

# **Internal Displacement in India: Status, Condition & Prospects of Return**

By

**Monika Mandal\***

This paper examines the conflict-affected internal displacement in India. Insurgency and retaliatory operations by security forces are a major factor of displacement. In Kashmir, the Northeast and in several states of central India civilians have fled fighting zones and have sometimes been directly targeted by militant groups. Majorities of the internally displaced people (IDPs) have not been able to return for several years, either due to protracted conflicts or unresolved issues related to land and property.

The national response to people fleeing conflict is often ad-hoc and largely insufficient. A first important step to improve assistance to internally displaced would be to conduct surveys in conflict-affected areas in order to document the magnitude of the problem as well as the needs of the displaced.

## **Internal Displacement in Jammu and Kashmir**

India's largest situation of internal displacement stems from the conflict in the Northwestern state of Jammu and Kashmir between militants seeking either independence or accession to Pakistan, and Indian security forces and police. The status of Kashmir has been in challenge since the creation of independent India and Pakistan in 1947, and the two countries have twice gone to war over the issue. Although security has improved with the ceasefire concluded in November 2003, Islamic militant groups have continued to launch attacks against local authorities and civilians to sabotage the peace process. Since 1989, the insurgency in Indian-administered Kashmir has claimed at least 67,000 lives.<sup>1</sup>

More than 90 per cent of the Hindu population in the Kashmir Valley, the Kashmiri Pandits remain internally displaced as a result of this armed conflict. The government estimates that 250,000 fled from the Valley during the 1990s, while Pandit groups believe at least 350,000 people were displaced. Today, around 100,000 live in the capital New Delhi and some 240,000 in the city of Jammu.<sup>2</sup> Thousands of people uprooted from their

---

\* Fellow MAKAIAS  
Refugee Watch, 33, June 2009

homes along the Akhnoor frontier in Jammu and Kashmir during the conflict continue to suffer. According to estimates, over 50,000 people along with their livestock migrated from the forward tehsils of this border area.

The migrants are still holed up in tents along the Jammu-Poonch National Highway and left to care for them. Several times they tried to return to their villages but could not, due to the frequent outbreak of tensions. In 2001, many of them came home but had to leave again after India-Pakistan tensions increased after the December 13, 2001, attack Parliament OF India

People living in villages in other places along the border returned after the war, but the Akhnoor migrants could not. For, most of their homes had been destroyed in the shelling and their fields rendered infertile due to the increased toxicity in the soil. Elections in Jammu and Kashmir in November 2002 led to the creation of a new coalition government and raised expectations for an end to the displacement of the Kashmiri Pandits. However, an ambitious return plan including cash assistance, interest-free loans and the building of 500 apartments in the Anantnag district where some of the displaced Pandits would be able to stay until they have repaired their own houses, has still not been implemented.<sup>3</sup> Protection of the remaining Pandit population has been far from adequate, leading to further displacement during 2004 when 160 of the estimated 700 Pandit families remaining in the Kashmir Valley fled an upsurge of violence and killings.<sup>4</sup> Minister for Housing and Urban Development said that as per the reports filed by screening committee constituted by Deputy Commissioner Doda, Udhampur, Rajouri and Poonch, 4017 families comprising 20,931 souls were displaced from the militancy effected areas during the past ten years and the cases of 1717 families of these districts are under investigation.

During the Kargil conflict nearly 1.57 lakh people were displaced from the border belt. Now, all of them have returned to their respective places except 1302 families of Niabat Khour in Akhnoor. Of the total, 1.07 lakh were migrated from Jammu, 17,692 from Kathua, 10,327 from Rajouri and 21,952 from Poonch. Besides this, in Kupwara district 16 families consisting of 97 souls were displaced.

Despite threats from separatist militant groups against any attempt to return the Kashmiri Pandits, the state government of Jammu and Kashmir for its part maintains that it is moving forward with return plans and that 1,600 families have signaled in writing that they want to return to the valley.<sup>5</sup> Another long-lasting situation of internal displacement exists along the Line of Control separating Indian- and Pakistani controlled Kashmir. Since the end of the 1990s, clashes between Indian and Pakistani forces and attacks by separatist militant groups led to several waves of displacement from villages along the Line of Control. The ceasefire has substantially improved the security situation, but more than 12,000 (some say 30,000) people, are still displaced on the Indian side because their villages have not been rehabilitated or their fields are mined. Administrative delays have also hindered their return. While the state government applied for support from the federal government almost four years ago, a relief

package was not approved until August 2005.<sup>6</sup> Only 20 per cent of the funds had been disbursed.

### **The North-East: Internal Displacement in Assam, Tripura and Manipur**

The eight states in the geographically isolated and economically underdeveloped North-East are home to 200 of the 430 tribal groups in India. 30 to 40 rebel groups are currently active in this region. An influx of migrants from the neighboring countries of Bangladesh, Nepal and Burma (Myanmar) has caused a massive population increase and subsequent competition for resources and jobs.<sup>8</sup> This has also spurred ethnic conflicts over land and fighting for political autonomy or secession.

