिरगिरि आरो खन्थाइगिरिफ्राबो बाहागो लालानायखौ नुनो मोनदों इयुन समाव। “Poetry for peace and love” theme जों खन्थाइ An Anthology of Poems खौ Kokrajhar Literary Festival-2021, BTR, Assam, India बिखं महराव सेबखानानै 100 रावनिबो बांसिन खन्थाइ फरायनायाव दंमोन Poetry for change नि मोन्दांथि। बे हाबाफारियाव “खन्थाइ” बिसम्बिनि सासे सुजुगिरि महरै खामानि मावनायनि अनगायैबो बे लिरगिरियाबो खन्थाइ फरायनो खाबु मोनदोंमोन। बे जाबाय गोदान बि.टि.आर. सरकारनि मोनसे गोदान मावखान्थि आरो सोलायनाय आरो जौगाहोनायनि गुबै मोन्थोर। नडब्ला बि.टि.आर. गोरोबथानि सिगां एन.डि.एफ.नि Search Operation नि मुडै बर'नि गामि गामि दाय गैयै सुबुंफोरखौ Encounter खालाम खालाम बर' हारिखौ फोजोबनायनि मोनसे गात्रि Agenda Assam आरो Central Govt. आ लानाय बादि जों मोन्दाडो

बे समाव दिनैबो। नाथाय BTR Agreement इयुनाव मानगोनां गाहाइ खुगिरि प्रमद बर' बिथांनि गोख्रों नाजानायाव गासै बर' ओनसोलाव गोजोन थासारि लाबोनो जुनै “Kokrajhar LitFest” खुंनायाबो बाख्यायजाथाव मावथांखि Agenda जादों होननो हायो। बे LitFest आ 2nd आव Literature for Peace and Harmony (6-8 January, 2023), 3rd आव Existing Boundless Horizons – The Native Narrates (27-29 January, 2024), आरो 4th आव Bringing People, Cultures and Literatures with a Message of Peace (1-3 February, 2025) आव खुलांजाबाय। बे हाबाफारियाव गोबां गोदान आरो गोजाम लिरगिरि आरो खन्थाइगिरिफ्रा लोगो हमनायनि खाबुया गाव गावनि गेजेरावबो जादों आरो भारत हाददनि गुबुन राइजोनि लिरगिरि, खन्थाइगिरि, सल 'मागिरि आरो थुनलाइगिरि आरो बिजिरगिरिनि अनगायैबो Foreign Countries नि लिरगिरि आरो थुनलाइगिरिनि लिस्नाय, फरायनाय, बुंनाय आरो सुबुंजों आयदा सोलाय सोल' (Exchange of Ideas) खौ खालामनो मोजां खाबु जादों। बे बेसेन आरो मोन्दांथिखौ जायफ्रा बाहागो लादोंमोन बिथांमोना थारैनो मोनदांखागोन। बे हाबाफारिखौ जाफुंसार आरो जारिमिन महरै जों बिसम्बि महरै मोनगोन बेव सेबखांजानाय “खन्थाइ” (सेथि/21), “थुनलाइ” (नैथि/23), “लिरथुमलाइ-1”, (थामथि/24) आरो “लिरथुमलाइ-II”, (ब्रैथि/25) जों। बेनो बिथां मानगोनां गाहाइ मावफुं सोद्रोमा प्रमद बर'नि गोदान, सोलायनाय आरो जौगानाय सानस्त्रि आरो जाफुंसार मावथांखिनि गेजेराव मोनसे बर' राव-थुनलाइ आरो हारिमुखौ फोजौनाय आरो गोसार होनायनि जुनै मावनाय।

गेलेनाय/खेलाखौ फोजौनाय (Promotion of Sports in BTR Region)

जों मिथिगौ बर'फ्रा गोदोनिफ्रायनो जोलुर गेलेनायाव गोबां मुं खामायनो हादों आरो गाव गावनि जिउ खांनाय राहाबो लामा मोनदों। बि.टि.सि. सरकार थानाय समावबो Football, Archery, Boxing आव गोबां गेलेग्रा दिहुननो नाजानाय आरो State Level आरो National Level सिम लानो नाजानाय

नुनो मोनदों। बे Trend and Spirit खौ दावखोहोनो आरो जौगाहोनो (Promotion) मावथांखि लानायखौ जों नुनो मोनो आरो गोदानै दाजानाय सरकारनि जोहै आगोलनिफ्राय साबसिन आरो हामसिन मावथांखिजों। बेनि Planning आरो Policy Making खौ जों बि.टि.आर. सरकारनि गाहाइ खुंगिरि मानिनां प्रमद बर' बिथानि नाजानायाव Successful जानाय नुनो मोनो। ISPL 2022 आव गासै Sixth Schedule Councils of Indiaनि गेजेराव Football League खौ मोजाडै जाफुंसार खुंनो हादों। Durand Cup 2023 आरो Durand Cup 2024 खौबो क'क्राझार सहराव खुफैनो हानायाबो बि.टि.आर. ओनसोलनि Football Spirit आरो Enthusiasm खौ बांहोनाय आरो Sports खौ Promote खालामनायनि मोनसे गिदिर मावथांखि, मानोना बेव Bodoland FC खौ दानानै Durand Cup आव बाहागो लाहोनायनि खाबु खालामनानै होदों।

गोजौवाव बि.टि.आर. सरकारनि नोजोर बोनो हानाय मोननैसो जौगालु खामानिनि मावथांखि आरो जौगानो सोलायहोनो नाजानायखौ सोलोंथाइ, बर' राव-थुनलाइ आरो गेलेनाय/खेलानि आयदाखौ लानानै सुंद 'यै सावरायबाय। बेखौ जों मिथिनाय आरो मेगनजों नुनाय आयदाखौल' एसे सावरायनाय जादों। बेनि अनगायैबो सावस्त्रि (Health, Sanitation and Hygienic Drinking Water) आरो लामा दालां लुनाय, गावखौ जेरावबो राफोद खालामनाय (Skill Development & Entrepreneurship) आरो आबाद (Agriculture and Horticulture) अमा फिनाय, ना फिनाय बेफोर बिथिंखौबो गोबां जौगालु आरो NEDFi आरो NITI Aayog नि जोहै गोदान आद 'बजों दावगानो Training & Workshop लानाय, NDFB नि Rehabilitation नि Package, Community Vision Document आव गासै 26 हरिनि राव-हरिमु दावगाहोनाय आरो सरैखानि थाखाय, आरो "Mission Bwiswmuthi 1.0 x 2.0" नि जोहै हा Patta राननाय बेफोर गोबां मोजां हाबाफारिफ्रा जागासिनो। बेफोर गोदान बि.टि.आर. सरकारनि गोथार सोलायनायनि आरो जौगाहोनायनि मावथांखि। लोगोसे आगोलनो फालिबोनाय बाउखुंग्री फोरबोखौबो फोथानानै लाखिनो

हादों। हारिमुखौ गोसारहोनो आरो अनसाय होनो हादों। गमामायै बेफोरनो
बि.टि.आर. नि जाफुंसारनाय।

22

Community Visions of BTR : Transforming Communities and Heralding Peace and Stability in the Bodoland Region

*Kati Ram Boro, Speaker, BTCLA,
Advisor, Bodoland Happiness Mission &
Chairperson of the Community Vision Document*

Bodoland has long carried the burden of a difficult past, marked by cycles of conflict, mistrust, and violence. For many across the country, the name “Bodoland” became synonymous with unrest. But today, we are writing a new chapter—one of healing, reconciliation, and collective hope. And at the heart of this transformation is the Bodoland Happiness Mission, an initiative rooted in emotional well-being, community participation, and peace-building.

Under the visionary leadership of Hon’ble Chief Executive Member Shri Pramod Boro, the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) is not only reclaiming its narrative but setting a new example of inclusive and heart-led governance.

Breaking the Myth: From Violence to a Culture of Peace

One of the most remarkable shifts in recent years has been the breaking of the myth that Bodoland is a region destined for conflict. Nowhere is this more evident than in Kokrajhar, once considered among the most sensitive areas in Assam. Today, Kokrajhar proudly stands as a City of Peace—a symbol of what is possible when leadership meets community aspiration.

There is now no fear of communal conflict, no climate of tension—only growing trust, dialogue, and a shared sense of purpose. The Bodoland Happiness Mission has played a quiet but powerful role in this journey, touching thousands of lives across the region through mental well-being programmes, youth engagement, healing circles, and inter-community trust-building initiatives. It is one of its kind in India, placing inner well-being and emotional healing at the centre of governance.

A People's Vision: Shaping the Future from the Ground Up

What makes the progress in BTR especially meaningful is that it is community-led. From remote villages to townships, people are stepping forward to articulate their needs, share their hopes, and dream of a future shaped by dignity and harmony.

The most participatory embodiment of this is the Community Vision Document launched on the 30th December 2024, an unprecedented, region-wide initiative to gather aspirations, grievances, and visions from every community in BTR. Reaching out to all 26 Communities residing in BTR, 77 Community Organisations, having Focus group discussions, Key informant interviews and mapping the hopes and aspirations of the people of BTR. This is not just another government Document—it is a moral, social, and developmental commitment, it is a shared commitment between the people and the BTR Government to build a future that belongs to everyone. The very example of the post-launch impact of the Vision Document has already begun to show. One moving example is the announcement of a Community Museum—a shared space to honour the cultural heritage of all 26 communities of BTR. This is not only symbolic of our diversity, but also a powerful gesture of inclusion and unity.

As Chairperson of the Committee guiding this process, I can say with confidence that this is a historic exercise, never before undertaken by any council government. Every section of society, youth, women, elders, farmers, artists, and educators, is being invited to dream boldly and participate in shaping governance.

From Conflict to Co-creation

The significance of this moment cannot be overstated. For decades, Bodoland struggled with alienation, injustice, and wounds that ran deep. But today, we are choosing healing over hatred, and dialogue over division. We are moving from being a conflict-affected region to being a peace-inspired society—not through force, but through listening, empathy, and collective visioning.

The Bodoland Happiness Mission is not just a programme. It is a philosophy. It represents a new way of doing governance, where policies are shaped by emotion as well as logic, by people as well as planners.

The Road Ahead

As we continue our journey, let us honour the spirit of this transformation. Let us hold space for one another's stories, share in each other's joys and struggles, and remain committed to the collective vision of peace and progress for every person in BTR.

We are not just transforming communities—we are transforming mindsets, rebuilding trust, and crafting a future where Bodoland is known not for its past conflict, but for its pioneering peace.

Let this Vision Document be our roadmap. Let Kokrajhar be our symbol of peace. Let the Bodoland Happiness Mission continue to light the way. And let the world see what is possible when a people rise with courage, and when leadership leads with heart.

23

Peace and prosperity usher new dawn in BTR

Gautam Das

The positive mindset of people can change the direction of the present as well as the future. Three years ago, the people of BTR began thinking of progress and positivity. With the desire for change and the blessings and well-wishes of the people of BTR, in 2020 we were able to form a government for the people, of the people, and by the people. This BTR government is a government that works with the positive mindset of the people and the inclusive development of BTR. Every member of this government works to fulfill the hopes, aspirations, and needs of the people of BTR. With the guidance, advice, and inspiration of our Honorable Chief of BTR, Sri Pramod Boro, we are moving forward to provide, along with the development, peace, harmony, brotherhood, unity, and equal rights to the people of BTR. We are working sincerely and tirelessly to provide skillful education, social security and well-being, creation of economic opportunity and employment, capability and motivation, good governance, and inclusive development to BTR.

BTR, situated in the Northeast of India and the northern part of Assam, is blessed with rich history, natural beauty, and abundance of natural resources. With a majority of indigenous Bodo population, this area was backward in all aspects of life and at the bottom of the development ladder. Neglected from every angle. For the overall development of the area, the populace of BTR were in agitation for more than 3 decades.

The agitation was supported in every way by all the tribes and communities that called BTR their home. Following in the footsteps and inspired by Lt. Upendranath Brahma, the chief pioneer of the Boro Agitation, many youths of Bodoland had to pay the ultimate sacrifice and were martyred. Even though there were differences of opinion among the leaders of the agitation, their ultimate goal never changed. During the prolonged agitation, the area remained isolated and devoid of development. Due to the prevailing troubled situation, progress and development came to a standstill. In spite of the BAC and the BTC accord, peace did not return to the area. With the BTR agreement on 27th January 2020, a new dawn of peace was ushered in the region. The BTR agreement signed by the leaders of the organizations NDFB, ABSU, Assam Govt, and the Indian Govt. brought with it a ray of hope and development for the region. Everyone realized that it is impossible to bring peace and prosperity via conflict and violence. Killings, violence, and hatred were a matter of the past. The bond of togetherness and belonging among all the tribes, communities, and languages of BTR grew stronger than ever. The dark clouds of mistrust and suspicion gradually disappeared, and the blue sky of peace returned to the region. The Bodo community finally found the opportunity to fulfill their personal hopes and aspirations. This is the ultimate transformation.

After the BTR agreement, respected Sri Pramod Boro has sacrificed himself to establish a peaceful, prosperous, and developed Bodoland, unitedly taking forward all the tribes and communities of the region. A simple, active, efficient, thoughtful, and loving youth leader, Shri Pramod Bodo, took the lead of the BTR during a complex and perilous time. He has been able to establish himself as a frontline political leader of not only BTR but also of Assam, with his realistic command and knowledge of the social, educational, political, economic, and cultural needs and aspirations of the people of Assam.

