

Army chief raised the right issue

General Rawat's remarks on immigration from Bangladesh have flagged the demographic changes in the North-East as well as the immigration of Rohingya Muslims from distant Myanmar

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Among the Bangladeshi nationals listed in the National Register of Citizens, a foreigner detected in June 2005, has acquired a voter's identity card and Aadhaar card. Obviously, the population of illegal aliens determined to settle in Assam is a natural vote-bank for the party that provides the documentation enabling eternal residence and rights in India. Little wonder that Bangladeshi immigrants always have infallible proof of Indian citizenship, while needy citizens in remote hamlets starve for want of Aadhaar linkage with the ration shop. As we await the efficacy of Assam's National Register of Citizens, we urgently need a law to deny citizenship to the offspring of infiltrators.

At a defence officers' seminar on 'North-East Region of India — Bridging Gaps and Securing Borders', organised by the Centre for Joint Warfare Studies and Integrated Defence Staff at DRDO Bhavan (New Delhi, February 21), the Chief of Army Staff, Gen Bipin Rawat, flagged the demographic invasion from the east. The deliberations were in-house; the partial leaks which sparked media outcry unfortunate.

Rawat reportedly said the influx of illegal migrants from Bangladesh into Assam explains the exponential rise of Maulana Badruddin Ajmal's fledgling party, All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF). He advocated amalgamating the population that came before independence and addressing problems in the North-East with development. The influx is part of a proxy war by a western neighbour (Pakistan), supported by a northern neighbour (China).

A thinking General, Rawat noted that the AIUDF, launched in 2005, has grown relatively faster than the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which grew out of the Jan Sangh that had just two MPs in 1984. In fact, an ethno-religious group was consciously nurtured to alter Assam's demography long before Partition. Amalendu Guha (*Planter Raj to Swaraj: Freedom Struggle and Electoral Politics in Assam 1826-1947*; ICHR, 1997) records that Muslim presence in the Brahmaputra Valley rose from nine per cent in 1881 to 19 per cent in 1931 and 23 per cent in 1941. In Barpeta sub-division, Muslims were just 0.1 per cent of the population in 1911, but almost 49 per cent in 1941.

Five time Chief Minister SM Sadullah (1937-1946) imported so many east Bengal Muslims, ostensibly to 'Grow More Food' during World War II that the Congress and even Lord Archibald Wavell, dubbed it a 'Grow More Muslims' strategy (*The Northeast Question: Conflicts and Frontiers*, Pradip Phanjoubam, Routledge, 2015). One lakh bighas in the Brahmaputra val-

ley were given to these migrants in 1939-40 alone. Sadullah joined the Muslim League in 1937 and supported the Cabinet Mission Plan grouping that would have placed Assam in Pakistan, but for Mahatma Gandhi, Gopinath Bordoloi and Sarat Chandra Bose. The original map of the Muslim League before 1947 included all of India's North-East.

Maulana Ajmal legitimately claims that the AIUDF and the Aam Aadmi Party rose due to the mis-governance of large parties, and that his party gives a good number of seats to Hindus. But to lambast the General for making a "political statement" is absurd; a military strategist understands the political dimensions of every issue.

However, Ajmal rightly observes that New Delhi has never raised the issue with Dhaka, and, "If there are so many illegals, how did they get the right to vote, those documents? ... Those who are in power now and who have been in power must explain... what is the Border Security Force or the Army doing?"

Anger over changing demography was simmering when the Congress gave voting rights to four lakh immigrants during the 1983 Assembly poll; the Nellie massacre followed. The Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunals) Act 1983 was duplicitous and made it impossible to deport outsiders; it was struck down by the Supreme Court in 2005, for endangering the security of the North-East and reducing the local people to a minority in some districts. Indeed, it encouraged Bangladeshi intruders to spread to other

north-eastern States. The Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) recruited illicit migrants to make inroads into groups like the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA). China has joined the game.

Bangladesh's official census of 1991 noted a "missing population" of six million (*Illegal Migration from Bangladesh*, BB Kumar, 2006). In 1998, Assam Governor Gen SK Sinha sent a 42-page report to the President regarding an ISI plot (Operation Pin Code) to grab the "chicken neck" Siliguri corridor and cut off the North-East. In 2005, West Bengal Governor Gopal Krishna Gandhi warned President APJ Abdul Kalam that the State was sitting on an "infiltration time bomb". In 2011, Home Secretary Madhav Godbole estimated 1.5 crore aliens across the North-East; his Task Force on Border Management should be made public.

A crisis is brewing in Jammu & Kashmir, where Rohingya Muslims from distant Myanmar have been settling with impunity in recent years, long before the current ethnic conflict in Rakhine Province. The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) warned the Centre in 2010 that nearly 40 lakh Rohingyas had entered India illegally from Bangladesh and Myanmar. This is clearly an Islamist project as, instead of settling with co-religionists in Kashmir, they are grabbing lands in Jammu Province and frightening Hindus with their rising numbers.

The intruders have ration cards, voter cards, Aadhaar cards and even permanent resident certificates (PRC), which

proves administration connivance. Only bona fide Jammu & Kashmir citizens are entitled to a PRC, which entitles them to buy land, get Government jobs and pursue higher studies in the State. Hindu residents struggle to get the cards for their children; Hindu refugees from West Pakistan (1947) languish without state citizenship, but Rohingyas have bought State land in Jammu.

R Rohingyas have settled close to Army camps in Jammu. An illegal Rohingya settlement exists near Sunjwan military station that was attacked on January 10, and took the lives of six soldiers and a civilian; three Jaish-e-Mohammed militants were killed. Barely a month later, a sentry post at Sunjwan was pelted with stones (February 25). Rohingyas have links with the ISI and terror groups. In 2015, a militant killed by security forces in south Kashmir, Abdur Rehman al Arkani or Chota Burmi, was from Rakhine.

Last year, Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, Kiren Rijju, promised to deport 40,000 Rohingyas, but professional malcontents rushed to the Supreme Court, which unfortunately admitted the petition. So, Rohingyas enjoy their freedom, selling girls from Myanmar and heroin sourced from the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. As the city of temples prepares to descend into lawlessness, media and liberals berate the Army Chief for "political" (factually correct) statements.

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