

Searching for a solution: On Bodo accord

While the new accord empowers Bodos, questions about an enduring peace remain

New Delhi's third attempt at conflict resolution with Assam's Bodos came out of the blue. The State had been more in the news for the sustained protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, one that pre-dates the pan-India ferment after the Bill's passage in Parliament. The signing of the peace accord on January 27 shifted attention after the Prime Minister had to abort two planned trips to Guwahati for a summit with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzō Abe on December 15 and the inauguration of the Khelo India Games on January 10. The new deal offers more hope than the 1993 and 2003 accords; some of the most potent factions of the National Democratic Front of Boroland that had stayed away from earlier agreements are now on board. More significantly, the stakeholders have agreed that the updated political arrangements would remain confined to the realm of wider autonomy within the State of Assam, giving statehood and Union Territory demands a final burial. The generous terms promise an expanded area to be renamed as Bodoland Territorial Region, a Rs. 1,500-crore development package, and greater contiguity of Bodo-populated areas. There is also an offer of general amnesty for militants, with heinous crimes likely to be benignly reviewed, and Rs. 5 lakh each to the families of those killed during the Bodo movement — it claimed nearly 4,000 lives. On a success scale, the agreement falls somewhere between the Naga framework agreement of August 2015, shrouded in secrecy, and the January 16 Bru settlement to permanently settle around 34,000 people displaced from Mizoram in 1997 in Tripura. While it empowers Bodos, the question of an enduring peace remains moot.

With newer claimants to a share of spoils, the current bonhomie could be severely tested when the expanded Bodoland Territorial Council goes to the polls soon. It has been dominated since inception in 2003 by the Bodoland Peoples Front, comprising former Bodo Liberation Tigers cadre, but the new batches of surrendered militants as well as the All Bodo Students' Union intend to enter the fray. Of greater concern are inter-tribal and community ties. The Bodos comprise not more than 30% of the population in the BTR region, and the central munificence has deepened the insecurity among Koch Rajbongshis, Adivasis and Muslims. The politics of deferring to such identity-based movements is part of an old playbook of internal security in the Northeast — the Bru solution betrays shades of it, and one can trace it back to the Mizo insurgency and Laldenga becoming the Chief Minister of Mizoram. The Kokrajhar MP, a non-Bodo, has appealed to the government to ensure that a Bodo solution does not engender a non-Bodo problem. The accord's success will lie in the stakeholders working out a power-sharing arrangement in the proposed BTR that privileges equity over hegemony.

Meanings of Difficult Words :

- **accord** (noun) – agreement, treaty, pact.
- **empower** (verb) – authorize, allow, entitle.
- **enduring** (verb) – permanent, lasting, remaining for a long time.
- **out of the blue** (phrase) – unexpectedly, without warning.
- **sustained** (adjective) – continuous, constant, steady.
- **predate** (verb) – happen at a date earlier than (something).

- **pan-** (combining form) – all inclusive of.
- **ferment** (noun) – furore, frenzy, agitation, clamour.
- **abort** (verb) – stop, cut short, call of, discontinue.
- **summit** (noun) – meeting, conference, talk.
- **inauguration** (noun) – a ceremony to mark the beginning of something.
- **potent** (adjective) – strong, powerful, influential.
- **faction** (noun) – group, division, sector.
- **stay away from** (phrasal verb) – evade, avoid, dodge.
- **on board** (phrase) – as a member (on to a team/group).
- **stakeholder** (noun) – a person with an interest in something.
- **realm** (noun) – area, field, domain (of activity).
- **autonomy** (noun) – self-determination, freedom, independence (from external control/influence).
- **statehood** (noun) – the condition of being an independent nation/state/country.
- **burial** (noun) – settling, deposition.
- **generous** (adjective) – liberal, large, ample/abundant.
- **contiguity** (noun) – the condition/quality of bordering with something; closeness, nearness, proximity.
- **amnesty** (noun) – official pardon, reprieve, forgiveness.
- **militant** (noun) – extremist, radical, fanatic, sectarian/partisan.
- **heinous** (adjective) – extremely bad & evil, shocking, horrible/wicked.
- **benignly** (adverb) – kindly, agreeably, sympathetically.
- **shroud** (verb) – cover, envelop, conceal/hide.
- **moot** (adjective) – undetermined, undecided, unconcluded; questionable.
- **claimant** (noun) – applicant, candidate, petitioner/appellant.
- **spoils** (noun) – benefits, advantages, booty (taken forcibly from a person/place).
- **bonhomie** (noun) – friendliness, warmth, geniality/affability.
- **inception** (noun) – setting up, origination, establishment, foundation/formation.
- **cadre** (noun) – members of a group; a small group (of people).
- **fray** (noun) – competition, contest.
- **inter-** (prefix) – between.
- **munificence** (noun) – beneficence, liberality, open-handedness.
- **deepen** (verb) – increase, intensify, escalate.
- **defer** (verb) – delay, hold off, postpone.
- **playbook** (noun) – strategies.
- **betray** (verb) – reveal, exhibit, disclose, communicate.
- **insurgency** (noun) – uprising, revolt, rebellion.
- **engender** (verb) – cause, give rise to, bring about.
- **lie in** (phrasal verb) – be present, be contained, exist.
- **privilege** (verb) – give a special advantage.
- **equity** (noun) – justice, impartiality, fair play.
- **hegemony** (noun) – leadership, dominance, authority.

