

Shin-wa Lee (102), with the assistance of Aamena Malik (109), 06/22/94

Updates

Deepa Khosla (116), 03/17/96, 09/15/99

Assamese and Bodos in Assam, India

Capital: Guwahati

Population: (1998): **Assamese:** 12.792 million (This is 1.3% of the country population of 984.004 million).

Bodos: 4.920 million (This is 0.5% of the country population of 984.004 million).

The group populations are drawn from various sources and the country population is from the US Census Bureau.

-

Overview

Historically, the northeast part of India was sparsely populated. Fewer than a million people were reported to reside in the Ahom (the traditional **Assamese** aristocracy) kingdom of Assam until the advent of British rule in 1826. During the colonial period, the shortage of manpower in Assam was regarded as a major obstacle to British colonial plans (to clear the jungles, reclaim swampy lands for cultivation, develop tea cultivation, etc.). As a result, the British encouraged migration from East Bengal into Ahom. The inflow of people to the northeast continued even after the partition of India in 1947.

The population of northeast India has seen unprecedented growth during the past century, and that of Assam, for example, increased from 3,290,000 around partition to 19,902,826 in 1981. After the partition of British India in 1947, several hundred thousand Bengali-speaking Hindus left what was then East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) and flowed into Assam by late 1950. Since 1947, three tribal states have been separated from Assam: Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Nagaland. Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh, and Manipur of northeast India were considered for inclusion in Assam, but have also become separate states.

In 1956, Jawaharlal Nehru's government created linguistic states in the wake of ethnic strife throughout northeast India. Despite Nehru's administrative reforms, continuing migration from West Bengal and Bengali-speaking East Pakistan to Assam have threatened the political domination of the **Assamese**-speakers in the region, leading to the **Assamese** people's struggle for political autonomy. Since the demographic factor has played a crucial part in the democratic framework, the **Assamese** are convinced that they will become a minority in their own state and their political power will be taken by the foreign immigrants. This conviction was strengthened with the influx of illegal Bengali-speaking migrants from Bangladesh after 1971.

In the late 1970s, the **Assamese** began to protest the widespread inclusion of illegal migrants on electoral

rolls. The **Assamese** sense of threat was sharpened by developments in neighboring Tripura, which was one-third Bengali-speaking in 1947 but two-thirds Bengali-speaking in the late 1970s and politically dominated by Bengalis. Between 1979 and 1985, militant **Assamese** students, led by the All Assam Students Union (AASU), increasingly voiced demands for job opportunities in the bureaucracy and professional occupations over Hindu Bengali-speakers, as well as the expulsion of ethnic Bengalis. In 1979, the AASU had two associate organizations: i) the Ahom Gana Sanagram Parishad (AGSP), a political counterpart to the student group; and ii) the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), a radical, militant organization calling for secession from India. Whereas the AASU and the AGSP cooperated in moderate support of **Assamese** interests, ULFA members were regarded as marginalized extremists at the time (the ULFA became a prominent force in **Assamese** politics in the late 1980s, however).

Unlike the separatist ULFA, the **Assamese** student activists did not advocate secession in their most violent phase of the agitation in the early 1980s. Instead, employing Mahatma Gandhi's tactics of nonviolent civil disobedience, they demonstrated for political or constitutional issues involving illegal immigration and the principle of linguistic states. The AASU was well organized and had widespread support from ethnic **Assamese** workers in the oil fields, bureaucracy, and police. As a result, a strike to cut off local oil production, which accounted for 20% of India's domestic production, was implemented. Alarmed by growing **Assamese** cohesiveness, the large Hindu Bengali-speaking students organized the All Assam Minority Students Union (AAMSU) in late 1979. Rivalries between the AASU and AAMSU thus further aggravated the precarious situation in Assam despite the government's efforts to negotiate a compromise between the two groups.

Turmoil in Assam in the early- and mid-1980s was largely a result of perceptions of central neglect, geographic isolationism, the influx of illegal migration from neighboring regions, and resentment at persistent underdevelopment. Thus, **Assamese** agitation was targeted at non-ethnic **Assamese**, which resulted in large-scale violence including the Nellie massacre of 1983, in which over 300 Bengali-speaking people were killed. On August 15, 1985, India's Independence Day, the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi signed an accord in New Delhi, aimed at ending years of anti-foreigner turmoil in Assam. But the accord failed to effectively deal with illegal immigration, and few foreigners have been deported since the signing of the agreement. In addition, the potential for continued migration from overpopulated Bangladesh has escalated **Assamese** objections to the admission of any foreigners.

Despite its strong mobilizing power, the AASU had not functioned as a political party. Before the state assembly elections in December 1985, AASU leaders signed an accord for a separate regional party, the Asom Gana Parishad (Assam People's Party - AGP) to oppose the long ruling Congress (I) party. In order to oppose this accord, the United Minorities Front (UMF) party was formed to unite all minorities -- immigrant Muslims, Bengali Hindus, **Assamese** Muslims, Nepalese, and non-**Assamese** tribal groups. The AGP won the 1985 state election and Chief Minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta (the AGP leader) sought ways to integrate different ethnic groups in Assam. Despite the AGP's efforts, however, the situation in Assam remains insecure. While the conflict during the 1980s has been ascribed mainly to **Assamese** fighting against immigrants and foreign nationals, since 1989, the AGP has also faced the **Bodo** tribals' agitation for a separate state.

Bodos, indigenous to the subcontinent, are hill tribals of Mongol extraction who inhabit the northern plains region of Assam. **Bodos** are fervently proud of their heritage and culture and have increasingly felt that their own culture and language is threatened by **Assamese** dominance. Ironically, Chief Minister Mahanta was in the vanguard of the seven-year old agitation (1979-85) for the expulsion of the immigrants (particularly Bangladeshis) to safeguard the ethnic, economic, cultural, and political identity of the original inhabitants of

Assam. By 1989, the "original" tribals (mainly **Bodos**) opposed the Mahanta government.

Unlike the **Assamese**-speaking majority in Assam, who demand secession from India, most **Bodos** seek autonomy within India in the form of a state of their own called "**Bodoland**" (which would comprise almost the entire area north of the Brahmaputra river in Assam). Although the AGP government attempted to treat **Bodo** tribals and other minority groups (within Assam) as part of greater **Assamese** society, the **Bodos** opposed the policy because (they perceive) they are the most backward of the various tribes as a result of submersion. Under the auspices of the All-**Bodos** Students Union (ABSU), headed by Upendra Nath Brahma, the **Bodo** community launched an agitation, ironically reminiscent of the AASU movement a decade ago. The **Bodos'** demand for a separate state from Assam, however is unacceptable to AGP members who fiercely oppose the division of the already "much-fragmented" state. The **Bodos** have also demanded that the central government recognize **Bodo** as one of India's national languages and that **Bodo** be declared as the official language in **Bodo** areas. They have also been calling for an increase in the number of seats reserved for tribal peoples in admissions into educational institutions, as well as more housing grants, radio and television stations, and an agricultural university for **Bodos**. **Bodo** movements mainly resorted to violent tactics, including attacks on public buildings and railroads, as they believe that violence is the only avenue for minorities to attract the attention of the central government. Both the ABSU and the **Bodo** Security Force (BSF) have employed violent measures to gain publicity for their cause. In the mid to late 1980s, over 600 people were killed in **Bodo**-related violence.