During the past decades, the Northeast has been the scene of repeated ethnically-motivated conflicts in which the fight for a perceived homeland has sometimes resulted in ethnic cleansing. At least 50,000 people have been killed in such conflicts in the Northeast since India's independence in 1947.<sup>9</sup> Violence has broken out in the states of Assam, Manipur, Nagaland, Tripura and Arunachal Pradesh, involving at least ten different ethnic groups (Bodos, Nagas, Kukis, Karbis, Dimasas, Paites, Mizos, Reangs, Bengalis and Chakmas). The largest forced displacement movements have occurred in the states of Assam, Manipur and Tripura.<sup>10</sup> In Assam, ethnic clashes over territorial issues, insurgency against the Indian government for separate homelands and communal violence among the Assamese against "foreigners", mostly immigrants from Bangladesh, have led to widespread displacement. During 2005, thousands of Muslims of Bengali origin were driven out by angry mobs, accused of being illegal migrants from Bangladesh.<sup>11</sup> Major waves of displacement have also occurred due to violence against seasonal workers, mainly from Bengal. In November 2003, communal violence displaced at least 18,000 people who fled to about 40 camps in and outside Assam.<sup>12</sup> At least 10,000 people have been killed in separatist violence in Assam over the past 25 years.<sup>13</sup> The largest displacement situation in the state stems from the fighting between Bodos and Santhals, which erupted in the early 1990s and displaced an estimated 250,000 persons. As of December 2005, around 110,000 people remained in relief camps in Assam's Kokrajhar and Gossaigaon subdivisions – a decrease of 40,000 people since 2003. However, the displaced have not been able to return to their former villages, as they remain occupied, mainly by Bodo communities. Tribal leaders say they were forced out of the relief camps because the state authorities decided to stop all humanitarian assistance. Today, they are landless and destitute<sup>14</sup>

The Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills districts of Assam have been the main scenes of ethnic violence in recent years. Thousands of civilians have been displaced mainly due to fighting between Karbi, Kuki and Dimasa insurgent groups. In October 2005, there were clashes between the rival Karbi and Dimasa tribes, which continued until the end of the year.

Up to 50,000 people from both tribes were displaced and took shelter mainly in public buildings situated in safer areas.<sup>15</sup>

The Indian government has successfully come to an agreement with several major rebel groups active in Assam such as the Bodoland Liberation Tigers and the National Democratic Front of Bodoland. The creation of the Autonomous Territorial Council for the Bodos for example, led to a major improvement of the security situation in western Assam.<sup>16</sup> But at the same time, other long-lasting conflicts have re-emerged and threaten to destabilize Assam further. The outlawed United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) launched a series of Blasts in January 2006, at a time when it was supposed to be holding exploratory peace talks with New Delhi.<sup>17</sup>

*"The illegal migrants from Bangladesh are a major threat to our identity. We will become foreigners in our own land unless we keep these people out of Assam,"* says Sarbananda Sonowal, top leader of the regional party, Asom Gana Parishad (AGP).

Thousands of Hindi-speaking migrants are now fleeing in fear of the attacks. The Hindi-speaking people, predominantly from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, fled Assam after ULFA launched a violent campaign, ordering them to leave Assam or be killed. The violence was triggered by a conflict over the allocation of jobs between Assamese and Hindi-speaking groups. Violence took place both urban and rural areas.

The settlers have been visited by Sriprakash Jaiswal, and the Railway Minister, Laloo Prasad Yadav. They have both tried to reassure the Hindi-speaking settlers and promised to crush ULFA rebels. But there do not seem to be many takers for their assurances. All across the violence-affected districts of Assam, railway stations crowded with thousands waiting to catch the next train out of the state.<sup>19</sup>

In Manipur, counter-insurgency operations by the Indian army against local groups along the border with Burma (Myanmar), as well as ethnic clashes, have resulted in the displacement of at least 6,000 people from the Hmar and Paite ethnic groups. Like IDPs elsewhere in the Northeast, they are also reported to live in deplorable conditions, lacking food, medicines, warm clothes and other essential commodities<sup>20</sup>

Another major conflict in the Northeast has been the Naga people's 60-year-long struggle for a homeland. In April 2001, a decision by the Indian government to extend a five-year-old ceasefire to all Naga areas in the North-East was met with violent protests in Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. The ceasefire was seen as a step towards the establishment of a greater Naga state, which could infringe on the territory of the neighbouring states. Some 50,000 Nagas, fearing revenge attacks, fled the Imphal valley in Manipur to Naga-dominated districts in Manipur and Nagaland.<sup>21</sup>