There has been a transformation in BTR in the true essence. The people have acknowledged the positive change taking place. Every member of the BTR government is working tirelessly to fulfil the different Missions of the government and make it a reality. Sri Pramod Boro, Hon'ble Chief of BTR, has provided us with all the guidance and help to fulfil the missions taken up by the government for the people of the region. He has appealed to all the people of BTR to stand on their own feet and be self-dependent. The govt. has taken up several schemes and policies to make the region self-dependent. It is also worth mentioning that along with aiming to achieve economic development, the BTR govt. is also aiming to develop the human resource of the region. Under PIG MISSION, BTR has been able to produce 1 lakh kgs of pork daily. Under MILK MISSION, we have been able to set up dairy clusters in 14 villages to increase milk production. Under GYAN SWRANG BITHANGKHI Mission, we have been able to distribute Rs. 5000/- each to 8000 students per annum. Under MAINO SWRANG BITHANGKHI Mission, the Govt. disbursed Rs. 25000/- per annum to 4000 self-help groups. Under Sericulture Mission, there has been an increase in the production and expansion of sericulture. Under Bodofa Upendranath Brahma BTR Super 50 Mission, 200 students of BTR have been provided free coaching and training for UPSC, APSC, JEE, and NEET. These students have been provided free food and accommodation in Delhi, Guwahati & Kokrajhar. In BTR, we have seen an increase in land disputes and rights on several occasions. With that in mind, just like the Basundhara Mission of the Govt. of Assam, BAISUMUTHI MISSION has been initiated in BTR to settle the land issues. Starting December, under the BAISUMUTHI MISSION, the land disputes and issues of the people will be amicably settled. Meanwhile, 16,000 people of BTR have been given land allotment through different LAND MELA organized in different areas by our government. Through

these innovative and special positive actions by the BTR government, the economic, educational, and standard of social livelihood of the people of BTR has seen dramatic and upward development.

With the help of information and technology and innovative ideas, BTR Chief Sri Pramod Boro has initiated some special schemes for the development of the people of the region and for these purposes signed MOUs with several national and international organizations like UNICEF, SELCO Foundation, BRLF, TRIF, CINI, CeGIS, Agastya Foundation, etc. As a result, BTR has gained recognition both nationally and internationally. Moreover, by organizing several international knowledge business literature festivals, DURAND Cup Football Competition, Santosh Trophy Football, our government has showcased BTR as a strong and upcoming region.

The Government of BTR, in association with the Transforming Rural India Foundation (TRIF), has launched the BTR Development Fellowship Program to bolster the BTC administration's efforts towards expeditious and sustainable development of the Bodoland Territorial Region. Through this fellowship program, qualified and passionate youth have been inducted who are willing to professionally contribute to the development of the region. Moreover, this program has been providing a meaningful and professional opportunity to the educated youths, who aspire to pursue a vocation in the social and development sector, public policy, and governance. This program has been launched as an institutional setup that has been accelerating the objective of comprehensive sustainable development of BTR through a three-tier professional support structure at the Secretariat, district, and block levels, adding value at all levels of administration in a well-coordinated and professional manner.

Honourable Prime Minister of India Sri Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Sri Amit Shah, and Honourable Chief Minister of Assam, Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, have actively

participated and ensured the proper execution of all the clauses of the BTR agreement. The people of BTR have appreciated the good guidance of the Honourable Chief Minister and the activeness of BTR Chief Sri Pramod Boro in the implementation of the clauses of the BTR agreement. Since taking charge as Executive Member of BTR Social Welfare Department, I have pursued my responsibilities for Women and Child Welfare schemes and Social Justice and Empowerment schemes with utmost sincerity and dedication. I will be forever grateful for the advice and guidance our Honourable CEM has provided me to help me fulfil my responsibilities to the best of my abilities. For the eradication of social evils, unsocial activities, and to establish a healthy and beautiful society, 5 Community Counselling Centres have been established in the 5 districts of BTR. Gender Resource Cells have been established and made operational for the empowerment of women. To ensure eradication of child labour and for child rights and safety, a new mission will be launched in BTR. Immediate issuing of UDID certificates for the physically challenged individuals has been targeted and, meanwhile, ten thousand (10,000) certificates have already been issued to our brothers and sisters. Every year, 300 economically backward and physically challenged brothers and sisters have been provided with financial assistance and e-rickshaws. Women and children have to be made disease-free, and with an ambition to develop a strong and healthy society, women and children have been provided with nutritious food, regular health checkups, and all related departments have been instructed and alerted to remain vigilant and update all facts and figures. We have succeeded in bringing development in this department with sheer determination and ambition.

On the successful completion of three years of the BTR government, I convey my sincere congratulations to Honourable BTR CEM, Speaker, Deputy Speaker, Deputy CEM, all EMs, and all MCLAs of BTR government. On this occasion, I convey

my thanks to all the bureaucrats and employees for extending their sincere cooperation with us.

Going forward, I truly believe in creating and fostering a Peaceful, Smart, and Green Bodoland where all members will come forward with sincerity, dedication, honesty, and togetherness and work collectively. Lastly, on the occasion of the successful completion of three years of the BTR government, I convey my sincere gratitude to all the senior and junior party workers of BJP, UPPL, and GSP. Especially, I would like to convey my sincerest gratitude and thanks to the people of BTR for extending their helping hand and cooperation to the BTR government in our journey together.

Jai BTR!

Jai Ai Axom!

Bharat Mata Ki Jai!

24

The Revolution of Identity of the Bodos and the Journey of Transformation

Ranjit Basumatary

The Bodos are the aborigines of the land so called Pragjyotishpura or Kamrupa in ancient times and what is called Assam today. The Rishi Muni or the Sages had clearly mentioned about the religious, political, educational, language, cultural and customary aspects and the biographies of the Emperors and the Kings of those ancient times. From these writings or creations, it becomes clear that the Rishis or the Munis did not create those Vedas, the Upanishads, the Puranas and the Epics without touching the people and their social life of the North East India.

It is also clear that the Bodos in the North East India had their own level of civilization when the Aryans entered India and shared their superior civilization with the natives of India. But when the Aryan civilization entered the North East India, an assimilation of the Bodo civilization with the Aryan civilization took place as a result of which transformation along with the development underwent in the Bodos' civilization.

But there are instances where a tribe has ceased to exist because of assimilation of the inferior group with the superior group. Everyone is aware of the fact that the Bodo literature, culture, customs, political and educational systems became shaky in course of thousands of years of assimilation with the Aryan civilization. Realizing the consequences of 75 years of

democratic movement and 34 years of armed struggle for identity, I am trying to retrospect these as in the following with a new horizon of regeneration and reformation.

In 1928 when the British Parliament sent Sir John Simon to India for probable Constitutional reforms, Gurudeb Kalicharan Brahma along with his few associates met the Simon Commission on 4th January, 1929 in Shillong, the onetime capital of Assam to seek emancipation, regeneration and restoration of the Bodo society. This day was the beginning of Renaissance, Reformation and Revolution of the Bodos. This day can be compared to the Triveni Sangam in Prayagraj, the confluence of the Ganga, the Yamuna and the Mythical Saraswati River.

The *Bibar Muga*, the *Olongbar Muga*- the Literary Awakening, regeneration or reconstructions of customary rules and social traditions and emancipation of the Bodo nation were all begun through the Memorandum submitted to the Simon Commission. Gurudeb Kalicharan Brahma took the role of architect of the Emancipation of the Bodos.

Revolution is a complaint for not getting one's birthright. Today we find Revolutions with two goals- (i) Revolution seeking Ethnic Nationalism or Identity and (ii) Revolution arising out of Territorial or Regional Nationalism. The Bodo Revolution was of Ethnic Nationalism. The Heroic Bodo People in the Vedic or Epic Age were crumbled into small groups, and those that remained also were being assimilated to the superior people as a result of which the number of Bodo people became negligible.

Just as smaller fishes have to struggle for their survival from the demonic bigger fishes, so too the Bodo people had to revolt for 75 years to save the identity of their language, culture, religion, customs and traditions. This in short may be called the War for Identity or Survival.

Starting on 4th January, 1929 and ending on 27th January, 2020 by the Third Bodo Peace Accord, the Bodo people have lost many generations or there has arisen generation gaps; and

had to encounter degeneration, depravity and derogation; and of course, have learnt many lessons as well. In fact, we have to revert more than 30 years to regain whatever have been lost in this long period of Revolution. To recover and reconstruct we will have to work hand to hand like mindedly for Unity and Prosperity.

The Bodo people have received changes or enlightenment through revolution. First, we may mention educational changes or Enlightenment. Though the Bodos have distinct culture and language, the lack of Literature had dwindled them. As a result, we could not put on equal footing with the other more developed people.

Since born on 16th November, 1952, the Bodo Thunlai Afad (The Bodo Literary Body) has been able come to what it is today. Through the Second Bodo Accord signed on 10th February, 2003 the Bodo language has been included in the Eight Schedule and has become one of the Major Indian Languages; and this has further been raised by being given a Separate Directorate through the signing of the Third Bodo Peace Accord on 27th January, 2020.

But getting and working are two different things. Instead of celebrating the happiness of getting, it is more pertinent to work for its ever lastingness, development and brighter future. The real instrument of actualization of the vision of Late Upendranath Brahma, the Father of the Bodos, to make the Bodos a Great Nation is education.

Therefore, when we speak of the Identity of a people, or when we think of the self- sustenance of a Nation, we need to impart quality education; and for these reasons every member of the nation should shoulder one's own responsibility.

Secondly, when we think of building a great nation, there should be a vision and when we strive for a transformative community every member of the community should follow a few principles, namely,

1. **Sustainable Development :** “Sustainable development is that which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” Today our people should be self-dependent. As is mentioned above, if education is the guiding star that emits never ending light, so should the development of economy be established as the golden ladder. For these, innovative ideas should be invented to develop parallelly both education and economy.
2. **Empowerment :** Empowerment means people having power and control over their lives. Now, the question is have the Bodos been able to stand on their own legs without depending on others? If we cannot free ourselves from the differences between men and women, between the rich and the poor, the differences in socio-religious perspective and differences for countless other reasons in our walk of life, we cannot say that we have been able to stand on our own feet. So, we must be empowered first.
3. **Inclusivity :** Inclusivity means making sure that everyone feels welcome, valued and respected no matter who they are or where they come from. During the revolution for a separate state of Bodoland, in the name of freeing themselves from being down trodden by the other people, the politics of differences between the Bodos and the non-Bodos and sometimes revolting to be superior to others or in division between higher and lower caste a feeling of hatred and disrespect arose among the people. This was a great set back not only for the Bodos, but also for the entire humanity. Therefore, it is a right decision in right time to work unitedly to create a great nation and a prosperous Bodoland.
4. **Participative :** Participative means relating to participation or involving. In every society there are some unique leaders. These leaders are good in leading their people. In times of trouble they take a right decision and

make the society victorious. Taking the past experiences and with a view to create a healthy social atmosphere with mutual respect for every one in the society, innovative ideas should be utilized in every walk of life for self-sustenance.

Peace will be established in the region if we are able to create a healthy society where there are no exploitations, no swindlers, no hatred, no racial feeling and where there will be no differences based on caste, creed and competence. The vision of the Bodofa to create a great Bodo nation and the fruit of the last seventy-five years of Revolution for identity and nationalism will be realized only if there prevails Peace and Tranquility in the region and in this way our permanent identity will be established.

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Bodoland : A Moving Forward*Sanjoy Swargiary*

Like a shriveled plant awaits the drops of rain to raise its head with green leaves to blossom in earth, the most deprived people also awaited the expected drop of the Peace Accords for years after years to transform Bodoland into a real sustainable moving forward from a dream. The night of deprivation began to dawn from the final and comprehensive Accord signed on 27th January, 2020 by the All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU), four factions of the National Democratic Front of Boroland (NDFB), United Bodo Peoples' Organisation (UBPO), the Government of India and Government of Assam. It is seen that though the transformation process for healing follows the earlier two Accords of the BAC accord of 1993 and the BTC accord of 2003 respectively, the BTR Accord signed on the 27th January, 2020 glorifies the most important achievement of the extension of the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) by inclusion of contiguous Bodo dominated areas up to Gohpur as per the ORDERS BY THE GOVERNOR OF ASSAM NOTIFICATION dated the 1-11- 2023. The Bodo people of those extended areas are exulted with joy for being included in the present BTR and they have bestowed their deep gratitude to the governing authority of Assam and BTR and appreciated the dynamic leadership of Sjt. Pramod Boro, the Hon'ble Chief Executive Member of BTR and so also to the signatory leadership.

While the BTR Government took initiative the need for gearing up the transformation process for healing touched of the wounds of the miserable periods, it also immediately picked

up the change of transformation process for healing touched outside the BTR region also. Almost the political part of the clauses of the BTR Accord are on the way and about to be accomplished except the Scheduling Issue of the Bodos living in the hills districts of Assam and it is crying for healing immediately.

However, it is also well-mentioned that Fifteen numbers of Bodo Medium High Schools, outside the BTR have been upgraded to the Higher Secondary Schools with due initiative of the Bodo Sahitya Sabha, ABSU and BTR jointly. Thus, the BTR is piloting a notable transformation process for healing the educational disparity outside the BTR as well as inside the region under the able leadership of the present Chief Executive Member.

The 5th September, 2022 becomes a memorable day for the Bodos of Assam as their Bodo Language became as State Associate Official Language of Assam on that very day. Later on, the Bodo Language has been introduced in Assam Legislative Assembly in its business. The Bodo speaking Ministers, MLA's and officials can correspond and reciprocate their business in Bodo Language in Assam Legislative Assembly from now onward. In fact, this transformation of the BTR Accord which expedites the matter to come into force and implemented in practical. Despite declaration of Students Day on 31st March of the Calendar by the Assam Government in marked of respecting the thoughts and philosophy of Lt. Upendranath Brahma, the Father of the Bodos is also a remarkable achievement on the part of the Bodo people and BTR Government.

The inauguration of the required Bodo Books in Higher Secondary Schools on the 2nd August, 2023 follows the academic line and set-up of Bodo medium schools for the greater interest of the Bodo Language. Of course, it becomes possible only in pursuance of the Bodo Sahitya Sabha and the ABSU in ardent collaboration with the BTR Government as political initiative

and assistance conceded in a politically governed country. In every process of better transformation, the BTR Government keeps its stand and instantly moving forward with adherence to incubate for speedy developing the BTR region with a golden cloth in future along with the state of Assam.

The status of the road connectivity previously was totally in Intensive Care Unit (ICU). But now construction of roads and bridges over the rivers are an infrastructural achievement of the BTR Government in its transformation process. Crores of rupees are being invested through the Goodwill Project, AOP and SOPD schemes to construct the dilapidated roads and bridges for better communication. It is notable to say that the common people of the northern part of the Pagladia River in the district of Baksa are awfully delighted having this transformation for healing their untouched disease of communication as they were deprived of such bridge for communication for long time. The construction of bridge over the Pagladia River facilitates not only communication between the common people of the two parts of the river, but also ensures the accelerated development in areas of the down-trodden common people and paves the way for notable transformation. This is how it shows the essence of a comprehensive development of the Pramod Boro led government.