As the AGP government became increasingly ineffective in dealing with turmoil in Assam, the AASU resumed an agitation in 1990 after a five-year hiatus. The AASU opposed the AGP government as well as Bengali migrants. The AGP leaders, most of whom ironically were the AASU leaders who led the struggle in the early 1980s, were criticized by the new AASU members (led by Kartick Hazarika). In 1985, the AASU had accepted a central government accord promising a better watch on migrants, but the new leaders of AASU increasingly organized strikes, blaming both the state and central governments for the non-implementation of the agreement. Meanwhile, ULFA also increased its use of violence, causing a general paralysis of the AGP government. The surge of the AASU and ULFA signify the failure of the AGP government to address ethnic and tribal tensions in Assam.

Assamese Organizations

AASU (All Assam Students Union): an **Assamese** militant student organization, active between 1979 and 1985 and again since 1990.

AGSP (Ahom Gana Sanagram Parishad): a political counterpart to the AASU, formed in 1979.

ULFA (United Liberation Front of Assam): a radical, militant, Maoist group, founded in 1979; it has played the predominant role in the **Assamese** movement since the late 1980s, advocating of separate nation-state for **Assamese**.

AGP (Assam People's Party): Before the state assembly election in December 1985 against the long ruling Congress(I), AASU leaders signed an accord for a separate regional party, the AGP. The AGP won the 1985 election and ruled the state government until May 1991 when they lost power to the Congress(I). It came back to power in the 1990s.

Bodo Organizations

ABSU (All Bodos Students Union): Under the auspices of the ABSU, the **Bodo** tribals began an agitation in late 1980, demanding a separate state, "**Bodoland**", from Assam (but within India).

BSF (Bodo Security Force): a **Bodo** militant group, formed by the ABSU in 1989.

Chronology

February 16-21 1989: The **Bodos** demanded separate statehood, during a five-day general strike. At least 24 people were killed and attacks on police, bombings, arsons, train derailments, and looting were reported.

March 1989: A two-week long **Bodo** tribals' violent outburst (including a 175-hour strike beginning on March 2 and another 1,000 hour strike) forced the AGP-led state government (Chief Minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta) to call in the army and the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF).

The **Bodo**-dominated areas of Kokrajhar and Udalguri had been in turmoil for the past two weeks, leaving some 32 dead and 40 injured. As ABSU-led young armed **Bodo** extremists engaged in arson and banditry, attacked security guards, and looted arms, **Assamese** non-tribals in the **Bodo**-dominated areas fled to neighboring towns. Combing operations in **Bodo**-held areas were intensified, allegedly because of armed **Bodo** training camps in the forests bordering Bhutan.

The AGP government expressed its willingness to further accommodate all the tribals' socio-economic demands but strongly stated that they would meet violence with violence to prevent any division of the state.

AGP leaders charged the Congress(I) with encouraging the **Bodo** agitation in an attempt to destabilize the their government. While **Bodo** leaders denied that they received any support from the central government, they threatened that if the AGP government were to flush them out, they would demand the dismissal of the state government and the imposition of direct rule over Assam. The **Bodos** asserted that the AGP was a party of caste Hindus, with little regard for minorities.

April 1989: Assam fell into chaos as the **Bodos** continued to wage violent attacks against the state. **Bodos** extremists killed 62 people in recent terrorist attacks. In addition, hundreds of others died in related violence.

August 1989: Over 150 people (reportedly) died during four days of **Bodo** rebellious violence earlier in the month. Over 60,000 **Bodos** fled into the neighboring state of Arunachal Pradesh during the peak of the unrest.

An article in The Hindu implied that the above report may have been falsely circulated by the Congress (I) government of Arunachal Pradesh in an attempt to destabilize the AGP government.

(During 1989, a main source of the turmoil in Assam was the rebellion of **Bodo** tribals.)

January 27 1990: As the AASU increased its agitation, the AGP signed an agreement with it pledging that the investigations of illegal migrants would be completed by the end of October, 1990.

May 9 1990: The ULFA killed Surendra Paul, an influential tea estate planter in its dominant area in upper Assam, causing many tea estate managers to flee Assam.

August 1990: The ASSU (general secretary Sammujjal Bhattacharya) prevented crude oil from leaving Assam, after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and the subsequent oil price shock, demanding the halt of construction of a second crude-oil pipeline from Assam. In addition, the ASSU demanded tighter control of migrants and more industry in Assam.

September 1990: The AASU demanded that all of Assam's natural resources must be processed within the state. The AASU called for "real" implementation of the 1985 accord, alleging that the AGP government has deported only 45,000 out of some 200,000 illegal Bangladeshi migrants. Bhattacharya, ASSU general secretary, wanted new refinery projects using petroleum resources which would create jobs for 1.5 million unemployed Assamese youth.

November 27 1990: Operation Bajrang was launched by Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar and President's rule was imposed in Assam. The entire state of Assam was declared a "disturbed area". The decision was made in response to the deteriorating state of law and order, mainly caused by the militant activities of the separatist ULFA. ULFA was outlawed and as a result, many ULFA leaders had fled into Myanmar. Congress(I) leader Rajiv Gandhi (as Chandra Shekhar's newest coalition partner) supported Operation Bajrang. Still, the AGP argued that the Congress(I) had used the ULFA to reestablish its presence in Assam. Meanwhile, **Bodos** and other non-Assamese tribals were preparing to fight the ULFA.

(During 1990, the separatist ULFA conducted a series of assassinations, kidnappings, and bomb attacks, resulting in the central government's declaration of President's rule.)

January 19 1991: The Minister of State for Internal Affairs, Subodh Kant Sahay said that ULFA (together with the National Socialist Council of Nagaland) had been banned.

January 28 1991: ULFA expressed its willingness to accept any mediatory initiative, but the central government continued its campaign of arrests of suspected militants.

February 2 1991: The ULFA sent a letter to Assam's Governor D. D. Thakur, issuing its terms for negotiations with the central government. The terms included an immediate withdrawal of President's rule which was imposed on 27 November 1990.

February 1991: A four-month stand-off continued between the ULFA and the central government until February 1991.

March 4 1991: The ULFA unexpectedly declared a unilateral ceasefire and proposed negotiations with the center. It also demanded that all political groupings make clear by the end of March their standpoint on Assam's independence and the central government's "colonialism".

Governor D. Thakur agreed to negotiate with the ULFA but within the framework of the Indian Constitution. Rajiv Gandhi and Congress(I) leaders opposed any negotiations with the ULFA and called for the election in Assam to be canceled. Nevertheless, Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar announced that an election would be held in Assam in May 1991.

ULFA agreed not to interfere in the electoral process. Arbind Rajkova, ULFA chairman, apologized to the people of Assam for the ULFA's past mistakes. The gesture was regarded as the ULFA's "temporary" response to four months of army occupation and increasing public pressure against the violence in Assam.