A fact-finding team as 'Civil Society Team on Internally Displaced People from Tipaimukh Sub-Divisions' headed by Ms. Aram Pamei (NPMHR [The Naga Peoples Movement for Human Rights] and Rongmei Lu Phuum) as the Convenor and Babloo Loitongbam (Human Rights Alert) and Joseph R. Hmar as the Co-Convenors (Hmar Students' Association) with Wanhengbam Joy Kumar (Human Rights Law Network), and Elizabeth

Hrangchal (interpreter) from 5th - 10th March 2006 investigated the alleged incident and confirmed the facts. The team interviewed the displaced people, rape victims, village authorities and concerned local organizations and cross-sections of the community as well as organizations based in Aizawl, Mizoram. They also met the CO, PBS Lamba of 13 Dogra Regiment and Captain Viplove at the army camp office. While the report of the team is being stalled, the following facts are based on the report filed by Ms. Aram Pamei", said the NPMHR (South Sector) statement issued by its convenor Phamhring Sengul.

The Naga rights body also alleged that the underground groups (UGs) had planted landmines/IEDs in the surrounding jungles that had killed and maimed many lives adding that the extremely vulnerable situation has led people to flee their homes and villages resulting in hundreds of internally displaced people languishing in refugee camps who were supposedly repatriated but are yet to be adequately rehabilitated and restituted. NPMHR then strongly declares "the heinous crime perpetrated by the United Liberation Front (UNLF) and Kangleipak Communist Party (KCP) on the villagers of Parbung and Lungthulien in Tipaimukh area of Manipur.<sup>22</sup>

According to the Naga International Support Centre, most of those internally displaced by this incident and previous conflict have returned to their homes. The riots forced the Indian government to reverse their decision, and limit the ceasefire to Nagaland only. However, the parties have not succeeded in negotiating a peace agreement, and the NCSN has threatened to break the ceasefire unless the Indian government meets their demands.<sup>23</sup> The situation is destabilized further by feuding between two competing factions of NCSN. Both are involved in the formal peace process but have not stopped bloodshed and violence against each other. During the last months of 2005, the two factions clashed at least five times over territorial disagreements.<sup>24</sup> Indian and Burmese security forces have also launched a campaign against Naga militant camps on both sides of the border. There have been some reports about small-scale displacement of civilians fleeing the security operation, but no total figure is available.<sup>25</sup>

In northern Tripura, it is estimated that insurgent groups internally displace more than 100,000 people due to ethnic fighting and attacks. The main pattern of displacement is attack on villages inhabited by people of Bengali origin. Considered foreigners by the local tribal population, they have increasingly become the target of local armed groups<sup>26</sup> Some 31,000 Bru (also called Reang) from Mizoram remain displaced after fleeing ethnic fighting with the Mizos in 1997.

Another situation of displacement in Tripura has developed due to the building of a fence along the border with Bangladesh. Indian authorities are currently constructing a barbed-wire fence along "sensitive" stretches of the border. The fence now covers more than one third of the border. More than 10,000 families, or 70,000 people are reported to have been evicted from their land in Tripura alone. The Indian government has rejected all

claims for compensation to the evicted families, saying it is up to the state government to provide assistance to the displaced.<sup>27</sup> It is not known to what extent the construction of the fence has created displacement in the other states bordering Bangladesh. However, there has been anecdotal information about people fleeing security operations launched by Indian border forces against insurgent groups believed to be hiding on the Bangladeshi side of the border. This has in some cases also led to skirmishes between Indian and Bangladeshi border guard forces.<sup>28</sup>

In spite of recommendations from the National Human Rights Commission, the state government of Mizoram has refused to take back the displaced because they maintain that only half of them are citizens of the state. Although a memorandum of understanding was signed between the main Bru rebel group and the Mizoram government in April 2005 and the Indian government has endorsed a rehabilitation package for Bru IDPs, repatriation is yet to begin. The Mizoram government has only agreed to permit the return of some 270 people, consisting of former militant cadres and their families, while no timetable has been given for the repatriation of the large majority of the displaced. In the meantime, the Bru IDPs live in grim conditions in the camps where they face severe food shortages as well as a lack of medical and education facilities.<sup>29</sup>

Other populations at risk of displacement in the Northeast are the Chakmas who are regularly threatened with expulsion, in particular by an influential Arunachal student's organisation, which maintains that the Chakmas should be resettled elsewhere.<sup>30</sup> Migrants from Nepal living in northeastern India are also a particularly vulnerable group and have been targeted and displaced in Assam, Manipur and Meghalaya. It is unknown how many remain displaced today.<sup>31</sup>

Although conflicts regularly displace people in the Northeast, no official estimate exists. Most information is found in local newspapers, while objective research in terms of assessing the magnitude of conflict-induced displacement in the region has yet to be carried out by either governmental or non-governmental agencies.<sup>32</sup>

## **Displacement of Nepalis in Northeast India**

The process of migration of the Nepalis in Northeast India, Darjeeling, and Southern Bhutan began about two centuries ago with the recruitment of Gorkha soldiers into the British Indian Army after the treaty of Sugauli (1816). The British who wanted a hardy labour force for their tea plantations facilitated the Nepali migration to Darjeeling while in Sikkim, the Nepalis served as a wedge to contain the Bhutias.