Extended folly: On invocation of PSA against Omar Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti

Detention of former CMs under Public Safety Act will delay return of normalcy in J&K

Six months after the BJP government at the Centre revoked the special constitutional status of Jammu and Kashmir and reduced it to two Union Territories, several senior leaders of the erstwhile State continue to be in detention. On Thursday, the controversial Public Safety Act (PSA) was invoked against former Chief Ministers Omar Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti, among others. They were in preventive detention without charges until then. The 83-year-old Farooq Abdullah, another former CM, had earlier been detained under the PSA, and he remains in detention. There is no clarity regarding the number of prisoners or the future course for J&K, despite the elaborate rhetoric from Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Parliament on Thursday on the subject. With the dilution of Article 370 that accorded special status to J&K in August last year, the region has now been fully integrated with the rest of the country, the Prime Minister claimed. Indeed, the malevolent instruments of power deployed in J&K have since then dangerously spread to other parts — the crackdown on legitimate political activities, the vilification of leaders critical of the government as anti-India, and high-handed policing that is not merely condoned but glorified. The PM defended the indefinite and arbitrary detention of people as essential, and accused the former CMs of making "unacceptable" statements.

Explained | The Jammu & Kashmir Public Safety Act

If the executive were to draw boundaries on what statements are 'acceptable' and arrogate to itself the authority to punish unacceptable ones, it would be dangerous for a constitutional democracy. The Supreme Court had in January chided the government for the indefinite restriction on **Internet** in J&K, following which services have been partially restored. The Court cited the constitutional guarantee of freedom of speech, and also criticised the frequent and widespread use of Section 144 by governments. While the Court order was rousing in its tone, it did little to restrain the government. The changes to Article 370 and the manner in which they were effected, are under the consideration of the top court, which has not shown the sense of urgency these questions deserve. Though the BJP has always had an ideologically deterministic approach towards J&K, its policy has been nothing more than improvisation. At least at this late hour, the Centre must make an honest approach to restart a political process in the Valley. Indiscreet moves such as attempts to graft an inorganic layer of leaders into Valley politics are destined to fail. With all their follies, regional outfits and their leaders remain India's best bet in J&K. Their continuing detention betrays a perturbing lack of awareness of this basic fact in decision-making in New Delhi.

Meanings of Difficult Words :

- **folly** (noun) – foolishness, stupidity, madness, irresponsibility, thoughtlessness.
- **invocation** (noun) – citation, mention, reference to/appeal to.
- **detention** (noun) – confinement/incarceration, captivity, custody.
- **normalcy** (noun) – a normal condition; normality, regularity.
- **revoke** (verb) – cancel, repeal, reverse, abrogate, nullify.
- **erstwhile** (adjective) – old, previous, former, then.
- **invoke** (verb) – cite, refer to, appeal to.
- **preventative detention** (noun) – it means to detain a person so that to prevent that person from commenting on any possible crime or in other words preventive detention is an action taken by the

administration on the grounds of the suspicion that some wrong actions may be done by the person concerned which will be prejudicial to the state.