March 15 1991: D. D. Thakur resigned after Rajiv Gandhi criticized him for failing to quell the insurgencies in Assam. He was replaced by Loknath Mishra.

ULFA militants continued to resist Operation Bajrang (which reportedly has resulted in the deaths of 97 ULFA members since 27 November, 1990), by particularly targeting Congress(I) leaders.

May 1991: During state elections, the AGP split and the Congress(I) won in Assam. Hiteswar Saikia was reappointed as the state's Chief Minister.

July 1 1991: ULFA resumed its terrorist operations, kidnaping 14 people (including a Soviet engineer).

September 15 1991: Operation Rhino was launched after negotiation efforts stumbled. Two hundred and seventy companies of paramilitary forces from four army divisions were dispatched in Assam to push ULFA guerrillas.

October 13 1991: A bomb, allegedly placed by the banned **Bodo** Security Force (BSF), on a train in the district of Barpeta killed 21 people.

November 21 1991: The BSF was again blamed for two bomb explosions that killed 40 people in the town of Guwahati.

December 13 1991: ULFA was forced to declare a unilateral and indefinite ceasefire as a result of internal fighting among ULFA members and the arrest of its key leaders. Still, 500 well-trained ULFA militants remained active beyond the control of the army.

Meanwhile, the AASU and its splinter faction, the Naturn Assam Gana Parishad (NAGP) continued to demand the implementation of the 1985 accord. Also, the **Bodos** continued to agitate for a separate state from Assam.

The state and the central government were in discord because Assam's Chief Minister Saikia wanted to negotiate with the ULFA, whereas the central government strongly expressed faith in the Indian constitution and wanted to have the militants surrender their arms.

December 18 1991: The ULFA accepted a unilateral, indefinite ceasefire, after the release of six remaining hostages abducted in July 1991.

January 13 1992: The central government suspended the army's Operation Bajrang and the ULFA agreed to end their four-year rebellion.

March-April 1992: The ULFA resumed fighting with the army after a breakdown in peace talks which began on March 31.

April 11 1992: At least 140 ULFA members surrendered to the central government. 10 armed forces personnel were killed in an explosion, allegedly by the anti-talks faction of the ULFA.

October 13 1992: 21 people were killed in a bomb explosion on a train in the district of Barpeta, allegedly planted by rebels of the outlawed BSF.

November 21 1992: 40 people were killed in two bomb explosions in Guwahati, Assam. BSF members were alleged to be responsible.

February 20 1993: A Memorandum of Settlement (MOS) was signed between the state of Assam, the central government of India, representatives of the ABSU and the **Bodo** People's Action Committee (BPAC). Rather than acceding directly to the demand of the **Bodo** Tribe for a separate homeland, the MOS called for the creation of a 40-member **Bodoland** Autonomous Council (BAC) and a **Bodoland** Executive Council (BEC).

July 3 1993: An agreement on the immediate implementation of the MOS was concluded between the state government and the **Bodoland** People's Party (BPP).

October 12 1993: Fifty people were left dead after violent clashes between members of the separatists and non-**Bodo** peoples in the Kokrajhar and Bongaigon districts of Assam.

Early January 1994: The **Bodos** served an ultimatum for the demarcation of their "homeland" boundaries. Full-fledged armed guerrilla operations are in progress throughout Assam (along with Manipur, Nagaland, and Tripura) (Inter Press Service, 01/27/94). In the (militant-dominated) small towns of would-be **Bodoland** in Assam, schools and universities have stopped functioning.

January 27 1994: A commotion over the inauguration of two universities in Assam compelled Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao to cancel public functions in Assam.

March 2 1994: **Bodo** rebels released the head of Tata's Tea operation in the northeast after 11 months of captivity.

May 27 1994: **Bodo** militants set fire to the houses of Bengali-speaking Muslim settlers in the countryside district of Kokrajhar. More than 100 people were injured, 7,000 were left homeless and four villages were burned to the ground. To restore order and combat the rioting between **Bodo** separatists and the native **Assamese** population that followed the event, ten truckloads of army troops and hundreds of paramilitary troops were deployed.

May 29 1994: **Bodo** militants attacked four Muslim villages in lower Assam's Kokrajhar district, leaving at least 21 dead and 4,000 homeless.

The ULFA (led by ethnic **Assamese** militants) and BSF have (reportedly) become allies as have other militants in the region.

Update 03/17/96

June 29, 1994: Pradip Gogoi, the vice-chairman of the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) was arrested in Assam (BBC, 06/29/94).

July 22, 1994: Twenty-one people were killed during riots between the **Bodos** and long-time Muslim immigrants in Assam's Barpeta district. Ten Muslim and five **Bodo** villages were burnt, leading some 5000 people to flee. Police officials indicate that tensions between the two communities began nine days ago after a police party, that was investigating the killings of two Muslims, was ambushed by **Bodo** militants. Seven policemen died in the attack (Reuters, 07/22/94, 07/24/94).

July 24, 1994: Armed **Bodo** militants opened fire at Bangladeshi immigrants at the Bansbari relief camp, some 160 km east of the **Assamese** capital of Guwahati. At least 71 people were killed, including two **Bodo** guerrillas, and over 100 injured. In 1993, the federal government and the **Bodos** signed an accord to reportedly end the insurgency. However, the **Bodos** are now demanding that 515 villages be included in the autonomous **Bodoland** area and that the influx of Bangladeshi migrants be curbed. The government excluded the villages from the original deal due to national security concerns (they form part of the India-Bhutan border) (UPI, 07/24/94).

July 27, 1994: The massacre at the Bansbari relief camp on July 24 has prompted more than 54,000 people, mostly Muslims, to flee their villages and head towards cities such as Guwahati or Barpeta. The Indian government has sent 3000 additional troops to Assam (The Independent, 07/27/94; Reuters, 07/27/94).

July 30, 1994: Rajesh Pilot, the federal Minister of State for Home, admits that lapses in the state administration and the lack of adequate police forces led to the massacre of over 70 Bangladeshis at a relief camp last week. A 24-hour strike call by the All Assam Students Union was partly observed throughout the state (BBC, 07/30/94).

July 31, 1994: Indian army officials have received the permission of the Bhutan government to enter its territory to destroy bases suspected of harboring **Bodo** militants (Reuters, 07/31/94).

August 1, 1994: Police forces followed about 15 ULFA members into Bhutan but were unable to capture them (Reuters, 08/01/94).

August 16, 1994: In an attempt to check rising violence against Muslims, the Assam government will hire more Muslim policemen. One in three new recruits and one out of two officers will now be

from the Muslim community (Reuters, 08/16/94).

November 10, 1994: Seventeen ULFA members surrendered in front of Assam chief minister Hiteswar Saikia in Guwahati, the state capital (BBC, 11/10/94).

November 20, 1994: The Indian government has extended its ban on three outlawed groups in the

northeastern part of the country. The groups are the **Bodo** Security Force (BSF), the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), and the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) (Reuters, 11/20/94).