Anti-Nepali feeling in Northeast India was first observed during the Assam Movement. While the targets were the illegal migrants from Bangladesh, the Nepalis were also included in the anti-foreigner discourse. Allegations of Nepalis from Northeast India crossing over to side with the Lhotshampas and of their leaders, fleeing to Assam, probably encouraged

the targeting of Nepalis in Northeast India in ethnic assertions and backlashes. They were largely caught in the crossfire between the Assamese anti-foreigner agitation and the Bodo Movement.

Although the government of India had clarified its position on the Nepalis early in February 1984 - that those in possession of the Restricted Area Permit would not come within the definition of 'illegal migrants' and stood protected - their position was soon threatened by the agitation for a separate Bodoland. The Nepali population in the Bodo Autonomous Council (BAC) areas in Western Assam was only 2.5 percent and in no way large enough to constitute a threat to the Bodos. However, the presence of the Nepalis along with the 63 per cent non-Bodos (Bodos make up 34 per cent) constituted a major threat according to the Bodos. During the ethnic cleansing of these areas a considerable number of Nepalis was displaced.

In Manipur, the sentiment took the form of a movement that in 1980 manifested itself in direct attacks on the Nepalis, compelling many of them to relocate and flee to safer areas. Meghalaya, saw similar sectarian violence in 1987. The violence primarily targeted the Nepali minority living in Shillong, Jowai and other parts of Meghalaya, which had over 150,000 Nepalis. Most of the Nepali people fled but the worst affected were the dairy farmers who had to give up their occupation and leave the state. Today, most of the displaced from Meghalaya and Manipur are settled in Rupandehi, Jhapa, Banke and other parts of Nepal's Terai region, besides Kathmandu and Pokhara. The anti-foreigner upsurge also spread to Mizoram and Nagaland where again Nepalis suffered violence and eviction.

33

Anti-foreigner movements almost all over Northeast India, triggered by the 'son of the soil' agitation in Assam, the Assam Movement (1979-85), which sought out Nepali and Bangladeshi migrants to be deported to their respective countries of origin, have made these migrants vulnerable to growing instances of nativist backlash.

The issue of the Nepali IDPs has failed to draw much attention first, due to their small number and second, due to the apparently mobile nature of the community that makes it easy to ignore the many complexities that affect this community in recent times in Northeast India.

The Nepali population in the erstwhile Bodo Autonomous Council (BAC) areas in Western Assam, which the Bodos see constituting their own homeland was only 2.5% on an average and in no way large enough to constitute a threat to the Bodos. But the presence of the Nepalis along with the 63% non-Bodos (Bodos are 34%) constituted a major threat. In the ethnic cleansing of these areas a considerable number of Nepalis was displaced from the villages of Amteka (Betini), Patabari, Malivita, Koila etc. Besides, these in an attack on the Amteka Betini village in the Kokrajhar district, which had combined Nepali and Adivasi residents, along with the Adivasis, about 15 – 20 Nepali families also shifted to nearby villages. Similarly about 20 – 25 families from the Mangalchara forest village and about 20 – 25 families from the Khalasi forest villages were displaced in the

ethnic clashes. In all these cases it was apparent that the Nepalis were not directly hit but were caught in the crossfire.

The anti-foreigner sentiment was evident in the other states of Northeast India as well. In Manipur, the sentiment took the form of a movement, manifesting itself in direct attacks on the Nepalis in 1980 compelling many of them (who were made the domicile community in 1947) to shift houses and flee to safer areas. Meghalaya, another state in the Northeast, saw similar sectarian violence in 1987. Actually, in Meghalaya, tensions existed since 1931 between the Nepalis and the Khasis because of the damage done by the former's buffaloes and the indiscriminate cutting down of forests by them to make room for their increasing herds. In 1987, the violence primarily targeted the Nepali minority living in Shillong, Jowai and other parts of Meghalaya, which had over 150,000 Nepali population. The Nepali labourers in the coal mines in Jowai were the first targets, from where it spread to other parts of Meghalaya. A weekly magazine reported: 'Dozens of innocent children of Nepalese working in Jowai coal-mines died of hunger because their parents did not return to their home even weeks after the incident.' Violence involved killings, burning of Nepali villages and schools and finally their deportation by the state government in complicity with the police. Most of the Nepali people fled and the worst affected were the dairy farmers who had to give up their occupation and leave the state. Today, most of the displaced from Meghalaya and Manipur are settled in Rupandehi, Jhapa, and Banke and other parts of Nepal's *terai*, besides Kathmandu and Pokhara. The anti-foreigner upsurge also spread to Mizoram and Nagaland where the Nepalis who have been domiciled for years, suffered violence and eviction.<sup>34</sup>