While the Peace Accord recognised the need for establishing peace and security among all people irrespective of castes and creeds in the region, it also immediately formulates a proper vision with a comprehensive mission with a view to achieving all-round development in the region. The BTR Government seems augmenting the tribal areas through various developmental schemes day after day and year after years.

Simultaneously it is also proud of the Bodoland that the hosting of the Inter Sixth Schedule Premier League (ISPL) Trophy, Santosh Trophy, and Durand Cup Football Competition at Kokrajhar in the year of 2022-23 carries an important achievement of the BTR Government. It was, no doubt, an

amazing entertainment with the avalanche of spirit in the world of sports. After hosting of these Football Tournament's in BTR signifies a vigorous effort of the Government to encourage the youth generation for ready preparation to the world of sports. In this aspect, the Bodoland seems to have been a vanguard in the entire Assam. Many people of Assam and North Eastern States often acknowledged Bodoland a Mini Brazil of the Football World because many good footballers seem to have taken birth in the soil of Bodoland. It is highly expected that hosting of the National Level Football Competition will definitely beget high talented footballers in the soil of Bodoland in future.

The reservation of two percent for recruitment of NDFB cadres to Assam Police is one of the steps taken by the Assam Government for rehabilitation of the NDFB cadres who surrendered their weapons to pave the way for peace. They have given up their ways of violence with an ardent dream of dawning of a new epoch of permanent peace and prosperity in their newly accorded BTR. They also aspire a rapid transformation for healing sustainable development in the region.

Of course, the surrendered NDFB cadres of the four factions are carrying an untenable anguish in their mind for not meeting all cadres under this open blue sky of their newly accorded BTR. Some of their leaders and cadres are still under the four walls of the jail and they are expected to come out immediately at the great mercy of the political hegemony concerned to share in the transformation processes of rapid healing for the BTR. In this crucial aspect the BTR has pursued unceasingly the matter with the Central Government of India as well as with the State Government of Assam for amicable settlement.

The Face of Change towards development process through Mission Mode Programme and Flagship Schemes of the various Departments in order to uplift the socio-economic

activities in the society are the most notable achievements of the Pramod Boro led BTR government. Such transformation brings smiles of pleasure to the common people.

The BTR Government keeps keen vigilance on the part of the Cultural affairs too. Recently participation of the Bodo Cultural Troupe under the guidance of Hon'ble CEM Sjt. Pramod Boro from BTR at Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam organised by the North East India Festival in affiliation with Consulate General of India, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam on 27th October to 29th October, 2023, is also a remarkable and great achievement to connect culturally with the people of South East Asian Countries. The BTR is also going to make Guinness World Record by performing the famous Bodo folk dance 'Bagurumba' to be performed by Fifteen Thousand Bodo Damsels within short time to come.

After all, the BTR is on the way to bring a vigorous transformation with a holistic aim of Peace, Green and Smart Bodoland under the able and dynamic leadership of Sjt. Pramod Boro as a Chief Executive Member of BTR and his vision is now promoted to a 'Real Mission' along with the joint efforts of all the Executive Members, MCLA's and co-operation of the Mass people of the BTR.

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সর্বোন্নয়ৰ দিশে বি. টি. আৰ.

সঞ্জীত তাঁতী

অখণ্ড ভাৰতবৰ্ষৰ অসম মূলুকৰ এক প্ৰধান অংগ “শান্তিভূমি বি.টি.আৰ.”। এসময়ৰ হত্যা-হিংসা, বিদ্বেষ, জাতিগত সংঘৰ্ষৰে জৰ্জৰিত বড়োভূমিত মানুহৰ প্ৰতি মানুহৰ দৰদ-বিশ্বাসৰ অভাৱ হৈছিল। বড়োভূমিলৈ আহিবও ভয় কৰিছিল বাহিৰৰ পৰা। সেই বড়োভূমিৰ স্থানীয় সমাধান কামনা কৰি দুখনকৈ “Bodoland Autonomous Council, চমুকৈ BAC, 1993 আৰু ২০০৩ চনত Bodoland Territorial Area District (BTAD) গঠন কৰা হয় আৰু ইয়াৰ জনসাধাৰণৰ সাংবিধানিক অধিকাৰৰ হেতু বড়ো শান্তি চুক্তিখনে পূৰ্ণতা লাভ কৰে ২০২০ চনৰ ২৭ জানুৱাৰীৰ BTR নামে Memorandum Of Settlement ৰ জৰিয়তে। আৰু সেইমৰ্মে মাননীয় মুখ্য কাৰ্য্যবাহী সদস্য শ্ৰীযুত প্ৰমোদ বড়ো ডাঙৰীয়াৰ সবল নেতৃত্বত ২০২০ চনৰ ১৫ ডিচেম্বৰ তাৰিখে গঠন হয় আমাৰ UPPL-BJP-GSP সন্মিলিত বি.টি.আৰ চৰকাৰ।

কোকৰাঝাৰ, বাক্সা, ওদালগুৰি আৰু চিৰাংকে ধৰি মুঠ চাৰিখন জিলাক লৈ গঠিত বৃহত্তৰ বড়োভূমি শাসনাধিষ্ঠিত চৰকাৰৰ এগৰাকী কাৰ্য্যবাহী সদস্য হিচাপে, চৰকাৰৰ অংশ হিচাপে এই অঞ্চলটোৰ বিগত সময়খিনিৰ বহু উত্থান-পতনৰ সাক্ষী হোৱাৰ লগতে অংশ গ্ৰহণৰ সুযোগ লাভ কৰিছোঁ।

মাননীয় প্ৰমোদ বড়ো নেতৃত্বাধীন আমাৰ বি.টি.আৰ. চৰকাৰখনে বিগত বছৰকেইটাত বড়োভূমিৰ শান্তি-শৃংখলা বৰ্তাই ৰখাৰ স্বার্থত বিশেষভাৱে সফলতা অৰ্জন কৰা আমি প্ৰত্যক্ষদৰ্শী। এসময়ৰ উত্তপ্ত বড়োলেণ্ড, জংঘী বড়ো আন্দোলন, গোষ্ঠী সংঘৰ্ষৰে জৰ্জৰিত বিটিআৰ আজি শান্তিভূমিলৈ পৰিণত হৈছে, সেয়া নিশ্চিতভাৱে স্বীকাৰ্য্য। শান্তি প্ৰতিষ্ঠাৰ হেতু বিভিন্ন সময়ত কেন্দ্ৰীয় চৰকাৰ, অসম চৰকাৰ আৰু বিটিআৰ চৰকাৰৰ যুটীয়া প্ৰচেষ্টাত সন্তোষ এৰি মূল সুঁতিলৈ উভতি অহাৰ বাবে উদগনি জনোৱা হৈছে। এইদিশত Fin Rwdwnkhang

Falgship ৰ কথা উল্লেখযোগ্য, যাৰ জৰিয়তে মূল সুঁতিলৈ ঘূৰি অহা NDFB কেদাৰসকলক এটি মৰ্যাদাসম্পন্ন জীৱন যাপন কৰাৰ বাবে সহায়ৰ হাতখন আগবঢ়োৱাৰ লগতে বড়োভূমিত হিংসাৰ বলি হোৱা ভুক্তভোগী পৰিয়াল তথা শ্বহীদৰ পৰিয়ালকো সাহায্য প্ৰদানেৰে আগবঢ়াই লৈ গৈছে।

শান্তিভূমি বি.টি.আৰ চৰকাৰৰ বিগত সময়ৰ দ্বিতীয় উল্লেখযোগ্য সাফল্যতাৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত বিটিআৰ চৰকাৰৰ বিশেষ তৎপৰতাত মানৱ সম্পদ গঢ়াৰ দিশত লোৱা বিশেষ পদক্ষেপ। ২০২১ চনত পোন প্ৰথমবাৰৰ বাবে আৰম্ভ হোৱা Bodofa UN Brahma Super50 Missionৰ অধীনত মেধাৱী শিক্ষাৰ্থীসকলে APSC, UPSC, NEET, JEE আদি প্ৰতিযোগিতামূলক পৰীক্ষাৰ কোচিং লাভ কৰি জীৱনৰ নিৰ্ধাৰিত গতিত আগবাঢ়ি যাবলৈ সক্ষম হৈছে। শৈক্ষিক ক্ষেত্ৰত বিটিআৰ বাসীৰ সন্তানসকলে বিভিন্ন শিক্ষামূলক বৃত্তি, জলপানি লাভ কৰি আছে।

তৃতীয়তে, বিটিআৰ চৰকাৰৰ বিগত সময়ছোৱাত গ্ৰহণ কৰা বিভিন্ন জনকল্যাণমূলক আঁচনি, Flagship Program সমূহে বিটিআৰ অঞ্চলবাসীৰ জীৱন ধাৰণৰ মানদণ্ড উন্নত কৰাত বিশেষ ভূমিকা কৰা যেন অনুভৱ হয়। ৰোগ নিৰ্মূলকৰণ বিটিআৰ গঢ়ি তোলাৰ লক্ষ্যৰে AAI Onsai Bithankhi and Cancer Care Trust, Bodoland Handloom Mission, Green Bodoland Mission, Bodofa Livelihood Mission, Seed Mission, Mainao Swarang Bithankhi, Bagan Chalo Abhiyan ইত্যাদি অনেক কাৰ্য্যসূচী বি.টি.আৰ বাসীৰ সেৱাৰ বাবে অবিৰতভাৱে কাৰ্য্যকৰী হৈ আছে।

মাননীয় CEM শ্ৰীযুত প্ৰমোদ বড়ো ডাঙৰীয়াৰ নেতৃত্বত পৰিচালিত বিটিআৰ চৰকাৰখনে পোন প্ৰথমবাৰৰ বাবে “শ্ৰম কল্যাণ বিভাগটো” ক যথেষ্ট গুৰুত্বতা আৰু মৰ্যাদা প্ৰদান কৰি এই বিভাগটোলৈ যথোপযুক্ত পুঁজি আৱণ্টন কৰিছে, যাৰ জৰিয়তে বি.টি.আৰ অঞ্চলৰ অতি পিছপৰা শ্ৰমিকশ্ৰেণীটোৰ সৰ্বাংগীন উন্নয়ন সাধনৰ লগতে তেওঁলোকক জীৱিকামুখী কৰি তোলাৰ ক্ষেত্ৰত বিভিন্ন আঁচনিৰ অন্তৰ্ভুক্ত কৰি আগবঢ়াই নিয়াৰ প্ৰয়াস সমূহে ইতিমধ্যে কাৰ্য্যকৰী হ’বলৈ আৰম্ভ কৰিছে। মোৰ বিভাগৰ তৰফৰ পৰা শ্ৰমিক শ্ৰেণীৰ নিবনুৱা যুৱক-যুৱতীক কৰ্মমুখী কৰিবলৈ Residential Nursing Training Program(GDA), Taxi Driving Program, Computer Literacy Pro-

gram, Career Guidance Program, Digital Literacy Program, R.P.L Training Program, ABOCWWB Labour Awareness Program ৰ সুবিধা প্ৰদান কৰা হৈছে, যাৰ জৰিয়তে তেওঁলোকে ৰুচি অনুযায়ী প্ৰশিক্ষণ লাভেৰে নিজৰ বৃত্তি বাচনি কৰি লোৱাৰ সুবিধা লাভ কৰিছে আৰু এই ক্ষেত্ৰত মাননীয় BTR CEM প্ৰমোদ বড়ো ডাঙৰীয়াদেৱে আগবঢ়োৱা সম্পূৰ্ণ সহযোগিতা নথৈ প্ৰশংসনীয়।

শেষত, বি.টি.আৰ. অঞ্চলৰ সামগ্ৰিক উদ্ভৱণৰ এই যাত্ৰাত আমি যৌথভাৱে ৰাইজৰ আশীষলৈ, ৰাইজৰ বাবে কাম কৰাৰ যি পণ ২০২০ চনত লৈছিলোঁ, তাৰ বহুলাংশে আমি আগবাঢ়ি যাবলৈ সমৰ্থ হৈছোঁ। বিগত তিনিটা বছৰৰ কাৰ্যকালেৰে ৰাইজৰ অন্তৰত যি স্থান দখল কৰিব পাৰিছোঁ, তাৰ বাবে কৃতজ্ঞ। ভাৰতবৰ্ষৰ সন্মানীয় প্ৰধানমন্ত্ৰী নৰেন্দ্ৰ মোদী ডাঙৰীয়া দুৰদৰ্শী চিন্তাৰে ভাৰতবৰ্ষক বিশ্বগুৰুৰ আসনত স্থাপন কৰাৰ যি সপোন লগতে অসমৰ জনপ্ৰিয় মুখ্যমন্ত্ৰী মাননীয় হিমন্ত বিশ্ব শৰ্মা ডাঙৰীয়াৰ বলিষ্ঠ নেতৃত্বত অসমৰ সৰ্বাংগীণ উন্নয়ন সাধনৰ এই যাত্ৰাত অংশগ্ৰহণ কৰি পূৰ্ণোদ্যমে আগবাঢ়ি যোৱাৰ লগতে মাননীয় বি.টি.আৰ প্ৰধান শ্ৰীযুত প্ৰমোদ বড়ো ডাঙৰীয়া নেতৃত্বাধীন বি.টি.আৰক এখন “সেউজ বি.টি.আৰ., উন্নত বি.টি.আৰ.” হিচাপে প্ৰতিষ্ঠা কৰাৰ যাত্ৰাত আমি সহযোগিতাৰে কাম কৰি যাবলৈ প্ৰতিশ্ৰুতিবদ্ধ। বি.টি.আৰ. বাসীৰ আমাৰ ওপৰত থকা আস্থা আৰু ভৰষাক শিৰোধাৰ্য কৰি আগন্তুক সময়ত আমি শান্তিভূমি বি.টি.আৰক সৰ্বাংগসুন্দৰ কৰি তোলাৰ হ'কে কাম কৰি যাম।

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Beautiful Bodoland : Transforming Tourism in BTR

Dharma Narayan Das

When I was still a child, Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) was a land whispered about more than seen, its beauty masked by strife and misunderstandings. Today, as I travel around these very lands—a treasure trove of biodiversity and ecological balance—I feel a profound sense of joy and responsibility. The landmark Bodo Peace Accord signed on the 27th of January 2020 has bridged the gap between skepticism and wonder, inviting the world to discover our hidden splendor, by ensuing an era of peace, harmonious co-existence and an all-round development, putting an end to the long years of painful conflict in our region. Great leaders of our lands Hon'ble Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi Ji, Hon'ble Home Minister of India Shri Amit Shah Ji and Hon'ble Chief Minister of Assam Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma Ji have reversed this journey of pain into a journey of hopes and dreams.