January 25, 1995: Around 50 **Bodos** attacked a group of laborers in Kokrajhar district, Assam, killing nine and seriously wounding eight others (BBC, 01/25/95).

April 1, 1995: Authorities believe that members of the outlawed **Bodo** Security Force are responsible for killing nine people at Udalguri, in Assam's northern Darrang district (UPI, 04/01/95).

May 3, 1995: The Assam government states that 146 people have died of malaria while 54,823 have contracted the disease. However, health experts indicate that the numbers are double or triple that of government estimates and argue that the federal government did not provide money for chemical spraying (Reuters, 05/03/95).

June 4, 1995: India and Myanmar have joined forces to crack down on insurgent groups that operate in the border areas of each country. Indian government officials indicate that one of the northeastern rebel groups seeking independence suffered heavy losses after Myanmar's troops drove them back into India where Indian troops were waiting. Over 35 rebels were reportedly killed and another 50 injured. The head of ULFA, Paresh Baruah, denied the claimed government casualty toll (New York Times, 06/04/95).

August 1, 1995: Members of ULFA and the BSF jointly attacked a police camp and police station in Darrang district, killing two policemen. A few days earlier, ULFA militants killed eight policemen in an ambush in Kamrup district. Authorities responded by deploying police commandos in the state (BBC, 08/01/95).

On this same day, the Federal Minister of State for Home indicated that the situation in Assam had improved and that the United Liberation Front of Assam had largely been contained (BBC, 08/01/95).

August 3, 1995: An ambush by ULFA rebels resulted in the deaths of eight police personnel in Kamrup district in Assam (BBC, 08/03/95).

October 6, 1995: Irrigation Department executive engineer Dhir Kanta Debsarma was released by ULFA rebels in Assam following 75 days of captivity (BBC, 10/06/95).

October 14, 1995: One soldier was killed and another seriously injured after a police patrol was ambushed by the ULFA in Darrang district. In another incident in Assam, suspected **Bodo** rebels killed one person in Kokrajhar district (UPI, 10/14/95).

October 26, 1995: Three people, including the President of the Citizens Rights Preservation Committee, were killed in two episodes in Assam. BSF militants were reportedly involved in one of the instances (BBC, 10/26/95).

October 29, 1995: A bomb exploded on a passenger bus in Assam, killing four people and injuring fifteen others. No one has claimed responsibility but officials believe the **Bodos** were possibly involved (UPI, 10/29/95).

November 1, 1995: **Bodo** Security Force (BSF) members are reported to be responsible for a bomb blast in Assam that killed three soldiers and seriously wounded three others (BBC, 11/01/95).

November 12, 1995: A gastro enteritis epidemic in two **Assamese** districts has claimed the lives of at least 45 people. More than 35,000 others have been affected by the disease (Deutsche Presse-Agentur, 11/12/95).

November 19, 1995: Eight people were killed in Assam when the BSF fired at a passenger bus (Reuters, 11/19/95).

November 23, 1995: A joint ambush of a police patrol by the BSF and ULFA has resulted in the deaths of five policeman and their civilian driver. Two other policemen were injured (Reuters, 11/23/95).

December 9, 1995: In separate incidents in the **Bodoland** Autonomous Council areas, eleven people were killed and six others seriously wounded. The Assam government has asked the center to close the Indo-Bhutan border to check the cross-border movements of militants. State officials also requested additional troop deployments (Xinhua News Agency, 12/09/95).

December 31, 1995: Militants ambushed the convoy of Assam's Health Minister, Dr. Bhumidhar Barman. The minister escaped unhurt; three people were killed and ten injured in the incident. No information was available on who was responsible (BBC, 12/31/95).

Update 09/15/99

February 22, 1996: Indian Prime Minister Narasimha Rao offers to hold talks with insurgents in the northeast. Officials state that the **Bodo** Security Force (BSF) is responsible for the killings of 5 paramilitary soldiers in a land mine blast (Agence France Presse, 02/22/96).

February 26, 1996: In three attacks last week, militant **Bodos** kill 12 military personnel and 9 immigrant workers (Reuters, 02/26/96).

March 18, 1996: **Bodo** militant groups kill three government employees in Assam (BBC, 03/18/96).

April 22, 1996: Assam Chief Minister Hiteswar Saikia dies of cardiac arrest. He had been chief minister since 1991 (Agence France Presse, 04/22/96).

April 26, 1996: ULFA claims responsibility for the murder of a Congress Party candidate near Margherita town (Agence France Presse, 04/26/96).

May 6, 1996: An **Assamese** government minister and 10 of his bodyguards are killed in Golaghat district. The NSCN (Naga rebel group) and ULFA are blamed (Agence France Presse, 05/06/96).

May 23, 1996: Nearly 80 people are dead after clashes between **Bodos** and members of the Santhal tribe in the past week in Kokrajhar and Bongaigaon districts. Over 100,000 are left homeless as their houses are burnt and another 100,000 have fled to temporary camps. The clashes reportedly started after the killing of 3 **Bodo** girls (Agence France Presse, 05/23/96).

July 2, 1996: Flooding in Assam in the past month claims over 500 lives (Agence France Presse,

07/02/96).

July 28, 1996: ULFA is blamed for the deaths of two policemen and one civilian (United Press International, 07/28/96).

July 30, 1996: The President of the All **Bodo** Students Union (ABSU), Sumbra Basumatary, is killed by three gunmen in Kokrajhar district. Police suspect the involvement of **Bodo** tribals (Agence France Presse, 07/30/96).

August 15, 1996: A police officer is killed in Nalbari district on the country's Independence Day. **Bodos** enforce a 24-hour strike in the state and attack a number of police posts (Agence France Presse, 08/15/96).

August 19, 1996: ULFA reportedly kills 13 military personnel in three attacks and the **Bodos** kill 10 people in Assam. The army launched an offensive against **Bodo** bases in Bhutan this month (Agence France Presse, 08/19/96).

September 13, 1996: A general strike called by the All Assam Students Union (AASU) paralyzes the state. The AASU alleges that the state's voters list is full of illegal Bangladeshi immigrants and it wants the list revised before by-elections are held on October 11. The organization has over 500,000 supporters (Agence France Presse, 09/13/96).

October 28, 1996: Prime Minister Gowda invites rebel groups in the northeast to hold peace talks (Agence France Presse, 10/28/96).

November 7, 1996: An ULFA-called 24-hour general strike cripples Assam. The strike was held to protest alleged army atrocities and human rights violations against civilians (Agence France Presse, 11/07/96).

November 19, 1996: Eleven villagers in Kokrajhar district are killed by unnamed rebels. Over 250 people have died in violent attacks in Assam this year (Agence France Presse, 12/06/96).

November 21, 1996: Thirteen people are killed, likely by **Bodo** groups, in two incidents in Assam (BBC, 11/21/96).

November 28, 1996: An explosion in a petroleum pipeline of a state-owned oil company in Nalbari district results in a massive fire. Officials suspect the involvement of the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA). New Delhi accuses Bangladesh of sheltering ULFA militants; Dhaka denies the claim (Agence France Presse, 11/28/96).