### **Internal Displacement in Central India**

In central India, leftist extremist groups commonly referred to as Maoists or Naxalites, have significantly increased insurgent activities during the past few years, including in the states of Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Orissa, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh.<sup>35</sup>

Violence has been especially on the increase in Andhra Pradesh and Orissa.<sup>36</sup> Distinction against the tribal population, displacement by large development projects and government failure to ensure food security have been the main reasons for the rapid spread of the Naxalite movement, according to an independent study released in June 2005.<sup>37</sup> Estimates of the extent of the Naxalite groups differ widely. The last available government report states that 76 districts in nine states were affected by leftist rebels,<sup>38</sup> while the June 2005 study says Naxalite groups had extended their influence to 155 districts in 15 states, affecting close to 300 million people across 7,000 towns and villages as of February 2005. Furthermore, such groups were reported to control almost 20 percent of India's forests over an area two-and-a half times the size of Bangladesh.<sup>39</sup>



The government's response to the insurgency has been criticised of being ad-hoc and piecemeal. In addition to federal police and paramilitary troops, some states are also believed to use private armies in their hunt for insurgent groups and sympathisers. In Jharkhand state, for example, it is known that the state government has sponsored village "defense" groups for this purpose.<sup>40</sup> In Chhattisgarh, a state sponsored movement against Naxalite violence has gained momentum. While the movement, called Salwa Jodum, is gaining support among the local population, state authorities have been accused of using the campaign to justify a brutal search for supporters of Naxalite groups.<sup>41</sup>

No estimate of the number of people displaced as a result of the insurgency in central India is available, but anecdotal information suggests that thousands of villagers have been displaced either as a result of government mobilisation against the insurgent groups or because they flee Naxalite violence. In Chhattisgarh, approximately 15,000 people from 420 villages have fled to temporary camps. People have left behind their cattle and most of their household goods. Displacement is reportedly continuing while more police and para-military stations are being set up. 7,000– 10,000 people fled to camps protected by the police to avoid Naxalite retaliation because they had joined the Salwa Jodum movement. In Orissa, the state authorities have reportedly forcibly displaced local tribes because they were suspected of sympathizing with the Naxalites.<sup>42</sup>

The following issues mainstreamed the Naxalite conflict in 2006:<sup>43</sup> First, with 48.5% of the total killings being reported from Chhattisgarh, the Salwa Judum campaign with its disastrous consequences such as the violations of the right to life by the Naxalites and the security forces and Salwa Judum cadres, forcible displacement of 43,740 persons as of 31 December 2006 and abdication of the law and order to the lawless and unaccountable Salwa Judum cadres brought national and international spotlight on the Naxalite conflict in India.

Second, the Naxalite conflict has spread to new areas in 2006. According to the 2005-2006 Annual Report of the Ministry of Home Affairs, Naxal violence in 2005 was reported from 509 police stations across 11 states. In 2006, Naxal violence has been reported from 1,427 police stations in 13 States. Among the Naxalite affected States, Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh and Jharkhand were most severely affected, followed by Maharashtra and Orissa.

Third, the attack on Jehanabad jail in Bihar on 13 November 2005 by the Naxalites was followed up by the simultaneous attacks on the State Armed Police camp, the local police station, sub-jail, treasury, tehsil office and a telecom tower in Udayagiri town of Gajapati district of Orissa on 24 March 2006 in which 40 prisoners were freed, three policeman were killed and arms were looted. Similarly, the killing of 13 Central Reserve Police Force personnel at Kanjkiro, 62 kilometers from Bokaro, Jharkhand on 2 December 2006 was followed up with the detention of the Tata-Kharagpur

passenger train near a deep forest between Gidni and Chakulia stations in Jharkhand on 10 December 2006. These incidents raised the spectre of the Maoists' increased striking capability reminiscent in neighboring Nepal.

Fourth, the easy access to small arms by the Naxalites, hitherto known only in the North East and Jammu and Kashmir, came to the fore.

Fifth, while the security forces continued to violate human rights, the chilling massacres of the unarmed civilians by the Naxalites in 2006 were unprecedented.

Across the Naxalite affected areas, the edifice of the State structure remains weak and the State governments have virtually failed to deliver to the citizens even the basic amenities. Consequently, the law and order approach in the areas where there is neither law nor order remained dominant. The Naxalites while frowning at the lack of development systematically targeted all such governmental buildings that could provide shelter to security personnel and virtually blocked all development initiatives.

Increasing conflicts as a result of the acquisition of lands either for Special Economic Zones (SEZs) or development of industrial projects without free, prior and informed consent and without proper and appropriate relief/rehabilitation of the displaced persons in more ways than one mainstreamed the Naxalites' worldview as never before."