Not long ago, BTR was known more for its struggles than its splendor. The scars of conflict ran deep, and the world looked away, unaware of the beauty that lay hidden beneath the surface. But the people of Bodoland never stopped believing. We held on to our culture, our forests, our rivers, and our dreams. And when peace finally took root, it brought with it a new dawn—one where tourism became not just an industry, but a celebration of who we are. I have seen this transformation unfold with my own eyes!

There is a quiet magic in BTR that words often struggle to capture. It's in the way the morning mist clings to the foothills of Bhutan, in the laughter of children echoing through bamboo groves, and in the solemn grace of a golden langur watching from the treetops. For those of us who have walked these lands long before they found their place on the tourist map, the transformation of Bodoland is not just a story of development—it is a story of healing, of rediscovery, and of hope.

I have stood in Manas National Park as the sun rose over the grasslands, casting golden light on herds of wild buffalo and the occasional silhouette of a tiger. I have watched visitors fall silent in awe as a hornbill soared overhead or a rhino emerged from the underbrush. Manas, once a symbol of what we stood to lose, has become a beacon of what we can protect and share.

Raimona National Park, our young sanctuary of flora and fauna, tells a similar tale. Declared in 2021, it is a testament to our commitment to conservation and community. Here, local youth—once uncertain of their future—now lead treks, identify bird calls, and speak proudly of the land they call home. Sikhna Jwhlwao, our newest national park, is a jewel in this crown. With its butterflies, orchids, and elusive leopards, it reminds us that even the most delicate ecosystems can thrive when nurtured with care.

But BTR is not only about forests and wildlife. It is about people. It is about the woman in Udalguri who weaves dokhonas with stories stitched into every thread. It is about the elder in Kokrajhar who lights a lamp at Mahamaya Dham and whispers prayers that have been passed down for generations. It is about the children who dance the majestic Bagurumba barefoot during the Baukhungri Festival, their joy unburdened by the past.

Our festivals are not performances—they are invitations. When guests join us for Baikho, they are not spectators; they are family. They eat with us, dance with us, and leave with a piece of Bodoland in their hearts. And when they visit our

heritage sites—ancient ruins or Sidli’s royal palace—they walk through chapters of a history that is both painful and proud.

Adventure, too, has found its place here. The rivers that once carried only fishermen now carry rafters and dreamers. The trails that once led to remote hamlets now welcome trekkers seeking silence and stars. In the Beki River Valley, I have seen families gather for picnics, their laughter mingling with the sound of flowing water. In Daojeng, I have watched the sun set behind tea gardens, painting the sky in hues that no camera can truly capture.

This transformation has not been accidental. It has been built—brick by brick, policy by policy, heart by heart. Under the dynamic leadership of the Hon’ble Chief Executive Member of Bodoland Territorial Region Shri Pramod Boro Ji, we have invested in roads, in homestays, in training programs that empower our youth. We have created digital platforms that guide travelers to hidden gems and ensure their journeys are safe and meaningful. We have protected our wetlands, our forests, and our traditions—not by locking them away, but by opening them up with care.

And the results speak for themselves. Tourist footfall has grown steadily. Our growing revenue has funded schools, health centers, and wildlife corridors. Women’s cooperatives have flourished, and young people have found purpose in guiding, hosting, and storytelling. The Durand Cup, once a distant dream, now echoes through our stadium at Kokrajhar- the City of Peace, bringing with it pride and possibility.

Yet, we are not without challenges. Some villages still wait for reliable banking. Some trails remain vulnerable to floods. But we face these not with despair, but with determination. We seek greater support, not for luxury, but for dignity—for the right to build a future that honors our past.

As we join the march towards the realization of the clarion call of our Prime Minister Modi Ji— Viksit Bharat @ 2047—

the centenary of India's independence, we envision a BTR that is not just a destination, but a model. A place where electric boats glide through green corridors, where oral histories are preserved in digital vaults, where wellness retreats blend Ayurveda with ancestral wisdom. A place where every visitor leaves not just with photographs, but with perspective.

To those who have yet to visit, I say this: come not as a tourist, but as a guest. Come with curiosity, with respect, and with an open heart. Let Bodoland surprise you, move you, and change you. For in every forest path, every village song, and every shared meal, there is a story waiting to be told—and we are ready to tell it.

Bodoland region is beautiful not because it is perfect, but because it is real. It is a land that has suffered, survived, and now shines. And in its transformation, it offers a lesson to the world: that peace is possible, that culture is strength, and that when people believe in their land, even the most forgotten corners can become the most unforgettable!

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Transforming Land Governance in Bodoland Territorial Region : Pathways to Justice, Access and Equity

Dhiraj Saud, ACS

Land is one of the key components for survival, dignity, identity and self-respect of persons and households in our society without which people especially from the rural and tribal communities can't think of building social, cultural and economic capital. The landlessness often hampers economic growth and there is a constant impoverishment of the household often leading to weak socio-economic-cultural bondage.

Since the Colonial time, though some measures were taken under the land Acts and policies of the State for the tribal areas and tribal communities, several issues and gaps have cropped up over the years leading to inadequate settlement of land right issues and ineffective regulation of illegal transfer of land inside tribal belts and blocks. Deprivation of rights over the land under their long occupation and also illegal transfer of land to ineligible people led to conflict, instability and insecurity among the indigenous communities of the region. It is often said that land related issues have been one amongst the major issues leading to the Bodo movement where hundreds of lives were lost. Further, in spite of having some protective provisions under the Chapter-X of the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation, 1886, strict enforcement was perhaps missing over the years leading to deprivation, resentment, conflicts and unrest in the region.

The Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) has embarked on a transformative journey to modernize land administration, ensuring transparency, efficiency, and accessibility for its citizens. Over the last four and half years, significant milestones have been achieved in digitizing land records, streamlining services, and implementing progressive policies to safeguard land rights. This transition has been crucial in ensuring efficient service delivery, land security, and improved dispute resolution mechanisms, addressing long-standing challenges in land governance. The introduction of digital land records, GIS-based mapping, and online service portals have not only enhanced transparency but has also empowered citizens by providing them with easier access to land-related services which was a distant dream until few years back.

The visionary Chief Executive Member of the Bodoland Territorial Council Shri Pramod Baro took up the land issues seriously and committed to resolve the issues on a fast-track mission mode. He envisioned to launch a digital platform enabling the citizens of BTR to apply for various land related services online. Subsequently, all the land records were digitized and an online platform called “Mission Bwiswmuthi 1.0” was developed for the citizens and the Land Record officials for delivery of fourteen services like mutation by right of inheritance, mutation by registered deed, partition, reclassification, allotment certificate to periodic patta, conversion from annual patta to periodic patta, area correction, striking out names from patta, name correction etc. Within one and half years, more than 1,88,000 families have applied for various services out of which more than 1,61,000 applications have so far been disposed of positively. Encouraged by the peoples’ response towards “Mission Bwiswmuthi 1.0”, the Council Authority decided to launch “Mission Bwiswmuthi 2.0” with six more new services like settlement of government land (Khas & Ceiling Surplus) to individual occupant, settlement of VGR/

PGR land to individual occupant, settlement of government land to individual small tea/rubber grower, settlement of government land to Registered Co-operative Society/SHG etc. of small tea/rubber grower, settlement of transferred annual patta land to eligible occupant and certified copy of digitized map.

The services under “Mission Bwiswmuthi 2.0” mainly focus on ensuring land rights to the indigenous inhabitants and permanent residents of the region which has been a major demand from the people belonging to different communities as evident from the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) Vision Document published in 2024 and released by the Hon’ble Governor of Assam Shri Lakshman Prasad Acharya. Initially, there have been apprehensions or doubts in the minds of people belonging to non-protected or non tribal communities residing in the region about the right over the land under their long occupation, but during the last four and half years, it has been made clear to the people through series of consultative and awareness meetings at various levels that the Council Authority is keen towards giving land rights to every landless family of the region irrespective of caste and community who are otherwise eligible as per the provisions of the Chapter-X of the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation, 1886 (As amended) and the spirit prescribed in the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution (Amendment) Act, 2003. Based on these principles, over 65000 families have so far been provided land rights during the last four and half years both in revenue and forest villages. If the other services are cumulated, approximately 3,23,178 beneficiaries have got various land related services in both offline and online mode within this period. “Mission Bwiswmuthi 2.0” is going to further ease the process of offering land settlement to more eligible families of BTR within less time and more transparently.

Another major initiative taken by the Land Revenue & Disaster Management Department, BTR is the survey of Non-cadastral villages bordering Bhutan. People of various castes and communities residing in those villages were deprived of land rights as the villages were not surveyed even after completion of 77 years of independence of our country. Those Non-cadastral villages have been surveyed using drones and the process of land records preparation and subsequent pattadistribution is going on.

The Bodoland Territorial Region is also well known for its lush green tea gardens. As informed by the All Bodoland Small Tea Growers' Association, there are approximately 8000 plus small tea gardens in the region covering an area of 2239.04 hectares of government land. Udalguri District has the maximum number of small tea gardens with 7581 followed by Kokrajhar District. These small tea gardens have been producing a significant quantum of green tea leaves which is estimated at approximately 9,95,92,875 Kg per annum. The unfortunate part here was that approximately 9000 small tea growers associated with such livelihood activities never got rights over the land they have been cultivating since years. For the first time in the administrative history of Bodoland Territorial Council, the issue was taken up seriously and the land policy for small tea growers and small tea gardens was formulated. Now, through "Mission Bwiswmuthi 2.0", the land settlement issues of all the small tea and rubber growers of the region could be resolved without further delay. Further, all these initiatives have been aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), particularly those addressing land rights and land revenue.

Several other key government interventions have also played a vital role in restructuring the land governance system in BTR. The establishment of central modern record room with record tracking and management system, well equipped GIS Lab, the integration of land services with digital platforms,

and continuous capacity-building programs for officials have strengthened the institutional efficiency. The focus on land security, proper documentation, and land ownership verification has brought greater confidence among the people, minimizing land disputes and unauthorized encroachments.

With these advancements and technology-driven land services, the Bodoland Territorial Council has been in the forefront amongst the other Sixth Schedule Councils of our Country and committed to further improve service delivery endeavours aligning with “Viksit Bharat 2047”.

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Towards a Knowledge Society : BTR Government's Educational Flagship Missions

Dr. Nironjon Islary

Abstract

The Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) is evolving from historical instability into a centre of educational innovation, driven by nine flagship missions that emphasize inclusivity, equity, and preparedness for the future. The initiatives, including Super-50 coaching, school adoption, STEM education, career counselling, and digital equity, constitute an integrated strategy that prioritizes community ownership, capacity building, and data-driven governance. This approach advances BTR's vision of a knowledge society by improving access, aspiration, and accountability in education.

Introduction :

The notion of a knowledge society, articulated by theorists including Peter Drucker, Manuel Castells, and Nico Stehr, denotes a societal structure where the generation, distribution, and application of knowledge are pivotal to economic growth, governance, and cultural progress. In contrast to industrial societies that depend on manual labour and physical production, knowledge societies emphasize intellectual capital, innovation, and the strategic application of information and communication technologies (ICTs).

The Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) consists of five administrative districts: Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa, Tamulpur,

and Udalguri. This region has experienced prolonged socio-political unrest and ethno-political violence over several decades. For almost thirty years, the region experienced inter-community conflict and systemic instability, which constrained opportunities for sustained development and long-term investment in human capital. The prevailing volatility characterized BTR as a “disturbed area,” rendering peace-building and social transformation seemingly unlikely.

The signing of the “Third Bodo Peace Accord” in 2020 represented a significant turning point. The agreement, along with a new administrative and developmental framework, commenced a process of reconciliation, peace consolidation, and inclusive governance. The newly established BTR government, under the leadership of Chief Executive Member Shri Pramod Boro, initiated efforts to promote a vision of peace that can be cultivated, institutionalised, and developed into a foundation for a knowledge-driven society.

Flagship Missions as Agents of Change

The notion of a flagship mission—frequently employed by both national and international scientific organizations like NASA or ISRO—denotes high-priority, intricate, and resource-demanding initiatives designed to produce groundbreaking results. These missions frequently exhibit a focus on enduring strategic goals, robust political dedication, and a cohesive approach to policy formulation.

Translating this framework to public policy and development, numerous flagship missions launched by the BTR government in recent years have aimed to revitalize its education sector, transforming it from a stagnant, underperforming system into a vibrant platform for inclusive and knowledge-driven growth. In historical contexts, previous administrations have embarked on disparate initiatives—like arbitrary scholarship programs—lacking a coherent framework for design, monitoring, or evaluation of results. Conversely, the BTR administration has transitioned to focused, mission-oriented

strategies, harmonizing developmental goals with quantifiable outcomes.

Theoretical Structure: Knowledge Society and Effective Governance

The quest for a society rooted in knowledge is anchored in various overlapping scholarly discussions. Drucker (1969) articulated the notion of the knowledge worker as pivotal to contemporary economies, supplanting manual labour as the foremost contributor to productivity. Castells (1996) highlighted the importance of networked information technologies in influencing the formation of global, interconnected societies. UNESCO (2005) emphasizes the importance of lifelong learning, digital inclusion, and equitable access to information in the development of a genuinely participatory knowledge society. In this framework, effective governance encompasses not merely operational efficiency but also the enhancement of individual agency through the availability of knowledge systems. This encompasses the advancement of digital equity, the facilitation of meritocratic educational opportunities, and the implementation of inclusive decision-making frameworks.

Challenges and Critiques of the Knowledge Society Paradigm

Notwithstanding its potential, the knowledge society model is subject to scrutiny. Researchers such as Van Dijk (2005) caution against the digital divide, highlighting how inequalities in technological access sustain disparities in knowledge and understanding. Moreover, Lyotard (1979) warned about the potential commodification of knowledge, asserting that in post-industrial societies, knowledge may be transformed into an instrument controlled by corporate or state entities—a concept he referred to as “knowledge capitalism.” In areas such as BTR, characterized by infrastructural shortcomings and socio-economic inequalities, these critiques act as vital reminders that the shift towards a knowledge society must be inclusive, attuned to specific contexts, and rooted in ethical considerations.