December 6, 1996: Police state that ULFA is responsible for the deaths of 5 civilians when a fire erupts in a market in Barpeta town (Agence France Presse, 12/06/96).

December 10, 1996: Some 1000 **Bodos**, including members of the ABSU, march near the Parliament building in New Delhi to press for a separate tribal state to be carved out of Assam (Agence France Presse, 12/10/96).

December 30, 1996: While the official toll is listed at 33, more than 100 people are suspected dead as a result of a bomb explosion on a train in Assam. **Bodo** groups are believed to be responsible. They are also

blamed for blowing up two bridges in the area (Reuters, 12/30/96).

January 1, 1997: Police state that **Bodo** militants destroyed a railway bridge in Darrang district, Assam (Agence France Presse, 01/01/97).

January 7, 1997: **Bodo** rebels are suspected in the bombing of a courthouse in Kamrup district. This is the 4th bombing in Assam since December 29 (Agence France Presse, 01/07/97).

January 13, 1997: Officials state that the **Bodo** Security Force (BSF) reportedly killed 9 members of its rival **Bodoland** Liberation Tigers Front (BLTF) in a raid on its camp in Nalbari district. Two days earlier, **Bodos** shot dead two soldiers while ULFA members reportedly killed two hotel owners in Lakhimpur district (Agence France Presse, 01/13/97).

January 19, 1997: Some 25,000 government troops begin to move into Assam for a reported major crackdown against insurgents (Agence France Presse, 01/19/97).

January 22, 1997: The **Bodo** Security Force (BSF) allegedly kills eight woodcutters in three raids in Assam (Reuters, 01/22/97).

January 24, 1997: An AASU-called strike shuts down Assam. The student organization is protesting against the federal government's deployment of the army in the state. It says that the Assam government should have made the decision. The **Bodo** Liberation Tigers Front (BLTF) declares a ceasefire after one of its leaders is recently killed. The BLTF is reported to be responsible for the December 30, 1996, train attack (Agence France Presse, 01/24/97).

January 26, 1997: An ULFA-called 12-hour shutdown is observed in Assam on India's Republic Day (Agence France Presse, 01/26/97).

February 7, 1997: The United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) rejects peace talks with the government due to the army's crackdown in the state. An ULFA-called general strike is observed in five districts (Agence France Presse, 02/07/97).

February 18, 1997: Officials blame ULFA for the ambush attempt on an intelligence officer in Guwahati. One person died (Agence France Presse, 02/18/97).

March 22, 1997: **Bodo** groups reportedly kill the wife of a tea estate owner and two bodyguards in Assam, likely due to an extortion attempt (Agence France Presse, 03/22/97).

April 19, 1997: An ULFA-called 12-hour strike is observed in Assam. The strike is held to protest last week's alleged police killings of some of the organization's activists (Agence France Presse, 04/19/97).

April 24, 1997: The government says that violent activities in Assam have significantly increased since last year's general elections when compared to the previous two years. It says that ULFA is responsible for 107 deaths in the past year, including the deaths of 48 police/security personnel. Intercommunal violence has resulted in around 200 deaths (Agence France Presse, 04/24/97).

May 14, 1997: Close to 5000 additional troops are to be deployed in Assam to deal with tribal violence. Up to the first week of May, ULFA is reported to be responsible for 79 attacks which resulted in 60 deaths. The **Bodos** are blamed for 42 killings during the same time period. In 1996, they are believed to responsible for around 260 deaths (Agence France Presse, 05/14/97).

May 20, 1997: Prime Minister Gujral offers to hold unconditional talks with rebels in the northeastern states. He does however state that the country will not be broken up. His offer comes as an ULFA-called strike is observed in Assam (Agence France Presse, 05/19-20/97).

June 13, 1997: A 10-hour strike called by the ruling AGP, its 6 allies, and opposition groups is held in Assam. The strike is to protest an ULFA attempt to assassinate Chief Minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta. This is the first anti-ULFA strike. The United Front for the Liberation of Assam had called on the population to oppose the strike (Agence France Presse, 06/13/97).

July 2, 1997: Thousands of people in Guwahati hold a rally against violence and **Aterrorism@** in the state. The rally was organized by the ruling AGP and five other political parties which called on ULFA to open peace talks. While ULFA warns the population against participating in the rally, this is seen as the first organized effort by the ruling alliance and its allies to politically challenge militant groups (Hindu, 07/02/97).

Six soldiers are killed in an ambush in Darrang district. It is not known who is responsible (Agence France Presse, 07/02/97).

July 4, 1997: A prominent social activist, Sanjay Ghose, is reported abducted by ULFA. Ghose is the secretary of the NGO, the Association of Voluntary Agencies for Rural Development (Hindu, 07/08/97).

July 21, 1997: A 36-hour general strike called by the AASU cripples Assam. The students= group, which reportedly has the support of 3 million people, is demanding the deportation of illegal Bangladeshi immigrants (Agence France Presse, 07/21/97).

August 7, 1997: Some residents in Guwahati protest against the alleged death of social activist Sanjay Ghose and call for a boycott of ULFA. The United Liberation Front for the Liberation of Assam (ULFA) says that Ghose died while trying to escape. He was reported to have been kidnaped by ULFA on July 4 (Statesman, 08/07/97).

August 8, 1997: Seven members of the **Bodo** Security Force (BSF) are reported killed in an encounter with soldiers in Darrang district. In other incidents, ULFA members are blamed for the deaths of two soldiers while three of its members were arrested near Guwahati (Agence France Presse, 08/08/97).

August 11, 1997: No deaths are reported when a bomb derails a train in Assam. ULFA or the **Bodos** are suspected (Agence France Presse, 08/11/97).

August 13, 1997: A 36-hour strike called by the ABSU closes down Kokrajhar and Bongaigaon districts and other **Bodo**-dominated areas. In the last few days, bombs reportedly planted by **Bodo** rebel groups have killed non-Assamese people (Statesman, 08/13/97).

August 14, 1997: Several women hold a protest in Guwahati over the reported killing of social activist Sanjay Ghose by ULFA (Hindu, 08/14/97).

Seven people die when a railway train carriage is blown up in Assam. Authorities believe the **Bodos** are responsible. This is the fourth attack blamed on the **Bodos** in the past week. Earlier, 13 villagers were killed (Agence France Presse, 08/14/97).

August 15, 1997: An ULFA-called strike to denounce human rights abuses closes down Assam. Several hundred people hold a procession in Guwahati in defiance of the ULFA call (Agence France Presse, Hindu, 08/15/97).

August 16, 1997: Suspected rebels of the **Bodoland Army C** the armed wing of the National Democratic Front of **Bodoland C** raid villages in Nalbari district. Fourteen Bengalis are killed.

ULFA and **Bodo** groups also set fire to government offices and railway stations and blow up a bridge (Statesman, 08/16/97).

August 17, 1997: The **Bodoland State Movement Council** asks the federal government to intervene to maintain law and order in Assam (Statesman, 08/17/97).

August 18, 1997: Seven **Bodos** are likely killed by Bengalis in Nalbari district, in what is viewed as a retaliation for the August 16th attack against Bengalis (Agence France Presse, 08/18/97).