The attack was one of the largest by the Maoists in the eastern Chhattisgarh state. Dantewada is the district worst-hit by violence in Chhattisgarh, the state worst-hit by Maoist violence in India. Maoist rebels are reportedly active in 10 of the state's 16 districts. Violence has increased in Chhattisgarh since the grassroots Salwa Judum (Campaign for Peace) was launched by the state government in June 2005 to galvanize civilians and tribal people against the Maoists. Since then, more than 700 people have died and over 60,000 displaced as the powerful Maoist rebels have retaliated against the movement. Tribal leaders have complained that many Salwa Judum cadres are poorly armed, some with only bows and arrows, against the well-armed Maoists. Official forces in the state also reportedly have limited resources. The rebels are active in at least 15 eastern, central, and southern states, and form what observers call a "Red Corridor" from Nepal down into southern India. In 2005, more than 669 people died in Maoist violence across the region, while 372 people, including 154 civilians, were killed in 2006. Half of the 2006 casualties occurred in Chhattisgarh. The New Delhi-based Institute for Conflict Management said that rebels spent much of last year collecting arms, and that Maoist violence is expected to increase in the upcoming months. The Maoist movement claims to fight for the rights of the poor and landless, and relies on local support for its operations. <sup>44</sup>

### **Internal Displacement in Gujarat**

More than 2,000 people were killed and as many as 100,000 Indian Muslims were forcibly displaced from their homes in a major outbreak of

communal violence in Gujarat in February 2002. The state's Muslim population was targeted in retaliation for an attack by a Muslim mob on a train carrying Hindu militants returning from the destruction of a celebrated mosque at Ayodhya. Women and girls were particularly targeted in the reprisal attacks; hundreds were raped, maimed and killed during the riots. The state government organised relief camps, where the internally displaced reportedly lacked the most basic necessities such as food, medical supplies and sanitation.<sup>45</sup> Despite strong international concern, the Indian government refused to solicit or accept international assistance. By October 2002, virtually all the camps had been closed, forcing many to return to their neighbourhoods where their security was continually threatened. In rural areas, incidents of killing and looting continued until April 2003. Many were forced to flee to relief camps again, where they remained generally unassisted.<sup>46</sup> Both the state authorities and officials of the formerly governing Bharatiya Janata Party, have been accused of planning and instigating the violence against the Muslim population. Furthermore, the failure of the police to intervene and stop the violence is believed to have been decreed at the highest level.<sup>47</sup> Reports by Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International conclude that both the Indian government and the state government of Gujarat have failed to provide sufficient protection, assistance and compensation to the displaced. Since the riots, there have been several clashes between Hindus and Muslims, but rarely lasting more than two days. The state government is still being accused of complicity in the on-going violence against the Muslim community in Gujarat. According to a local organization, an estimated 61,000 people are still internally displaced and in dire need of assistance and rehabilitation.<sup>48</sup>

### **Internal Displacement in West-Bengal**

Displacement is reported in the West-Bengal district of North Dinajpur due to clashes between border guard forces. A number of issues have plagued the bilateral relationship between India and Bangladesh in recent times. But India has been seriously concerned about two issues. First is use of Bangladeshi territory by the insurgent groups who are operating in northeastern India for anti-India activities. India is also concerned about illegal immigration, which has reached serious proportions in recent years. India sought Bangladesh cooperation to sort these issues, but its requests fell on deaf ears. Its result has been regular skirmishes between the border guards of two countries.

India shares its largest border with Bangladesh, which is also extremely porous. The border runs through jungles, hills, villages, paddy and jute fields, making it easy to cross. There is also a small riverine portion. Five Indian states border Bangladesh, including four in India's troubled northeast where dozens of militant groups are fighting for full statehood, more autonomy or independence. Dhaka denies the presence of rebel camps, calling the allegations baseless, but the issue remains a thorny one in ties

between India and Bangladesh. This border also faces problems like illegal immigration, smuggling, arms trafficking, drug trafficking and trafficking of women and children. To deal with some of this problem India had suggested joint patrolling of the border to which Bangladesh did not agree. However, Bangladesh agreed for coordinated patrolling, but that was not sufficient to solve problem of this magnitude.

As a result, India has been forced to take its own steps. To check problems like illegal immigration and arms trafficking, India decided to erect barb wired fences. It had seen its positive impact on the northwestern frontiers. It wants to replicate the same experience on its eastern border too. So far, it has managed to fence over a third of the 4,894 kilometers (3,034 mile) long border with Bangladesh.<sup>49</sup>

The Border Security Force (BSF) is on alert and ready for “any eventuality”, just like their counterparts on the other side of the Nagar River.

Bullet-ridden walls and roofs bear testimony to the exchange between the border forces, allegedly started by the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) after the BSF objected to the construction of a stone embankment along the river.

BSF sources said the construction was being carried out despite an embargo on such work within 150 m of the border. The BDR apparently resumed construction late on Friday evening after halting it following early Indian objections.