1. **Giyan Swrang Onsungthai**

Initiated on April 3, 2022, originally titled Giyan SwrangBithangki and subsequently rebranded as Giyan Swrang Onsungthai, this premier initiative aims to assist students from economically challenged backgrounds in the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR). This initiative offers annual, one-time financial support to assist chosen students in advancing their education and achieving long-term career aspirations, encompassing preparation for civil services and various professional domains. The initiative seeks to improve educational accessibility, encourage engagement in competitive examinations, and advance project-based interventions aimed at enhancing educational quality throughout schools, colleges, and higher education institutions. During the 2023–24 period, a selection of 200 students from each of the 46 BTCLA constituencies, which includes six nominated constituencies, was conducted through a decentralised process overseen by local elected officials—MCLAs or Chairpersons of the Territorial Council Level Coordination Committees (TCLCCs). The program encompasses a diverse array of learners, spanning from school students to university-level candidates, with domicile status in BTR serving as a fundamental eligibility criterion.

Sl. No	Financial Year	No of Beneficiaries	Amount per student (INR)	Total Allocation (INR)
1	2021-22	7567	5000.00	3,78,35,000.00
2	2022-23	9194	5000.00	4,59,70,000.00
3	2023-24	9200	5000.00	46,000,000.00
4	2024-25	9200	5000.00	46,000,000.00

The scholarship produces two primary outcomes: it enhances governance connections through organized collaboration between local community leaders and MCLAs or TCLCC Chairpersons in the beneficiary selection process, and it offers specific academic support to the most disadvantaged students. The stipend, though modest, is timely and adequate for covering essential expenses such as textbooks, thereby providing necessary support that alleviates financial stress for economically disadvantaged students.

1. **Bodofa UN Brahma Super-50 Mission**

The program, originally introduced as the CEM Super-50 Mission and rebranded in 2023 as the Bodofa UN Brahma Super-50 Mission serves as a flagship initiative designed to empower high-potential youth from the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) by providing fully government-sponsored residential coaching for prestigious national and state-level competitive examinations for a lucrative and prestigious career option, and higher education. The mission comprises four targeted components: ***Super-50 Engineering for IIT-JEE Advanced*** at the District Library in Kokrajhar; ***Super-50 Medical for NEET at Allen Institute*** in Guwahati; ***Super-50 APSC for CCE exams at SPM IAS Academy*** in Guwahati; and ***Super-50 UPSC for CSE exams at Vajirao & Reddy Institute in Delhi***. The initiative aims to democratize access to quality coaching for underprivileged students, establish BTR as a centre of academic excellence, and ensure inclusive talent development with representation from diverse communities. The Super-50 Engineering and UPSC components were initiated in 2022–23, incorporating expert contributions from IIT Guwahati, CIT Kokrajhar, and other scholars. These components are headquartered at the District Library in Dimwlgaoon, Kokrajhar, which serves as the central nodal office. Since its establishment, the mission has effectively coached three cohorts of students.

**Table 2. Admissions from Super-50 Engineering Coaching Centre (IIT/NIT/Others)
(A Year-wise Overview)**

Batch	Total Candidates	IIT	NIT	Central Universities/ CIT/State Engineering Colleges	JEE Advanced Qualified
1 st (2022–23)	32	5	4	22	13
2 nd (2023–24)	50	1	9	36	17
3 rd (2024–25)	30	7*	-	-	13

Note–7*: Of the 13 JEE Advanced qualifiers, 7 are eligible for IIT admission.

Final enrollment depends on branch preference and participation in the upcoming 2025–26 counselling process, which is yet to begin.

In response to significant healthcare shortages in the Bodoland Territorial Region, stakeholders in late 2022–23 committed to enhancing local NEET preparation and increasing the number of prospective doctors. After consultations with intellectuals and executive leaders, Allen Academy was approved to provide intensive coaching, leading to the launch of the Super 50 Medical programme in 2023–24. The inaugural cohort has yielded promising results, highlighting the initiative’s capacity to meet the medical workforce demands of the region.

Table 3. NEET Qualifiers and MBBS Admissions Overview

Batch	Total Candidates	Coaching Institute	NEET Qualified	MBBS Admission
1st (2023-24)	50	Allen Academy, Guwahati	48	16
2nd (2024-25)	50		-	-

Note: “-” NEET for the 2024–25 batch was held in May 2025; results are awaited, hence data is unfilled.

The Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) Government initiated the Super-50 UPSC coaching programme in 2022–23, concurrently with the Super-50 Engineering initiative, with the inaugural batch receiving training at Chanakya IAS Academy in Delhi. Starting in the 2023–24 period, coaching transitioned to Vajirao& Reddy IAS Academy, resulting in the completion of training for two additional batches. The Super-50 APSC coaching programme was launched in 2023–24 to align with state civil service goals, providing fully sponsored training for 50 students in each batch at SPM IAS Academy, Guwahati. Although none of the 150 UPSC candidates have successfully passed the Civil Services Examination, the initiative has produced positive outcomes in the state civil services. Specifically, 12 students—7 in 2023–24 and 5 in 2024–25—from both the UPSC and APSC groups have qualified for the Assam Public Service Commission (APSC) exams.

Table 4. Bodofa UN Brahma Super-50 – UPSC

Batch	Total Candidates	Coaching Institute	Remark
1st (2022-23)	50	Chanakya IAS Academy, Delhi	Coaching completed
2nd (2023-24)	50	Vajirao&Reddy Academy, Delhi	
3rd (2024-25)	50		
Total Coached	150		

Table 5. Bodofa UN Brahma Super-50 - APSC

Batch	Total Candidates	Coaching Institute	Remark
1st (2023-24)	50	SPMIASAcademy,Guwahati	Coaching completed
2nd (2024-25)	50		
Total Coached	100		

Table 6. Combined UPSC + APSC Outcomes

Total Coached Candidates	No of Qualified in APSC Exam	Year
250	7	2023-24
	5	2024-25
Total	12	

Beginning in FY 2025–26, the UPSC, APSC, and medical coaching sectors within the Super-50 Mission will increase to 100 seats each—50 allocated for open merit and 50 reserved for two candidates from each of the 26 recognized communities in BTR. The Engineering vertical will maintain 50 seats. This expansion strengthens the mission’s emphasis on social equity and inclusive educational opportunities for all communities.

1. Bodoland School Adoption Program

Initiated on 15 August 2022, the Bodoland School Adoption Programme (BSAP) commenced with the adoption of 536 schools by leaders from various backgrounds throughout BTR, with each leader assigned a school in proximity to their residence or workplace. The programme, focused on enhancing infrastructure, learning outcomes, and community engagement, experienced consistent growth, with adoptions rising to 780 schools by February 2024. Adoption Champions contributed more than Rs.36.8 lakhs in support. The Bodoland School Adoption Week (February 12–17, 2024) significantly enhanced

engagement, resulting in 83 new school adoptions and an additional Rs.10 lakh in financial and material contributions, with 95% of adopters actively visiting and supporting their respective schools.

Table 7. Status Overview of Adopted Schools in BTR

Districts	As of July 2023	As of January 2024	Post-Adoption Week (Held in February 2024)
Kokrajhar	111	150	162
Chirang	103	105	114
Baksa	103	171	182
Tamulpur	102	121	126
Udalguri	116	233	279
Total	535	780	863

Active adopters who fulfill the expected activities established by the BSAP managing committee have received certificates in a tiered format, beginning with a Diamond Certificate signed by the Governor of Assam, followed by certificates from the Chief Minister, the HCEM of BTR, and the Principal Secretary of BTC.

Table 8. Adoption Week 2024: Champion Awardees by Category

<i>Award Category</i>	<i>No. of Champions</i>	<i>Points Range</i>
Diamond	117	110–600+ points
Gold	10	80–100 points
Silver	17	50–70 points
Bronze	21	30–40 points

Over the course of three years, the innovative funding, in-kind assistance, and volunteer efforts from adopters have revitalized BTR government schools, transforming the Bodoland School Adoption Programme into a model that is now being replicated by other autonomous regions.

1. Bodoland Science Education Programme

The BTR Government initiated the Bodoland Science Education Programme (BSEP) in collaboration with Agastya International Foundation in late 2022 to tackle ongoing deficiencies in STEM education. This initiative integrates teacher training, mobile science laboratories, and experiential learning to clarify concepts in science and mathematics for students. Nine Mobile Science Labs and 18 Lab-on-a-Bike units consistently engage with schools throughout all five districts, providing curriculum-aligned experiments and activities. More than 300 teachers from government schools have undergone residential training at Agastya's Kuppam campus, returning with portable science kits to facilitate low-cost classroom laboratories. Student participation has exceeded 30,000, surpassing initial year-one targets. Preliminary feedback indicates improved conceptual understanding and diminished anxiety regarding math and science. BSEP's scalable and high-impact model is garnering interest from various autonomous councils and education departments throughout the Northeast, establishing BTR as a leader in experiential STEM education.

2. Bodoland Space Education Programme (BSEP)

The Bodoland Space Education Programme (BSEP), initiated by the BTR Education Department under the leadership of Hon'ble Chief Executive Member Shri Pramod Boro, seeks to enhance science education by providing immersive space science experiences for students in high and higher secondary government schools. BTR collaborated with Vyomika Space Academy to mitigate the deficiency in technical expertise, formalizing this partnership through a Memorandum of

Understanding in February 2024. This initiative aims to create 13 decentralized Space Labs across five districts, which will be outfitted with advanced models, simulations, and telescopic instruments. These laboratories function as experiential learning centres for students and venues for public engagement, with qualified educators overseeing sustainable operations. At present, four laboratories are fully operational, with additional facilities in development. The program facilitates annual student exposure visits to ISRO's Space Applications Centre, connecting remote students with national space research initiatives. This initiative, part of the Bodoland Science Education Mission and incorporating mobile labs from the Agastya Foundation, enhances STEM education through practical astronomy and space exploration, fostering scientific curiosity and career aspirations. The project has received regional recognition and is viewed as a potential model for replication by other autonomous regions, establishing BSEP as a leader in the advancement of science education in Northeast India.

3. Bodoland Youth Employment Mission

Since 2023, the Bodoland Youth Employment Mission has offered weekend coaching for Grade III and IV government examinations at 25 colleges and higher secondary schools, benefiting thousands; however, it has not been able to satisfy the increasing demand. The mission aims to enhance access and facilitate preparation for IIT/NIT, NEET, and other professional courses by establishing 420 Bodoland Knowledge Centres (BKC)s at the village council level by 2030. The centers will provide digital classrooms, online content, weekend tutorials led by master trainers, and peer study groups, thereby fostering equitable coaching through local mentors and scholarships for underrepresented groups. The implementation will commence with 60 pilot centres in 2025-26, followed by a gradual expansion and incorporation of career counselling and alumni mentoring by 2030. The initiative seeks to achieve comprehensive village-

level coverage, resulting in 15,000 new government exam qualifiers and 500 professional college admissions from BTR. It aims to cultivate a sustainable, community-driven coaching ecosystem that mitigates migration and develops local role models. This strategic transition from centralized hubs to hyper-local centres reflects BTR's vision of inclusive, knowledge-driven development.

4. Dr. Bashi Ram Bodo Doctoral Fellowship

The Dr. Bashi Ram Bodo Doctoral Fellowship, initiated by the Bodoland Territorial Region Government, offers annual financial assistance to 50 doctoral candidates from BTR who do not have access to national research fellowships, with the objective of addressing socio-economic and institutional challenges encountered by underrepresented groups. This fellowship enhances equitable access to research, fortifies local knowledge via context-specific studies, and cultivates a pipeline of academic and professional leaders to diminish reliance on external expertise. The program provides Rs. 90,000 per student per half-year for a maximum duration of three years, specifically aimed at Ph.D. scholars enrolled in accredited Indian institutions who do not receive other government funding. The fellowship is overseen by a dedicated committee, representing a strategic investment in inclusive academic development, empowering marginalized communities, and honoring the legacy of Dr. Bashi Ram Bodo.

5. Bodoland Career Counselling Program

The Bodoland Career Counselling Programme is implemented in all 1,180-degree colleges and higher secondary schools in BTR to offer students accessible and timely career guidance. Every institution is assigned a trained nodal teacher, who is supported by 23 zonal officers for the purposes of coordination and quality assurance. The program utilizes regular training and digital resources to ensure that counsellors provide current information on career paths, competitive examinations,

and scholarships. This initiative seeks to democratize career support, equipping BTR's youth with the knowledge and confidence necessary for informed academic and professional decision-making.

6. Mission of One Student One File (OSOF)

The One-Student-One-File (OSOF) Mission in the Bodoland Territorial Region aims to establish centralized student profiles in lower primary schools, encompassing data on academic performance, attendance, co-curricular activities, health, and personal development. Implemented in 10 schools, this initiative promotes inclusive, data-informed educational planning and accountability through the engagement of teachers, parents, and the community. OSOF seeks to tailor learning support, enhance policy responsiveness, and develop a scalable model for student-centered education management, establishing BTR as a leader in comprehensive education governance.

Way Forward: Strategic Focus Areas for Continuous Transformation

The Bodoland Territorial Region seeks to expand flagship initiatives such as OSOF and BKC's throughout all schools and VCDCs, institutionalize data-driven governance via enhanced digital systems, and diversify educational pathways by incorporating vocational and career-oriented courses. Focusing on equity, targeted coaching, and outreach will assist underserved communities, while the expansion of the Dr. Bashi Ram Bodo Doctoral Fellowship will enhance research addressing local challenges. Ongoing teacher training, increased community involvement through school adoption, and strategic partnerships at both national and international levels will guarantee quality and innovation. Evaluations based on outcomes and the alignment of education with peacebuilding and governance objectives will enhance BTR's inclusive, sustainable, and participatory education ecosystem.

Conclusion: An Innovative Educational Framework for the Future of Bodoland

The BTR Government's primary missions reflect a transformative developmental vision focused on knowledge, inclusivity, and empowerment. The initiatives aimed at enhancing rural youth aspirations through Super-50 coaching, strengthening schools via community adoption, and fostering local academic leadership through doctoral fellowships collectively position BTR as a national model for education-driven change in post-conflict, rural, and indigenous contexts. Success relies on continuous political commitment, adequate funding, and active community participation. With robust foundations and coordinated efforts from all stakeholders, Bodoland is progressing towards becoming a vibrant knowledge society.