August 19, 1997: ULFA is reported to be responsible for the killing of a Surrendered ULFA (SULFA, i.e. former rebels=organization) member in Nalbari district (Statesman, 08/19/97).

August 28, 1997: Four officers are dead following an alleged ULFA attack on a jeep convoy in Nahoratiya district (Agence France Presse, 08/28/97).

September 18, 1997: A meeting is held between the representatives of the federal and Assam governments and six **Bodo** groups, including the body that governs the **Bodo** district, the **Bodo** Autonomous Council. **Bodo** militant groups boycott the meeting which discussed the implementation of the 1993 **Bodo** accord. The government rejects the creation of a separate **Bodo** state and proposes that a working group be established (Statesman, 09/18/97).

September 26, 1997: Five villagers are killed in Assam in an alleged dispute between rival **Bodo** groups (Agence France Presse, 09/26/97).

October 13, 1997: A reported ULFA ambush in Goalpara district results in the deaths of four soldiers (Agence France Presse, 10/13/97).

November 25, 1997: A limited response, except in **Bodo**-majority areas in Assam, was reported to a 24-hour strike called last week by the All **Bodo** Students Union (ABSU) (Statesman, 11/25/97).

November 28, 1997: ULFA reportedly blows up part of a 1500 km oil pipeline and kills a police officer in western Assam. Earlier it held an 18-hour blockage that forced three oil refineries to temporarily close to mark the 7th anniversary of the government crackdown against the group (Agence France Presse, 11/28/97).

December 2, 1997: Four ULFA and three **Bodos** are killed in clashes with police forces in Assam (AAP Newsfeed, 12/02/97).

December 9, 1997: A strike called by the All Assam Students Union (AASU) shuts down Assam. The AASU says the strike was to protest the inclusion of Bangladeshi immigrants on electoral rolls. It asserts that some 7 million immigrants who entered the country since 1986 are on the rolls (Agence France Presse, 12/09/97).

December 10, 1997: ULFA says it is willing to hold talks with the federal government but they must be held outside the country with UN supervision and sovereignty must be discussed (Agence France Presse, 12/10/97).

December 14, 1997: Police blame **Bodo** rebel groups for a bomb explosion in Bongaigaon district that results in the deaths of four soldiers (Agence France Presse, 12/14/97).

January 1, 1998: Three **Bodos** are reported killed, likely in retaliation for the deaths of 14 non-**Bodos** in Darrang district. Around 700 people have died in the past 18 months in the northern and western **Bodo**-dominated districts (Agence France Presse, 01/01/98).

January 4, 1998: The **Bodos** are blamed for the deaths of seven Hindu villagers in Assam. A few days earlier, they reportedly killed 9 other villagers (AAP Newsfeed, 01/04/98).

January 8, 1998: A 12-hour ULFA called strike paralyzes Assam. The rebels are protesting the arrest of one of their leaders in Bangladesh (Agence France Presse, 01/08/98).

January 15, 1998: A strike called by **Assamese** political parties is observed. The strike is to protest the killing of 18 **Assamese** villagers yesterday, likely by the BLTF (Statesman, 01/15/1998; Agence France Presse, 01/14/98).

January 26, 1998: An ULFA strike on India's Republic Day closes down Assam. The rebels also attack a railway station (Agence France Presse, 01/26/98).

February 13, 1998: An AASU-called strike is observed in Assam. The student organization is protesting the inclusion of Bangladeshi immigrants on the electoral rolls (AAP Newsfeed, 02/13/98).

February 14, 1998: Three **Bodo** Liberation Tiger Force (BLTF) members are killed in an army encounter (BBC, 02/14/98).

February 16, 1998: Some 42% of the population of Assam votes in federal elections despite the first ever ULFA call for a boycott. ULFA members reportedly snatched ballot boxes at a dozen polling stations and kidnaped at least 3 members of the ruling AGP party. ULFA is already reported to be responsible for the murder of an AGP campaign manager and a political candidate and the kidnaping of 12 of its workers. Yesterday, six ULFA and two BLTF members were killed in encounters with the police (Agence France Presse, 02/11/98; Inter Press Service, 02/10/98; Statesman, 02/15-16/98).

February 26, 1998: Reports indicate that militancy among Muslims in Assam is growing. The Islamic Liberation Tigers of Assam, which reportedly has safe haven in Bangladesh, is demanding a Muslim state in Muslim-dominant districts (Statesman, 02/26/98).

March 17, 1998: Six businessmen are abducted by unknown militants in Assam (Agence France Presse, 03/17/98).

March 9, 1998: India asks Bhutan for permission to attack ULFA and BSF bases in Bhutan. The two organizations are reported to have more than 12 bases in neighboring Bhutan (Inter Press Service, 03/09/98).

April 2, 1998: The federal BJP government offers to hold unconditional talks with rebel groups in the northeast (Agence France Presse, 04/02/98).

April 9, 1998: A top ULFA leader is arrested in the state of West Bengal. In response to the government's offer to open talks, ULFA says that it has no choice but to continue an armed struggle as an independent state cannot be granted under the constitution (Agence France Presse, 04/09/98).

April 19, 1998: Two local leaders of the ABSU are reportedly killed by NDFB members in Darrang district. The ABSU is alleged to have links to the BLTF, which a rival of the NDFB. The **Bodo** Liberation Tigers Front (BLTF) is fighting for a separate **Bodo** state within the Indian union while the National Democratic Front of **Bodoland** (NDFB) wants a sovereign **Bodoland**. The NDFB was formerly known as the **Bodo** Security Force (Statesman, 04/19/98).

May 3, 1998: **Bodos** reportedly kill 14 members of the Santhal tribe in Assam. Last week, the Santhals killed four **Bodos** (Agence France Presse, 05/03/98).

May 8, 1998: Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee announces an annual \$400 million package to build infrastructure in the eight northeast states (Agence France Presse, 05/08/98).

May 9, 1998: Fourteen Santhals are killed by **Bodos** in Kokrajhar district. Some 10,000 people flee. Four days earlier, two **Bodos** were killed and around 100 of their houses were burnt by Santhals. Clashes between the two tribal groups in 1996 left more than 500 people dead (Agence France Presse, 05/09/98).

May 15, 1998: The United Front of Assam (ULFA), which is fighting for an independent state in Assam, warns the NSCN (I-M) (the major Naga rebel group) about encroaching on **Assamese** territory. The warning follows the reported killing of a family member of an ULFA leader by the NSCN (I-M). Rebel demands for a greater Nagaland include territory that is currently part of Assam, Manipur, and Arunachal Pradesh (Statesman, 05/15/98).

May 25, 1998: A meeting is held between representatives of the federal and Assam governments and some **Bodo** groups. The two sides agree to meet again. Last September, the various parties agreed to establish a working group but **Bodo** groups opted out shortly afterward indicating that they are not interested in the autonomous **Bodo** council and instead want a separate state in India (Statesman, 05/24-27/98).