*“When we objected to the violation of the agreement between the two countries, they opened fire,”* said Rakesh Chauhan, the commandant of the BSF’s 32 Battalion here, some 20 km from Islampur.

The men of two small settlements on the Indian side, Pakhargaj and Singatgaj, have moved the women and children to safety. Upset over the turn of events, they blamed the BSF for not warning them about tension along the border.<sup>50</sup>

## Conclusion

In the light of the preceding discussion, we can see there are various causes of internal displacement in India. It is not our conclusion that the process of development should be stopped in the state. But the serious fallout’s of the development process, which have so far been lost in the generalist socio-economic researches, have to be seen from the point of view of displacement. The government as well as the non-governmental agencies including of course the academics must reflect the views of the people. To changed the State to devise the necessary mechanism and strategies to allow a legitimate space for marginalized sections of the indigenous population with the development framework to prevent or reduce the process of emerging problem of the Internally Displaced People in the State. The postcolonial Indian state too failed miserably to resolve the issues raised by the identity

movements. The state has virtually abdicated its responsibility towards the victims of these movements.

The postcolonial Indian State, the colonial legacy of communalism and various exclusionist identity movements have been the major actors in the political threat of massive internal displacement of people in India. If the present situation continues without any effective intervention, India is likely to experience more conflict induced internal displacement of population, particularly the marginalized groups in near future.

## Notes

---

<sup>1</sup> Center of Excellence in Disaster Management & Humanitarian Assistance (COE-DMHA), 2

February 2006, Indian police says 1,086 people killed in 2005 in separatist violence in Indian controlled Kashmir (IcK)

<sup>2</sup> The Observer Research Foundation, 3 September 2003, Recommendations made at the Conference on Kashmiri Pandits 2-3 September 2003.

<sup>3</sup> The Tribune, 14 September 2005, Return of Pandits to valley may be delayed, Centre's caution to Mufti govt; Indian Express, 19 September 2005, Return Of Pandits: Govt Slow-pedals.

<sup>4</sup> Amnesty International (AI), 2 December 2003, India - Open Letter to the Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir on the failed promises of the Common Minimum Program, AI INDEX: ASA 20/033/2003; Center of Excellence in Disaster Management & Humanitarian Assistance (COE-DMHA), 5 April 2004, "Report says 121 people disappeared since November 2002; 400 people killed this year in Indian-controlled Kashmir (IcK)".

<sup>5</sup> Reuters, 22 July 2005, Muslim Militants Ban Return Of Kashmiri Hindus; The Tribune, 14 September 2005, Return of Pandits to valley may be delayed, Centre's caution to Mufti govt.

<sup>6</sup> Daily Excelsior, 10 August 2005, Centre Approves Rs 78-cr Package For Migrants.

<sup>8</sup> Nath, Lopita, 2 January 2005, Migrants in flight: conflict-induced internal displacement of Nepalis in North-East India, Peace and Democracy in South Asia, Volume 1, Number 1.

<sup>9</sup> Center of Excellence in Disaster Management & Humanitarian Assistance (COE-DMHA), 2 April 2004, "Election campaigners in India's restive northeast threatened by rebels".

<sup>10</sup> Bhaumik, Subir, March 2000, Internal Displacement in Northeast India: Challenges Ahead, in Refugee Watch of the South Asia Forum For Human Rights, No.9, p.22-24.

<sup>11</sup> BBC News, 9 December 2005, Assam's paths of violence.

<sup>12</sup> The Hindu, 2 December 2003, "Relief package for violence-hit in State"; Frontline, 6 December 2003, "Outrage in Assam" Vol. 20, Issue 25.

<sup>13</sup> Center of Excellence in Disaster Management & Humanitarian Assistance (COE-DMHA), 19 April 2005, Rebels in India's northeastern Assam state extend ceasefire with Indian government; 1 killed, 8 injured in bomb blast in Manipur.

<sup>14</sup> BBC News, 9 December 2005, Assam's paths of violence.

<sup>15</sup> Center of Excellence in Disaster Management & Humanitarian Assistance (COE-DMHA), 28 December 2005, Fresh tribal violence breaks out in India's

---

northeastern Assam state; Médecins Sans Frontières, 2006, *Voices from the Field*: "Houses and whole villages have been burned".

<sup>16</sup> BBC News, 9 December 2005, Assam's paths of violence.

<sup>17</sup> South Asia Intelligence Review (SAIR), 23 January 2006, Assam: ULFA Talks Tough With Bombings.

<sup>19</sup> BBC News, 9 January 2007, Soldiers hunt for rebels in Assam.

<sup>20</sup> The Sangai Express, 21 January 2006, Govt assures relief to displaced villagers.

<sup>21</sup> Naga Peoples Movement for Human Rights (NPMHR), 5 January 2002, Summary report on the conditions of the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) from the Imphal valley to the Naga Hills areas of Manipur; repercussions of the Indo-Naga cease.