Notes

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Restructuring Agriculture for Holistic Development of Bodoland: Ensuring Sustainable Development amidst Increasing Risks and Competitive Environment

Puspadhar Das

Introduction :

The oft-quoted development mantra is that we should develop the agriculture sector because more than 60% of the population of Bodoland are farmers. We thus have a tendency to design programmes with plethora of schemes that will attract more and more people, only to overcrowd the sector with free riders and subsidy grabbers. Our tendency to believe that farmers are in a pathetic conditions without any thinking capacity and born only to toil the land. This is a Catch 22 situation: on the one hand, we have a huge population to feed from agriculture. On the other, we need so much fund to cater to all of them that we will run into huge deficit unless the fund is generated from agriculture.

The workforce statistics shows another picture. As per 2011 census in Assam, 18.93% of the population were cultivators and agriculturalists, while almost additional 50 to 60% of the population were dependent on agriculture. Agriculture being the least remunerative, economically, and riskiest of all occupations, the population becomes all the more vulnerable to the changes in market conditions in the globally connected world.

Table 1 Cultivators and agricultural workers as percent of population of a few states of India

As per 2011 Census	Total	Cultivator + Agriculturalists	
State	Population	Number	Percentage
Punjab	2,77,43,338	35,22,966	12.70%
Haryana	2,53,51,462	40,08,934	15.81%
Assam	3,12,05,576	59,06,973	18.93%
Bihar	10,40,99,452	2,55,41,875	24.54%
Gujarat	6,04,39,692	1,22,86,915	20.33%
Andhra Pradesh	8,45,80,777	2,34,59,276	27.74%
Karnataka	6,10,95,297	1,37,36,612	22.48%
Tamil Nadu	7,21,47,030	1,38,55,004	19.20%
Odisha	4,19,74,219	1,08,43,982	25.83%
West Bengal	9,12,76,115	1,53,05,530	16.77%
All India	1,21,05,69,573	12,84,68,067	

Inspite of dependence of such huge population in the agriculture sector, its contribution to the gross domestic product is only third. This sector is at the bottom of the pyramid.

Agricultural productivity is one of the lowest in India, particularly in Bodoland. Landholding is low. Perhaps it was in the interest of a class of people to keep them in poverty and in need of money so that they can be manipulated, because of which the strategy had been to give them fish, instead of training them to catch fish.

Table 2. Landholding pattern in Bodoland

Holding Size (hectares)	Total Holdings	
	Number	Area
Below 0.5	87721	23613
0.5-1.0	35673	25009
1.0-2.0	22280	31217
2.0-3.0	10971	26464
3.0-4.0	5904	20048
4.0-5.0	3659	16087
5.0-7.5	1683	9861
7.5-10.0	252	2097
10.0-20.0	70	868
20.0 & ABOVE	10	270
	168223	155534

In the developed countries, very less number of people are engaged in primary production. Machines and large scale farms produce the primary goods. For example, the percentage of people involved in agriculture in the developed countries is in single digit. In the UK, less than 1% of population are involved in agriculture and primary produce share in GDP is also very less. Even in countries like Brazil, which is a world leader in soybean cultivation, only 8.2% of the population is involved in agriculture(Table 3).

Table 3. Percentage of active population engaged in agriculture

Country	Active population in Agriculture	Sector-wise value added as % of GDP		
		Agriculture	Industry	Services
UK	0.99	0.58	17.50	72.53
Germany	1.20	0.84	26.84	63.69
US	1.57	0.94*	17.61	76.40
Netherlands	1.91	1.72	18.75	69.65
Denmark	2.02	0.76	23.49	64.42
Brazil	8.20	6.24	22.26	58.88
Malaysia	9.84	7.79	37.67	53.42
Vietnam	32.98	11.96	37.12	42.54
Bangladesh	35.27	11.00	34.59	52.11
India	43.51	16.00	25.03	49.58

Source : World Bank, World Development Indicator 2023. * Sector-wise value-added data as percentage of GDP for US data is of 2021.

As can be seen from the table above, developed economies have less dependence on primary agriculture and more on value added products and industries. This may not entirely be possible in India, given the size and skill level of the populations.

BTR Strategy

It is in these contexts that the BTR Government is rethinking its strategy towards agriculture by blending the practical realities and theoretical framework developed from economic histories of various nations. Joe Studwell, in his seminal book *How Asia Works*, has given three interventions which determines how rapid economic transitions can be achieved:

1. Restructure agriculture as highly labour-intensive household farming;
2. Direct investment and entrepreneurship towards manufacturing;

3. Focus financial interventions on intensive, small-scale agriculture and on manufacturing development.

Bodoland's agriculture policy is based, majorly on the above premises and aims the following:

1. Farmer aggregation in order to develop common facilities for smaller intensive farmers, reducing the number of people in primary production by forming clusters, mechanizing farming, and integrating value chains;
2. Emphasizing on value addition of primary produce through micro and small scale industrialization at the beginning and then slowly adopting mega green technologies for attaining economies of scale.
3. Introducing technologies for increasing productivity, improving quality and reducing physical hardships.

This trajectory of transformation is in line with Rostow's growth model (Theory of Demographic Transition), the first stage of development is characterized by high birth and death rates and mainly agrarian economy. The second stage is characterized by rise in income, reduction in death rates and consequently growth in population.

Our region has passed first stage and we can presume that we are towards the end of the second stage. The population explosion has given rise to conflicts for scarce resources, mass migration of people from one place to another due to natural disasters, strong ethnic tendencies or due to economic reasons.

In the third stage, the economy moves away from agrarian economy to a partially industrialized one. With the growth in population, population tends to shift away from rural areas towards industrial and commercial centers. Due to lack of local industries, our population has migrated out of the state to more industrialized states like Karnataka, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, etc. This is also a positive trend as it is ensuring flow of money from those areas to the region and also there has been acquirement of skills and exposure to modern techniques.

In the fourth stage, which may not be very appropriate moment for us to think of now in the context of BTR, population growth stagnates or even becomes negative, which has been witnessed in countries like Japan.

Our region may be said to be in transition between the second and the third stage characterized by the following:

1. Population has started moving away from agriculture towards industry and service (secondary and tertiary) sector;
2. Declining death rates and increasing population due to high or constant birth rates due to improvement in health services;
3. The education and skill sector is growing and more and more people are acquiring education and skillsets.

The need of the hour is to effectively use the scare resources and also improve the quality of population. It has been a major policy shift in the last four years in terms of actions taken to improve quality of population as well as quality of life through numerous missions in health, education and livelihood sector.

Michael Porter's diamond model

National prosperity is created, not inherited. It does not grow out of a country's natural endowments, its labor pool, its interest rates, or its currency's value, as classical economics insists. Instead, all natural endowments are a bane to a region: consider for example, Africa, the continent full of natural resources, but very far from development. On the contrary, Japan, which does not have any major natural resources like coal, iron, etc., but the country is one of the most developed countries.

We need to know what works and how. There is no unique formula that applies to all. Around the world, companies employ different strategies and succeed differently. The progress of a nation is the sum total of the progress of all these endeavours of the companies. Government's role is to facilitate and provide

the basic and infrastructural services and to some extent, protection from fierce competition.

In his seminal article in Harvard Business Review (March-April, 1990), Porter argued that:

“In a world of increasingly global competition, nations have become more, not less, important. As the basis of competition has shifted more and more to the creation and assimilation of knowledge, the role of the nation has grown. **Competitive advantage is created and sustained through a highly localized process.** Differences in national values, culture, economic structures, institutions, and histories all contribute to competitive success. There are striking differences in the patterns of competitiveness in every country; no nation can or will be competitive in every or even most industries. Ultimately, nations succeed in particular industries because their home **environment is the most forward-looking, dynamic, and challenging.**”

The above statement was based on a study of over more than 4 years with historic data and case studies of ten most successful trading nations. The bottomline is to create a conducive environment.

Vision of BTR

With the above in the background, Bodoland Territorial Council is preparing its economic development programme focused on:

1. **Building peaceful environment :** The past has been the period of insurgency, exploitation, conflict, a period of *Sangharsh* in a nutshell. Through collaboration among diverse communities to work harmoniously has been one of the most notable achievements of Bodoland Administration in the last four years. This is the *sine qua non* of development. Diverse talents are needed to development and must be nurtured in a peaceful environment.

2. **Nurturing and establishing institutions of regional importance :** While the Government had been on a construction spree for the last few decades, giving life and spirit to these institutions have been ignored totally, thereby resulting in wastage of these institutions. In the last five years, tremendous efforts have been put by the Government to revive and transform these institutions and integrate them into the economic processes of the Bodoland Territorial Region. Industry-Academia interaction is very critical to the development of a region and the institutions that are being developed shall go a long way in this direction.
3. Restructuring the economy by upskilling the human resources and encouraging industrialization and service sector.
4. **Strengthening land administration :** Land is the primary input to any activity, whether it be agricultural and industrial. Especially, for an agrarian economy, land ownership is very important. BTR's land administration has been overhauled and it will go a long way to create the right environment for all other activities. First, it will do away with land rent, which is a major deterrent. Secondly, it gives a sense of security to the farmer to grow a crop for commercial purpose and plan for the longer term.
5. Improving quality of life by improving infrastructure, health facility, communication, education system, markets, etc.

The challenge is to create a competitive advantage for ourselves. A competitive advantage that is not easily challenged and sustainable in the longer term.

Role of Agriculture in the Economic Development Process

Agriculture is apparently and comparatively easier to adopt and entry/ exit barriers are low.

In every progressive economy, there has been a steady shift of employment and investment from the essential primary activities to secondary activities of all kinds and to a still greater extent into tertiary production.

BTR has more than 5 lakh farm families. A comprehensive strategy for 5 lakh farm families will require huge fund and efforts. A self-sustaining system has to be developed.

With a small fund, which can be treated as a seed capital, and through proper revolution and circulation of money, capital formation is to be ensured.

The major stakeholders in the entire system are:

1. Farmers at the core
2. Support services, most important being:
 - a. Machinery sources and services
 - b. Technical services
 - c. Market linkage
 - d. Value addition services
 - e. Ancillary industries
 - f. Agro-input suppliers
 - g. Banking and financial services
3. Various Missions and Programmes of the Government
4. NABARD and its subsidiaries
5. Assam Agricultural University
6. Banks and Financial Institutions
7. Food parks and other common facilities
8. Organic input production unit
9. Centers of excellence for horticulture
10. KVKs, ITIs and other educational and technical institutions
11. Industries, companies and FPOs.

Each one of these key stakeholders plays a major role. To explain it is beyond the scope of this article, but mentioned in order to give a perspective to the role of the stakeholders, though the list is not exhaustive and specific to particular aspects, more stakeholders may be needed.

BTR's Initiatives

Few initiatives of the Bodoland Government that are worth mentioning are:

1. **Bodofa Livelihood Mission :** Driven by the philosophy of "Live and let live" of Bodofa Upendra Nath Brahma, this mission aims to provide multiple income sources, directly or indirectly, to the rural population
 - a. Dairy clusters
 - b. Nurseries
 - c. Mushroom clusters
 - d. Goat rearing
 - e. Egg production
 - f. Agriculture infrastructure
2. **Bodoland Pig Mission :** With an aim to produce 1 lakh kg pork per day, this is a mammoth mission with 65,000 families to be involved in avarious activities like pig breeding, fattening, feed supply, veterinary services, feed production, transportation, retailing and marketing activities. Already one nucleus pig breeding farm is under constriction, which will provide high genetic merit piglets to the multiplier farms. Similarly, soybean cultivation and maize cultivation are also being taken up.
3. **Lakhpatri Abo Initiative :** This initiative aims to help women earn more than Rs. 1 lakh per annum from multiple income generating activities under NRLM and State Livelihood Mission.

Conclusion :

History reminds us that, however fleetingly, the developmental destiny of a nation is in its government's hands (Joe Studwell).

From a tattered socio-economic imbroglio to a peaceful environment conducive for economic development, the last four years have formed a strong foundation for transformation. The scenario is built, the stakeholders are in place with clear roles and course is synchronized. Bodoland needs strong and visionary

leaders as the last few years have shown in achieving quick results in solving some of the major issues that troubled the region for decades. The three level of government for BTR, the Central, the State and the Council government has worked collectively to build this foundation. The coming years shall be the witness to the transformation that has been envisaged by the leadership. There is no looking back. Agriculture shall play a major part in creating opportunities, creating capital and also being the market for both inputs and outputs, in achieving the vision of Viksit Bodoland.

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Initiating Transformation of Livestock Development and Production in the Bodoland Territorial Region

Dr. Bhagat Lal Dutta

Introduction :

The North-East Region of India encompasses some of the country's most rugged terrain and biodiverse habitats. The Region, comprising of eight states – Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim, had long been relied on mixed, low-input farming systems dominated by smallholders – with agricultural activities as the prime livelihood for nearly 85% of the rural population. In this backdrop, livestock in the region had not merely been “side-assets” but kind of integral to every life – providing draft, manure, savings, and critically, animal-sourced food in areas where crop yields are fickle.

The Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) is an autonomous region within the state of Assam, situated on the north bank of the river Brahmaputra and bordered by the sub-Himalayan foothills of Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh. The BTR was established following peace agreements in 2020 granting autonomy and providing governance under the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC), after a turbulent period of more than six decades involving multifaced movements for ethnic identity, socio-economic development, autonomy and statehood. The BTC was established in 1993, but significant breakthrough came with the Bodo Accord 2020, which led to the formation of the

BTR enhancing executive and legislative powers under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India, which is designed to provide autonomy in tribal areas in the North-East Region of India. The BTR comprises of 5 administrative districts and houses well over 3 million people – about a third of which belongs to the Bodo ethnic group.

The BTC consists of 40 elected members and six additional members appointed by the Governor of Assam. This administrative structure gives the BTC significant executive and legislative powers on subjects important for regional development, including animal husbandry and veterinary services, which cover the preservation, protection, and improvement of livestock, prevention of animal diseases, veterinary training, and the establishment of cattle pounds. This provision establishes the BTC as playing a key role in shaping the future of the livestock sector within the BTR.