June 5, 1998: The fifth bomb attack in four days is reported in Assam. **Bodo** groups, including the BLTF, are suspected (Agence France Presse, 06/05/98).

June 21, 1998: Hundreds of women demonstrate to protest the alleged rape of two women by soldiers in Paikarkuchi village (Agence France Presse, 06/21/98).

July 18, 1998: Seven policemen are reported killed by **Bodo** rebels (Agence France Presse, 07/18/98).

July 24, 1998: Some 51 member of ULFA reportedly surrender to authorities (Statesman, 07/24/98).

July 25, 1998: **Bodos** allegedly kill 7 members of the Santhal community, a rival tribal group, in Kokrajhar district (Agence France Presse, 07/25/98).

July 26, 1998: In an attempt to prevent former militants from returning to violence, the federal government will establish a new battalion in Assam comprised of ex-ULFA members (Agence France Presse, 07/26/98).

July 29, 1998: Police believe the NDFB is responsible for a bomb blast in Nalbari district which claims 11 lives (Agence France Presse, 07/29/98).

July 30, 1998: Members of the Santhal tribe kill 11 **Bodos** in Kokrajhar district, reportedly in response for a **Bodo** attack against them last week. The ownership of land is reported to be the main point of contention (Agence France Presse, 07/30/98).

August 3, 1998: Hundreds of **Bodos** and Santhals flee their villages and take shelter in refugee camps (Statesman, 08/03/98).

Reports indicate the **Bodoland** Autonomous Council (BAC) still remains a very poor region with little development undertaken in the past few years. The BAC says that the state government has not provided funds for development. There are also allegations that some money that has been misspent. Although the BAC was created under a 1993 agreement, its jurisdictional area still remains undefined (Ibid.).

August 6, 1998: Three army personnel die in a bomb blast in Nalbari district. ULFA is suspected (Statesman, 08/06/98).

August 11, 1998: ULFA claims responsibility for an explosion and fire at an oil depot in Nagaon district (Statesman, 08/11/98).

August 12, 1998: Twelve people are killed in various incidents in Assam, including four Bengalis killed by **Bodo** groups (Agence France Presse, 08/12/98).

August 14, 1998: ULFA is blamed for the deaths of five civilians and the **Bodos** for four deaths (BBC, 08/14/98).

August 15, 1998: The BLTF kills seven civilians and strikes are held in Assam to mark India's Independence Day (Agence France Presse, Deutsche Presse-Agentur, 08/15/98).

August 24, 1998: At least three people die in a massive bomb blast at the main railway station in Guwahati. ULFA claims responsibility (Agence France Presse, 08/24-25/98).

August 26, 1998: Four ULFA members are killed in a gunbattle with security forces (Agence France Presse, 08/26/98).

August 30, 1998: The government and ULFA blame each other for the deaths of three SULFA members (former militants) who are helping police forces. In recent weeks, some 200, mainly ULFA, rebels have surrendered (Agence France Presse, 08/30/98).

September 9, 1998: Bodo-Santhal violence in the last few days has resulted in 15 Santhal houses being burnt and two Santhal deaths in Kokrajhar district (Statesman, 09/08/98).

September 16, 1998: Members of the NDFB reportedly kill 14 members of the Orang ethnic group and six Santhals. The Santhals kill three **Bodos** (Deutsche Presse-Agentur, 09/16/98).

September 26, 1998: Tribal violence between the Santhals and **Bodos** has subsided after some three weeks. Over 50 people have died, over 10,000 houses torched in some 30 villages, many in Kokrajhar district. Over 100,000 people are homeless and refugee camps where some of them are residing report a lack of food and the spread of diseases (Agence France Presse, 09/17-26/98).

September 28, 1998: ULFA is blamed for an ambush of a paramilitary convoy in Goalpara district. Seven soldiers died (Agence France Presse, 09/28/98).

October 3, 1998: More than 1000 Santhals demonstrate in Guwahati demanding that the government provide them with proper weapons to protect themselves against **Bodo** attacks (Agence France Presse, 10/03/98).

October 8, 1998: The military leader of ULFA, Paresh Barua, rejects a ceasefire with the government. He says that the rebels will only consider holding talks if they are held outside of the country and sovereignty is included on the agenda (Agence France Presse, 10/08/98).

October 9, 1998: Some 13 **Assamese** and Bengalis are killed in three attacks in Darrang district. The BLTF is suspected in one incident (Statesman, 10/09/98).

October 11, 1998: The National Democratic Front of **Bodoland** (NDFB), formerly known as the **Bodo** Security Force (BSF) is believed responsible for a fire in a market in Sonitpur region which results in five deaths. A **Bodo** group is also suspected in the deaths of five forest guards in Kokrajhar district (Agence France Presse, 10/11/98).

October 17, 1998: The NDFB reportedly kills five Adivasis at a relief camp in Kokrajhar district. The Adivasis burn down 10 **Bodo** huts (Statesman, 10/17/98).

October 29, 1998: An AASU-called strike to protest rising violence paralyzes Assam. Over 1000 people in the state have died this year (Agence France Presse, 10/29/98).

October 30, 1998: The NDFB reportedly kills 7 Santhals west of Guwahati (Agence France Presse, 10/30/98).

November 11, 1998: Reports indicate that ULFA and **Bodo** rebel groups shifted their camps from

Bangladesh to Bhutan after Sheikh Hasina assumed power in Dhaka (Statesman, 11/11/98).

November 25, 1998: The Roman Catholic Church of India says it has been forced to close down one of its leading missions in Dhubri district after a priest was kidnaped, likely by the mostly Christian Santhals (Agence France Presse, 11/25/98).

November 28, 1998: ULFA is blamed for the deaths of five soldiers in Fibfagar district and bomb explosions at two oil pipelines and two bridges in Dibrugarh and Morigaon districts (Agence France Presse, 11/28/98).

December 2, 1998: India and Bhutan launch an unprecedented joint military offensive after a **Bodo** attack on a Bhutanese convoy in Assam results in the deaths of four soldiers. The Bhutanese army often travels through **Assamese** territory to access other parts of Bhutan (Agence France Presse, 12/02/98).

December 12, 1998: **Bodos** kill at least 23 Muslim settlers in Kokrajhar district (Agence France Presse, 12/12/98).

December 15, 1998: The United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) accuses the federal government of **A**trying to trigger civil war@by killing the relatives of its top activists. It says that in the past four months there have been 50 state-sponsored murders, including 30 relatives of senior ULFA officials (Agence France Presse, 12/15/98).

December 18, 1998: Nine people are killed in a car bomb attack in Guwahati. The **Bodos** or ULFA are suspected (Agence France Presse, 12/18/98).

December 20, 1998: ULFA is suspected in a bomb attack in Dhubri district in which 6 policemen and 4 civilians were killed (Statesman, 12/20/98).

December 27, 1998: Two weeks ago, a top tea executive in Dhubri district and a plantation manager in Cahchar district were killed. At least 50 tea plantations report they have received extortion demands from rebel groups. In the past five years, at least 20 tea executives have been killed and more than 30 kidnaped for ransom (Agence France Presse, 12/27/98).