<sup>22</sup> SIPHRO, 15 January 2007, NPMHR reveals facts of Hmar rape cases.

<sup>23</sup> BBC News, 31 January 2006, Naga separatists extend ceasefire; Center of Excellence in Disaster Management & Humanitarian Assistance (COE-DMHA), 30 January 2006, Northeast India rebels warn of ceasefire collapse following stalled peace talks.

<sup>24</sup> South Asia Intelligence Review (SAIR), 26 December 2005, Nagaland: Peace Games

<sup>25</sup> The Sangai Express, 6 June 2005, SF begin to sanitise NH-53, villagers flee to safer climes.

<sup>26</sup> Deccan Herald, 22 May 2005, Displaced Tripura villagers demand rehabilitation  
Deccan Herald, 20 March 2004, "Terror-struck Tripura families seek safety in Bangladesh".

<sup>27</sup> The Telegraph, 13 March 2005; Deccan Herald, 4 December 2005, Funds for displaced refused; Kumar, Anand, 8 April 2005, Bangladesh: Fighting over Fencing.

<sup>28</sup> The Telegraph, 27 February 2005; Kumar, Anand, 8 April 2005, Bangladesh: Fighting over Fencing.

<sup>29</sup> Asian Centre for Human Rights (ACHR), 11 January 2006, Despair in Bru IDP camps in India.

<sup>30</sup> Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies (IPCS), 19 September 2003, Refugees and Security: The Cases of Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram.

<sup>31</sup> Nath, Lopita, 2 January 2005, Migrants in flight: conflict-induced internal displacement of Nepalis in North-East India, *Peace and Democracy in South Asia*, Volume 1, Number 1.

<sup>32</sup> Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies (IPCS), 17 January 2004, Case for an IDP Database in India's Northeast.

<sup>33</sup> Haldar, Chiranjib, March 2007, The Nepali Influx in Northeast India

<sup>34</sup> Nath, Lopita, 2 January 2005, Migrants in flight: conflict-induced internal displacement of Nepalis in North-East India, *Peace and Democracy in South Asia*, Volume 1, Number 1, pp. 57, 58, 66, 67.

<sup>35</sup> Center of Excellence in Disaster Management & Humanitarian Assistance (COE-DMHA), 14 April 2005, Indian federal government boosts counter-insurgency operations against leftist rebels.

<sup>36</sup> Asian Centre for Human Rights (ACHR), 21 September 2005, Naxalism and civil wars of India; Frontline, 15 July 2005, A naxalite corridor.

<sup>37</sup> South Asia Analysis Group (SAAG), 13 June 2005, Messing up with Naxalites, by Col R. Hariharan.

<sup>38</sup> Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, (MHA-GoI), 2005, Annual report 2004 – 05, p. 43.

---

<sup>39</sup> The Telegraph, 26 November 2006; Center of Excellence in Disaster Management & Humanitarian Assistance (COE-DMHA), 6 February 2006, Clashes with Maoists in south-central India responsible for at least 16 deaths India: tens of thousands newly displaced in north-eastern and central states 9 February 2006; South Asia Analysis Group (SAAG), 13 June 2005, Messing up with Naxalites, by Col R. Hariharan. Frontline, 15 July 2005).

<sup>40</sup> Stratfor, 16 January 2006, The Threat to India's High-Tech Sector.

<sup>41</sup> People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL), 2 December 2005, Fact-finding report on the Salwa Judum, Dantewara District.

<sup>42</sup> PUCL, 16 November 2005.

<sup>43</sup> Asian Centre for Human Rights (ACHR), 10 January 2007, Naxal Conflict in 2006.

<sup>44</sup> Center of Excellence in Disaster Management & Humanitarian Assistance (COE-DMHA), 15 March 2007, At least 50 policemen killed in Maoist rebel attack in India's eastern Chhattisgarh state.

<sup>45</sup> Human Rights Watch (HRW), April 2002, "We Have No Orders To Save You" State Participation and Complicity in Communal Violence in Gujarat.

<sup>46</sup> Amnesty International (AI), 27 January 2005, India: Justice, the victim - Gujarat state fails to protect women from violence.

<sup>47</sup> Amnesty International (AI), 27 January 2005, India: Justice, the victim - Gujarat state fails to protect women from violence.

<sup>48</sup> Communalism Combat, June 2005, Gujarat genocide victims waiting for justis; International Initiative for Justice (IJ), December 2003, Threatened Existence: A Feminist Analysis of the Genocide in Gujarat, p.51; Amnesty International (AI), 27 January 2005, India: Justice, the victim - Gujarat state fails to protect women from violence.

<sup>49</sup> Kumar, Anand, 8 April 2005, Bangladesh: Fighting over Fencing.

<sup>50</sup> The Telegraph, 27 February 2005.