Like the rest of the North-East India, the economy of the BTR has also largely been dependent on agriculture and allied activities – mostly done with traditional farming and animal husbandry practices. The communities across the BTR have kept indigenous cattle, buffalo, goats, pig and poultry well adapted to the local micro-climates. As per the 20th Livestock Census of India, the livestock population in the BTR districts comprised of 1.29 million cattle, 0.52 million goats, 0.34 million pigs, 23 thousand sheep and 13 thousand buffaloes – which was roughly 12%, 12%, 16%, 7% and 3% of the state's cattle, goats, pigs, sheep and buffalo population respectively, or roughly 12% of the state's total livestock population.

Interestingly, the current area under the BTR (9,612 sq.km¹) is also approximately 12.25% of the state's total geographical area, whereas the human population of the region (3.15 million) was just over 10% of the state's human population (31.21 million) (Census of India, 2011). Historical figures for Bodoland's area include 8,795 sq.km for the Bodoland Autonomous Council (1993) and 8,970 sq.km for the Bodoland

Territorial Council (2003), illustrating the region's evolving boundaries.

Evolution from Traditional Practices and Subsistence Economy

In the early history of the Bodo people, their economic life was deeply connected to hunting-gathering, old forms of agriculture, pastoralism, and handicrafts. They maintained a self-sufficient lifestyle that prioritized meeting daily needs over the accumulation of wealth. The main domesticated animals included pigs, chickens, goats, cows, and ducks. Buffaloes were generally not raised. These animals served multiple purposes: as food, as a source of draft power for plowing fields (cattle), and as essential components for obligatory sacrifices in various religious ceremonies. This highlights the profound socio-religious and cultural significance of livestock within Bodo society, which extends far beyond mere economic utility.

Animal husbandry was primarily home-based, with no specific group of herders or shepherds. Instead, each family raised their animals for food and social-religious purposes themselves. Women played a central and traditional role in the care and management of domestic animals, and they were often considered their owners. The traditional infrastructure for animal housing included specific, albeit small, shelters like raised platforms made from locally available bamboo, reed, grass and wood.

Some historical accounts reveal some unhealthy practices, such as keeping pigs and poultry directly within homesteads, which caused pungent smells from urine and animal feces. These practices, along with the Bodo people's love for pigs and fowl, had fostered social stigma and derogatory treatment from their Hindu neighbors. This cultural context is important for understanding the evolution of the animal husbandry sector in the region.

The evolution of livestock sector in the region represents a profound socio-cultural paradigm shift, transitioning primarily

from a self-sufficient, non-commercial, and ritualistic relationship with animals to a rapidly market-oriented, profit-driven model. It was essential to overcome deeply entrenched traditional beliefs and practices for this transformation. For instance, in the early Bodo society, trade and commerce were not encouraged, based on the belief that such activities involved 'lying' and were therefore considered 'sinful.' However, over time, with the emergence of 'economic consciousness,' a significant change in this ideology has occurred, and the Bodos have become more 'business-minded' in their agricultural production and domestic animal husbandry. This adaptation of cultural values to modern economic realities is a fundamental aspect of the region's progress.

The traditional and prominent role of Bodo women as primary caretakers and pet owners has strategically established them as key drivers of the commercialization in this sector. Their involvement in poultry farming, egg production, and specifically in the commercial rearing of pigs directly contributes to their financial independence and family income. This indicates that livestock development initiatives can serve as a powerful and culturally resonant tool for women's economic empowerment and financial inclusion in the region, leveraging existing social structures for modern economic benefits.

Over time, the economic awareness of the Bodo people has increased, leading to significant changes in their approach to animal husbandry. This transformation has steered the region towards more commercial ventures beyond mere subsistence and socio-religious purposes. Initially, the emergence of trade through the barter system gradually shifted the traditional self-sufficient economy. The historical belief that engaging in trade or business involves 'lying' and is therefore 'sinful' has largely changed, reflecting a broad ideological shift in their economic life. This change in mindset has led to the development of animal husbandry into a more 'organized and scientific agricultural system,' transforming it into a significant source of income for

individuals and families. This commercialization is particularly evident in the role of women, who play a crucial part in rearing female pigs to produce a large number of piglets for sale, directly contributing to their financial independence and savings.

Opportunities

The North-Eastern Region of India (NER) faces a significant shortage of animal-source food products. Increasing urbanization, rising income levels, and growing awareness of nutritional benefits collectively have led to an increase in the consumption of milk, meat, and eggs throughout the region. This growing demand serves as a powerful market attraction, encouraging the commercialization and expansion of the livestock sector. For many families in the NER as well as in the BTR, livestock farming, particularly commercial operations, has emerged as a major supplementary agricultural business. This livelihood diversification strategy is essential for mitigating the risks associated with heavy reliance on traditional agriculture and provides necessary income support beyond primary crop cultivation. This trend reflects a broader adaptation of rural livelihoods in response to limited agricultural employment opportunities and climate variability, thereby offering a more resilient economic base.

For example, with the estimated annual requirement of 300,000 MT of pork the NER faces a substantial deficit in pork production producing less than 100,000 MT. Similar gaps are likely present for milk and eggs as well as for poultry and goat meat, as per capita availability remains low despite overall production figures. This considerable unmet demand for livestock products in the NER represents a clear market opportunity for livestock producers in the BTR being located at the gateway to the seven major states of the NER.

BTR's generally favorable climate and abundant natural resources provide a conducive environment for livestock rearing. The region is characterized by comparatively high average rainfall (in the order of 3000 mm) and predominantly alluvial soil, which supports fodder growth.

Given that BTR is a part of the largest producer and consumer of pork in India, coupled with the Bodo community's

deep-rooted traditional and cultural affinity for pig rearing, the piggery sub-sector emerges as a uniquely strategic and high-potential avenue for commercialization and significant economic growth in Bodoland. There is very high scope for comprehensive livestock promoting initiative(s) to bridge the substantial regional demand-supply gap, with a strategically clear roadmap for leveraging a traditional strength for modern economic benefit. The focus on a culturally relevant and economically viable sub-sector may be a very pragmatic approach to fostering development. This is true not only for pork production but also applicable for production of goat, poultry and dairy products.

Challenges

The state of Assam has been home to the largest population of pigs in India with pig farming serving as a vital livelihood source for many tribal and semi-tribal communities in the state, out of which about 16% were produced in the BTR. Similarly, about 10% of the state's annual milk production (which is in the tune of 800 – 900 million litres) is produced in the BTR. Despite a substantial livestock and poultry population in Assam, accounting for 3.25% and 8.36% of the country's total respectively, the overall production, productivity, and per capita availability of milk, meat, and eggs have been notably minimal in the state and the same is also true for the BTR. This indicates a significant "productivity paradox," where the sheer volume of animals does not translate into proportional output. This underlying inefficiency suggests a substantial untapped potential for growth if improvements are made in breed quality, feed management, and veterinary care, rather than simply increasing animal numbers.

Despite favorable weather, the BTR's agro-based economy, including livestock, is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Increasing temperatures and changing precipitation patterns negatively affect both animal and crop yields, which in turn impacts fodder availability. Extreme weather events such

as floods and droughts, which are projected to become more frequent, pose an immediate threat to livestock survival and fodder availability. Climate change can also increase the survival and spread of vectors and pathogens, leading to new or expanded disease outbreaks.

Farmers in Bodoland face considerable challenges in accessing organized markets and ensuring profitable prices for their livestock products. A lack of efficient market integration can create situations where farmers are compelled to discard their produce due to unprofitable returns, highlighting the disparity between production and market access. This market inefficiency discourages investment and restricts the profitability of commercial livestock enterprises.

The lack of banking facilities in several parts of Bodoland and limited access to formal credit have been significant barriers to investment in the modernization and expansion of the livestock sector. Despite the availability of government subsidies and schemes, financial self-sufficiency and access to capital are critical determinants for farmers to adopt recommended technologies and enhance operations. Without sufficient financial support, farmers struggle to obtain better breeds, modern equipment, and quality fodder, perpetuating a cycle of low productivity.

A general challenge is the limited knowledge among farmers regarding modern agricultural practices, which directly affects productivity and profitability. Historically, certain practices, such as raising pigs in homes, were considered unhealthy and led to social stigmas, which impacted dietary changes and religious conversions among some Bodo people. These socio-cultural factors can still influence the acceptance of new farming methods and technologies. Furthermore, there is an emerging trend of diminishing interest among the younger generation in traditional animal husbandry activities, posing a future challenge for labor availability and the continuity of practices within this field.

The challenges facing the livestock sector in Bodoland are not isolated; rather, they constitute a complex, interwoven web that creates a vicious cycle obstructing development. For instance, the issues of poor breed quality, inadequate fodder and feed supply, insufficient veterinary services, and devastating disease outbreaks directly contribute to low productivity. These production-side issues, in turn, negatively impact access to markets and overall profitability, which subsequently limits farmers' capacity to invest, restricts access to finance, and discourages the adoption of modern practices, thereby perpetuating the cycle of underdevelopment. To address these issues, a holistic and integrated approach is required, rather than piecemeal interventions.

BTC's Mandate and Aspirations for the Livestock Sector

The BTC possesses significant powers related to animal husbandry and veterinary services under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India, mandating the preservation, protection, and improvement of livestock, prevention of animal diseases, veterinary training, and the establishment of cattle pounds. Recognizing the importance of an agriculture-based economy, the BTC has prioritized the creation of employment opportunities in agriculture and allied sectors, including livestock.

In a holistic and integrated approach, a plethora for mutualistic development missions has been envisioned and is being put into the anvil by the Government of BTR under the leadership of Mr. Pramod Boro. Development of the dairy, poultry and goat are coalescent under the Bodofa Livelihood Mission, whereas the development of the highly potential piggery sector is being nurtured under the Bodoland Pig Mission. The Green Bodoland Mission focuses on regaining the green cover. The Bodoland Happiness Mission aspires to foster long term peace and unity, while the Mission Bwiswmuthi has been launched to efficiently address the land rights related

issues which are fundamental to agricultural and livestock livelihoods.

Among the Missions listed above, the Bodoland Pig Mission (BPM) and Bodofa Livelihood Mission (BLM) are two flagship initiatives that aspired to transform traditional livestock practices into sustainable economic activity. The BPM aims to produce 100,000 kilograms of pork per day directly involving 30,000 households and pig breeding and rearing activities and indirect involvement of additional 20,000 – 30,000 households in activities ranging from feed-fodder production to logistics and other support activities. The BPM to provide comprehensive support, including pig-breeding facilities, supply of quality feed, veterinary services, skill enhancement, livestock identification, insurance, value chain development, and market linkages. A pioneering aspect of the BPM is the establishment of “Pig Schools” which focus on training, technology demonstration, and skill development based on the Folk School concept, aiming to transform backyard pig farming into scientific and commercially viable practices. On the modern technological know-how front the BPM collaborates with specialist institutions from Denmark and the Netherlands. Similar interventions in the dairy, poultry and goat sector are components of the BLM.

Although certain powers have been transferred to the BTC, the fund for any developmental program in the BTR comes at the discretion of the state government. Funds allotted under the regular budgetary heads are very limited and within the state budget allocation there is very little scope of investing in out of the box and potentially breakthrough programs. The BTC has been requesting the Union government to implement Article 280 in the BTR area, seeking direct funding to fully execute its development plans as outlined in the 2020 Peace Accord. This direct funding mechanism is crucial for ensuring robust financial support for various sectors, including livestock

where holistic breakthrough development aspects have been envisaged at the BTR level.

Recent Transformation and Development Initiatives for the Livestock Sector in BTR

The BTR Government, formed after the 2020 Peace Accord under the leadership of Mr. Pramod Boro, has initiated an unprecedented comprehensive and holistic approach for the development of the highly potent livestock sector in the BTR which is envisaged in line with the One Health Initiative of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH), which is an integrated, unifying approach to balance and optimize the health of people, animals and the environment.

Launched in the BTR in coherence with the Bodoland Pig Mission (BPM), the concept of One Health emphasizes the interconnectedness of human, animal, and environmental health, making it highly relevant to pig farming in the BTR especially in the light of the BPM's objectives. To achieve the target of daily 100,000 kg of pork production, the pig population in BTR shall have to be more than double its normal (backyard and mostly unorganized) pig population. As such, the holistic One Health approach requires the following components in the context of the Bodoland Pig Mission:

1. **Disease Prevention & Control:** Pig farming requires strong biosecurity measures to prevent zoonotic diseases that can affect both pigs and humans. Strengthening disease surveillance and vaccination programs is essential.
2. **Sustainable Farming Practices:** Encouraging scientific breeding, nutritional management, and waste disposal can improve productivity while minimizing environmental impact.
3. **Economic & Social Impact:** Pig farming is a major source of income for small-scale farmers in Assam. Supporting local entrepreneurs and credit-linked subsidies can enhance the sector.

4. Food Safety & Consumer Awareness: Ensuring safe pork production through quality control and regulated slaughter practices is vital for public health.

With this holistic approach in the heart, the BPM paves its way to develop the BTR as a piggery hub of India by transforming tradition into a sustainable economic activity. The key features of the BPM are:

1. Breeding & Genetic Improvement: The BPM promotes scientific breeding using exotic breeds like Hampshire, Large White Yorkshire, and Large Black and their controlled crosses with local breeds. This helps improve productivity, meat quality and adaptability with local climate. Adoption of modern selective breeding techniques, artificial insemination technology.
2. Disease Control & Biosecurity: Strengthening vaccination programs, health monitoring, and biosecurity measures to prevent outbreaks.
3. Financial Assistance & Subsidies: Farmers receive financial aid to set up modern pig farms. They may also receive credit-linked subsidies under various Central and State Government schemes.
4. Training & Capacity Building: The mission conducts training programs to educate farmers on scientific pig farming, nutrition management, and market linkages.
5. Infrastructure Development: Investment in pig breeding units, modern slaughterhouses, and waste management systems to ensure sustainable farming.
6. Feed and Fodder Development: In convergence with the Agriculture Department farm machinery banks are developed across the BTR for extensive feed and fodder production.
7. Market: Facilitation of B2B links, assistance for branding, aggregation and supply network development for animals and related materials.