January 1, 1999: The NDFB is suspected in an attack on a relief camp in Kokrajhar district which resulted in the deaths of 3 policemen and the torching of 50 huts. The Adivasis reportedly retaliate by burning down two **Bodo** villages (Statesman, 01/01/99).

January 26, 1999: ULFA is suspected as an oil pipeline is blown up near Digboi town. Two soldiers are also killed in Sibsagar district (Agence France Presse, 01/26/99).

February 4, 1999: ULFA and three other unnamed northeast rebel groups launch their own websites to garner support (Agence France Presse, 02/04/99).

March 1, 1999: Eight Muslim villagers are killed by **Bodos** in Dhubri district. Nearly 50,000 Muslims who fled anti-Muslim violence in 1994-95 remain in refugee camps in Assam (Agence France Presse, 03/01/99).

March 8, 1999: Six relatives of ULFA leaders are killed in Guwahati, likely by former ULFA members. The attack is reportedly in retaliation for a recent ULFA attack on an apartment building that houses former

militants. Some 20,000 people have died in Assam in the past 15 years (Agence France Presse, 03/08/99).

March 10, 1999: ULFA is reported to have established new bases inside Burma. The rebels likely moved from their previous positions in Bhutan due to intensified efforts by the Bhutanese government to remove anti-Indian elements within its borders (Agence France Presse, 03/10/99).

March 13, 1999: Seven paramilitary personnel are killed in various ambushes in Assam (Agence France Presse, 03/13/99).

April 14, 1999: The All Assam Students Union (AASU) says that it will no longer call strikes as they are hurting the state's economic development. It says it will use other protest measures. From June 1997 to June 1998, there were 74 work stoppages in Assam (Statesman, 04/14/99).

May 2, 1999: Eight militants and a army officer die in a gunbattle in Assam (Agence France Presse, 05/11/99).

June 1, 1999: Some 100 **Bodos** attack 2 Santhal villages in Dhubri district. At least 14 people are dead (Agence France Presse, 06/01/99).

June 8, 1999: The NDFB and the BLFT say that they will end their rivalry and pool their resources to fight for a separate **Bodo** state within India that will be carved out of Assam (Agence France Presse, 06/08/99).

June 22, 1999: A bomb blast at Jalpaiguri railway station in West Bengal kills 9 people. Police believe ULFA is responsible (Agence France Presse, 08/02/99).

June 29, 1999: ULFA is suspected in a bomb blast in Kamrup district that results in the deaths of seven policemen (Agence France Presse, 06/29/99).

July 9, 1999: Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee warns Pakistan against fanning separatist unrest in the country's northeast. The Indian army reports that Pakistani intelligence agents are working in tandem with separatist groups. An ULFA-called strike is observed in Assam as Vajpayee visits the state. Reports indicate that separatist activities have increased in Assam as security forces have been redeployed to Jammu and Kashmir (Agence France Presse, 07/09/99).

July 15, 1999: The **Bodo** Liberation Tiger Force declares a unilateral ceasefire and says that it is ready for peace talks with New Delhi. It says that India is facing a national crisis in Kargil (in Jammu and Kashmir) and that Pakistan is trying to exploit the situation. In May of this year, Pakistani troops and Kashmiri insurgents were discovered occupying territory in Indian-held Kashmir. Since then, Indian troops have been attempting to dislodge them (Agence France Presse, 07/15/99).

August 9, 1999: The **Bodos** are suspected in the third bomb attack at a railway station in Assam in the past 10 days. No deaths are reported (Agence France Presse, 08/09/99).

August 10, 1999: ULFA reportedly blows up a portion of the national highway in Nalbari district as part of its campaign to cut transport lines with Assam (Agence France Presse, 08/10/99).

August 14, 1999: Six people, including three militants, are killed in Assam (Agence France Presse 08/14/99).

August 15, 1999: Over 200 tribal rebels surrender in Assam while three people are injured in two bomb blasts. The government regularly offers an amnesty on the country's Independence Day (Agence France Presse, 08/15/99).

August 19, 1999: The federal government is still offering to hold unconditional talks with ULFA and is awaiting a response from the rebels. Meanwhile, five ULFA members are killed when police attack one of the organization's communications centers and four NDFB members die in a police encounter in Bongaigaon district (Statesman, 08/19/99).

September 7, 1999: The United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) calls for a boycott of the September-October federal elections (Agence France Presse, 09/07/99).

-

Risk Assessment

The insurgency movements of the **Assamese** and the **Bodos** continue to impact the state of Assam, resulting in thousands of deaths each year. While the central government did previously negotiate limited accords with the two ethnic groups (in 1985 and 1993), problems of implementation coupled with disputes over the scope of the agreements meant that a significant portion of both groups decided to continue their campaign for autonomy/independence. Since the mid-1990s, the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), the main **Assamese** rebel organization, has escalated its violent campaign. It refuses to enter into talks with New Delhi unless they are held outside of the country under UN supervision and, most importantly, that sovereignty is addressed. India has rejected holding any negotiations that would entail the breakup of the country.

While some conventional **Bodo** groups, such as the **Bodoland** Autonomous Council, have periodically met with federal and Assam government representatives, the talks have not progressed due to **Bodo** demands for a separate state within India. Most of the **Bodo** rebels are also seeking a separate state within the Indian Union. In July 1999, the **Bodo** Liberation Tiger Force offered to open talks with the government. But it is not yet clear if these talks will be able address **Bodo** concerns.

A major cause of the dispute in Assam is the fact that the native peoples (**Assamese** and tribal groups) are being outnumbered by Bengali-speaking Hindu and Muslim immigrants. Large-scale rioting has occurred between **Assamese** and Bengali migrants. In addition, members of the **Bodo** tribal group have violently clashed with the ethnic **Assamese**, the Santhal tribal group, and Muslims (local residents and Bangladeshi immigrants). Encouraged by the ethnic **Assamese** self-assertion campaign of the 1980s, ethnic groups such as the **Bodos** launched identity-based movements for greater autonomy or a separate state. **Bodo** self-assertion signifies the rejection of the **Assamese** script (in favor of the Roman or Devanagair) and the invocation of an indigenous peoples' identity. Muslims within Assam have also mobilized this decade to protect their interests. A Muslim rebel organization is now demanding a Muslim state in Muslim-dominant areas of Assam.

Thousands of people have died in intercommunal violence in the 1990s and some 20,000 are reported to have died since the **Assamese** and **Bodo** insurgencies began. The state and federal governments, while holding periodic talks with some rebel groups, have primarily sought to repress the militant organizations. It is unlikely that these protracted communal conflicts will end in the foreseeable future.

-

-

References

Darnell, Alfred T. and Sunita Parikh, "Religion, Ethnicity, and the Role of the State: Explaining Conflict in Assam", Ethnic and Racial Studies, Vol. 11, No. 3, July 1988.

India Today, March 15, 1989.

Far Eastern Economic Review, 1989-1994.

Keesings' Contemporary Archive, Keesings Record of World Events.

Nexis Library Information, 1990-99.

Wilson, Jane S. "Turmoil in Assam," Asian Perspectives, 1992.