Parallely similar initiatives have been launched under the Bodofa Livelihood Mission for the development of dairy, poultry and goat sectors. The non-traditional initiatives taken for the transformation and development of the overall livestock sector in BTR may be summarized in the following:

1. Promoting transition from tradition to commercialization – households are encouraged to adapt scientific methods of livestock rearing, training and skilling expenses are borne by the concerned missions, financial assistance for farm development, breed improvement and assistance for biosecurity and veterinary care provided at varying scales. For very smallholders starting their first steps, it starts with short but comprehensive awareness training, construction of animal housing (often in convergence with the Panchayat and Rural Development Department), registering their livestock with National Animal Identification Tags and financial assistance for initial maintenance and care of the livestock during the transition.

For small, medium and large farms doors to tailor-made packages of assistance for farm development, technology adoption, breed upgrade, strengthening farm biosecurity are open.

2. BTR Prani Care – veterinary service at the farm premises (in convergence with the ESVHD-MVU scheme of the Govt of India). In addition to the Mobile Veterinary Units (MVUs), farmers are offered access to Rapid Livestock and Zoonotic Disease Diagnosis (through the BPM Diagnosis Service in collaboration with College of Veterinary Science, Assam Agricultural University – CVSc-AAU) – dedicated Service Vehicles are available in all 5 districts for sample collection and transportation to the designated laboratory. Selected veterinary field workers and transportation assistants were provided training in collaboration with CVSc-AAU. In its

commitment to One Health, the BPM diagnosis service already includes diagnosis for Japan Encephalitis and Swine Influenza, diagnosis for other zoonotic diseases of importance may be included in the coming phases.

3. **Connect to Care** – Direct tête-à-tête telephonic communication with the farmers from the missions' end for surveillance, monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of schemes / programs/ service-delivery. Update the farmers on issues, practices, support services, production activities, grievances. Aims to build an informed decision support system for the livestock sector in BTR in the long run.
4. **Financial and Business Development for the Livestock Sector in BTR** – Formalization of a professional umbrella legal entity with the provisions do business, earn profits and able to (re)invest in the livestock sector is being explored, which may play the role of an Integrated Livestock Development Agency for the BTR.

Early Impact and Ongoing Challenges

During the first phase of the BPM, more than 5,000 traditional very smallholder farmers were exposed to scientific pig farming relevant and easily adaptable in the BTR. Under the commercial pigger development umbrella 120 small (5 pigs) to medium (50 pigs) commercial pig farmers across the BTR were being handhold since 2023 by the mission by aiding for farm infrastructure development, breed upgrade, biosecurity and feed. Assistance was also released for 5 comparatively large pig farms (50 to more than 100 pigs) to act as model fattener (or primarily meat producing) farms based on tailor-made requirements. While the construction of the first nucleus pig breeding farm (with international know-how adapted to the BTR) started in Baksa district. During the first phase itself 5 service vehicles were made available for rapid response during

emergencies and collection and transportation of samples for disease diagnosis.

In a survey done under the Connect to Care initiative of the BPM, the early adopters reported 25 – 30% higher piglet survival and 15 – 20% better feed conversion. None of the handhold pig farms has reported any outbreak of economically important diseases during the last 2 years.

Given that the interventions under the BPM are quite recent, these early outcomes may be considered very promising and the same may now be replicated in larger scale but with very much caution within the ambit of the One Health guidelines and strictest possible biosecurity. The expansion of the piggery sector should be done very very carefully and to be meticulously incremented with highest level of biosecurity measures given that both sporadic and clustered outbreaks of African Swine Fever (ASF) has been reported in regular intervals from many parts of the NER including various districts of the state of Assam. There had been incidents of ASF within the BTR in the recent past wherein this disease without a cure nor a vaccination destroyed multiple farms having hundreds of marketable pigs in their inventory. Any apparently minor negligence or unknowing action may have devastating impact on the nascently re-growing piggery sector in BTR which may take years to recover or may even not be recoverable. This is the primary reason for the apparent slower than anticipated progress under the BPM, as BPM has so far been very cautious and choosy in the selection, adoption and development of pig farms under the mission and particularly uncompromising with biosecurity. But with growing number of farmers and spatial spread and expected individual behavior adhering to the development norms or enforcing the strict biosecurity may be the biggest challenge in the coming days.

During the same period, under the BLM, dairy clusters under a cooperative setting with high yield cows are being

developed and more than 25,000 liters of milk being produced per day by these newly developed dairy clusters, which in a way is very impressive.

Similarly, adoption of scientific goat rearing promoted by the BLM was found to be very attractive among the traditional goat rearers of the BTR. Intervention in the form of scientific raised goat shed has been reported to improve disease management and growth in goats.

Pathways Forward

The interventions initiated by the BTC, aiming transformation of livestock development and production in the BTR so far has been in a very nascent stage. Visibility of solid results in these sectors may take a few couples of years if not decades as these transformations can not be achieved overnight. Livestock has a production cycle of at least a couple of months. Getting and managing sufficient number of grand-parent, parent stock of livestock may also take substantial time. Region wise implementation of animal husbandry policy and making people adopt and adhere to them over their traditional practices both are tedious and very demanding affairs. But the early results may be considered very promising, and it may be undoubtably said that the BTC's recent initiatives for transformation of livestock development and production in the BTR are on the right track. The cautious approach, specifically for the piggery sector, may apparently appear slow but given the current state of the factors of epidemiological concern, the slow and steady but alert to avert potential disaster will certainly be the winner.

The following may supplement the efforts that have been put so far and BTC may explore adding the same to their agenda in the coming days:

1. Feed & Fodder Security: Promote silage pits, hydroponic fodder and block-logging of multipurpose trees.
2. Digital & Community-Based Veterinary Care: Train youth as para-vets, deploy tele-medicine apps and mobile clinics.

3. Credit, Insurance & Infrastructure: Offer low-interest loans, livestock insurance and build hygienic slaughter/cold-storage units.
4. Value-Chain Development: Foster dairy cooperatives, pork-processing units and egg-grading centers to improve bargaining power and traceability.
5. Farmer Producer Organization (FPO) / Cooperatives may be a good model for accelerated transformation and development of the livestock sector in BTR. From a disease control perspective also, bigger farms managed / owned by FPO / Cooperative may be better for implementing disease control and containment strategies.

And yes, by weaving together age-old animal husbandry with targeted modern interventions, the BTR can transform its livestock sector from subsistence mainstays into engines of rural prosperity, nutritional resilience and cultural affirmation.

Notes

⁴⁹<https://bodoland.gov.in/district> accessed on 09/06/2025

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Green Bodoland Mission : A Giant Leap of Faith Towards a Sustainable World

Manoranjan Das

The Green Bodoland Mission (GBM) was officially launched on 15th August 2023 by the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) Government as a visionary initiative to create a greener, more sustainable future for the region. Rooted in India's national and global climate commitments, the mission embodies local action for global impact.

While India's historical share of global carbon emissions from 1850 to 2019 remains less than 4%, and its annual per capita emissions are just one-third of the global average, the nation has taken strong strides toward climate responsibility. At COP 26, India committed to achieving net-zero emissions by 2070 and submitted its long-term low-carbon development strategy under Article 4 of the Paris Agreement to the UNFCCC. The Green Bodoland Mission aligns directly with these commitments, reinforcing Sustainable Development Goal 13 (Climate Action).

Thematic Pillars of the Mission

1. **Mass Scale Tree Plantation :** GBM is facilitating region-wide afforestation and ecological restoration through block plantations, Miyawaki forests, roadside and institutional plantations, and wetland greening.
2. **Sustainable Groundwater Management :** In collaboration with the National Institute of Hydrology

(NIH), Roorkee, GBM is undertaking scientific groundwater studies to develop a regional groundwater management plan for BTR. The objective is to phase out unsustainable groundwater extraction by 2033.

3. **Reduction of Plastic Pollution** : Through awareness drives, clean village competitions, and youth engagement, GBM aims to eliminate single-use plastic, promote alternatives, and instill eco-conscious habits in communities.

Key Achievements So Far [2023-24 & 2024-25 (Phase-I)]:

- 250 Youth Clubs mobilized for block plantation, covering 250 hectares with 1,00,000 saplings
- **30,000 saplings** of various species have been planted across **75 academic institutions and government office premises** under the **Institutional Plantation Component** of the Green Bodoland Mission (GBM).
- Two **Miyawaki Forest** pilots underway at BTC Secretariat and Kokrajhar Medical College with 12,000 plants of 45 indigenous species.
- 4000 saplings planted along roadsides and boundaries of the BTC Secretariat
- Groundwater action research launched with NIH Roorkee; aquifer mapping and 124 water samples collected for analysis
- Wetland restoration pilots completed successfully in Mazbat (Hatibil) and Tamulpur (Sontola)
- 10 villages adopted so far under the Village Adoption Programme, with more than 20000 saplings planted and trainings on waste segregation and composting
- One-time incentives of ¹ 50,000 provided to participating Green Brigades, with structured SoP for fund utilization. So far, the incentive has been provided to 176 Green Brigades (Youth Clubs).

Table 1. Summary of Plantation [2023-24 & 2024-25 (Phase-I)]

Sl. No	Component	Unit (Nos.)	Number of Plant Saplings
1.	Block Plantation with Youth Clubs (Green Brigades)	250 Nos.	100000 Nos.
2.	Institutional Plantation	75 Nos.	30000 Nos.
3.	Plantation in Adopted	10 Nos.	20000 Nos.
4.	Village and Roadside Plantation at BTC Secretariat	—	4000 Nos.
	Total Number of Saplings		154000 Nos.

The **Miyawaki forest method** creates **dense, fast-growing native forests** that are ideal for ecological restoration in limited spaces. It is proven to be **30 times denser**, **grows 10 times faster**, and **absorbs 30 times more carbon** than conventional plantations. Moreover, it ensures **100% native biodiversity**, making it a powerful tool for climate resilience and habitat restoration.

Plans of the 2024-25 (phase-II):

As GBM moves into its next phase, the mission aims to deepen its environmental impact while integrating sustainable livelihoods and scientific direction. Key initiatives planned for the coming years include:

- **Mass Plantation through Youth Engagement :** A targeted plantation of 44,000 additional trees is scheduled for the 2025–26 monsoon season, to be executed through 110 Youth Clubs, reinforcing the mission’s community-led model of ecological restoration.
- **Kesseru Plantation for Livelihood Convergence :** In collaboration with the Bodoland Sericulture Mission, 1,00,000 Kesseru (*Heteropanax fragrans*) saplings are being planted with the involvement of 400 Eri silk rearers, promoting biodiversity while supporting sericulture-based livelihoods.

- **Village Adoption Programme :** During the current phase another 15 villages will be adopted for mass scale tree plantation. It is estimated to plant 22500 plant saplings will be plated in these selected villages during the current planting season.
- **Fruit-Bearing Tree Plantation for Income Generation :** Under the *Lakhpati Abo* initiative of the BTC, GBM will also undertake fruit tree plantations in select areas to provide long-term livelihood opportunities for local communities, integrating environmental conservation with economic upliftment.

Table 2. Summary of Plantation 2024-25 (Phase-II)

Sl. No	Component	Unit (Nos.)	Number of Plant Saplings
1.	Block Plantation with Youth Clubs, SHGs (Lakhpati Abo)	110 Nos.	44000 Nos.
2.	Kesseru (Heteropanax fragrans) Plantation in convergence with Bodoland Sericulture Mission	400 Rearers	100000 Nos.
3.	Plantation in Adopted Villages	15 Nos.	22500 Nos.
	Total Number of Saplings		166500 Nos.

- **Scientific Groundwater Recharge Interventions :** Based on the recommendations of the ongoing action research with NIH Roorkee, GBM will roll out scientifically-informed groundwater recharge programmes, including structures percolation pits, and other aquifer recharge projects.
- **Promoting Plastic alternative :** Promoting plastic alternatives is one of the key initiatives under the Green Bodoland Mission (GBM), aimed at the strategic elimination of single-use plastics. In the current phase, the Mission plans to promote traditional rural pottery as

an eco-friendly livelihood option, in collaboration with the SELCO Foundation's solar-powered pottery solutions.

To support this initiative, GBM has earmarked ¹ 20 lakh, complemented by ¹ 16.8 lakh in additional support from SELCO. Together, this will enable the development of three pottery clusters equipped with sustainable energy solutions such as solar-powered pottery wheels, fuel-efficient kilns, and AC pugmills.

- **Scaling Zero Waste Settlements :** Building on the success of the Village Adoption Programme, GBM aims to develop Zero Waste Villages and Towns across BTR by enhancing solid waste management systems, promoting composting, and eliminating single-use plastics.
- **Bodoland Green Conference – Knowledge for Action:** To guide and refine its future course, GBM will host the first-ever Bodoland Green Conference, inviting leading climate change experts, renewable energy specialists, forestry professionals, and waste management practitioners for deliberation, brainstorming, and policy refinement of the mission's thematic focus areas.

The ceremonial plantation at the Miyawaki forest sites in the BTC Secretariat and Kokrajhar Medical College (KMC) were successfully carried out on the 5th June 2025, coinciding with World Environment Day. In addition, a plantation drive involving 1000 saplings was also carried out at CIT-Kokrajhar and 1200 saplings at KMC as part of the celebration.

As HCEM Shri Pramod Boro rightly observed, “When we protect nature, we protect ourselves. When we invest in our forests, rivers, and wetlands, we invest in the future of our children.” These words echo the shared sentiment of countless people across the region, including an elder from a remote village who said, “We don’t need to be scientists. The land is telling us everything.”

In summary, it can be said that the Green Bodoland Mission is not just a policy—it's a living movement. It reflects the hopes of a region determined to rise in harmony with its environment. It is a promise made by people, not to institutions, but to their future generations. It is a public call to action in a climate of growing uncertainty.

In a world weary of inaction, Bodoland offers a spark of hope. A green future begins not in distant capitals, but right here—in the heart of nature. And Bodoland has already shown the way!



The narrative of Bodoland is one of resilience, transformation, and an enduring pursuit of peace and prosperity. Transforming Bodoland: A Journey of Change in Bodoland Territorial Region is a collection of chapters, each contributed by experts in the field, presenting a scholarly examination of the region's evolution, analyzing key moments that have defined its socio-political landscape, economic resurgence, and cultural vibrancy.

This volume is not merely a collection of reflections but a presentation of a profound exploration of the processes shaping Bodoland's future.



GOVERNMENT OF BODOLAND TERRITORIAL REGION
BODOFANWGWR ❖ KOKRAJHAR- THE CITY OF PEACE
BODOLAND TERRITORIAL REGION, ASSAM