- **course** (noun) – plan of action, course of action, strategy, approach.
- **rhetoric** (noun) – bombast, loftiness, hyperbole/extravagant language.
- **dilution** (noun) – reduction in value/power/force of something.
- **malevolent** (adjective) – bitter, hostile, vengeful.
- **crackdown** (noun) – getting tough, severe/stern measures, restriction, suppression/repression, clampdown.
- **vilification** (noun) – condemnation, criticism/censure, character assassination, defamation.
- **high-handed** (adjective) – autocratic, authoritarian, undemocratic/oppressive; arbitrary.
- **police** (verb) – control, keep in order, keep under control, regulate.
- **condone** (verb) – deliberately ignore, not take into consideration, disregard.
- **arbitrary** (adjective) – unmotivated, unreasonable, irrational/illogical, unjustified.
- **the executive** (noun) – the executive is a branch of government which enforces the law as written by the legislature and interpreted by the judiciary.
- **arrogate** (verb) – assume, take over, acquire/claim (something without justification).
- **constitutional democracy** (noun) – in a constitutional democracy, the authority of the majority is limited by legal and institutional means (procedures) so that the rights of individuals and minorities are respected.
- **chide** (verb) – scold, reprimand, criticize, reprove.
- **rousing** (verb) – inspiring; vigorous, energetic, lively, spirited.
- **restrain** (verb) – control, restrict, limit, regulate.
- **ideologically** (adverb) – dogmatically, conventionally; in a method which relates to an ideology.
- **deterministic** (adjective) – believing in the idea that everything is caused by another event/action and so you are not free/allowed to choose what you do.
- **nothing more than** (phrase) – only.
- **improvisation** (noun) – the act of improvising; spontaneity, lack of premeditation.
- **indiscreet** (adjective) – incautious, irresponsible, unwise.
- **graft** (verb) – join, attach, add.
- **inorganic** (adjective) – not living, lifeless, dead.
- **destined to** (adjective) – certain to meet a particular fate; intended for (a particular/purpose).
- **outfit** (noun) – organization, set-up, group.
- **best bet** (phrase) – reliable and successful idea or course of action.
- **betray** (verb) – reveal, exhibit, disclose, communicate.
- **perturbing** (adjective) – unsettling, causing anxiety; causing concern.

On the front foot: On RBI holding rates

The RBI's efforts to boost growth could change the sentiment in the economy

The humble onion almost halted the onward march of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in its endeavour to bring down financial costs in the economy. Almost, because the RBI, despite finding its hands tied by rising inflation thanks to onion prices, found other means to drive down interest rates in the market,

and in the system, in its monetary policy announcement on Thursday. At the press conference after the announcement, Governor Shaktikanta Das declared, only half in jest, that the proceedings of the Monetary Policy Committee, which decided to hold rates, had already been discounted by the market. "But don't discount the RBI," he warned, pointing out that the central bank had at its disposal various instruments. True to the statement, the RBI unleashed several measures that had an electric effect on the markets, driving down bond yields by 10-20 basis points in a matter of a minutes. The exemption to banks from providing for cash reserve ratio on fresh retail loans disbursed after January 31 to purchase automobiles and residential houses, and to MSMEs, will help banks shave off a part of their costs. The hope is that they will pass on at least a part of that saving to borrowers as lower rates. Second, the introduction of one- and three-year term repos at policy rate of 5.15% for a total of Rs. 1 lakh crore is also aimed at prodding rates downward as banks now pay 6%-6.5% on deposits. Third, the RBI has fine-tuned its liquidity management process in a manner designed to help banks manage their interest costs better.

Whether banks really do what the RBI has signalled to them — transmit lower rates to borrowers — depends on various factors, not the least of which is demand for credit. The RBI's statement that it would maintain an accommodative stance "as long as necessary to revive growth" clearly signals its commitment to growth. By explicitly saying that there is "policy space available for future action", the RBI has signalled that there could be at least one more cut in the months ahead in this rate-easing cycle. The decision to extend the one-time restructuring of MSME loans, linking pricing of loans to medium enterprises to an external benchmark, and the nod for permitting extension of date of commencement of commercial operations for loans to commercial real estate are all welcome measures that raise questions of excessive forbearance but will certainly help the industry. The inflation projection — 6.5% in the current quarter and 5.4%-5.0% in the first half of 2020-21 — reflects the current realities. The projected GDP growth of 6% for 2020-21 appears achievable, assuming that the nascent signs of recovery sustain. The RBI has gone on the front foot to boost growth in this policy after the conservative Budget presented last week. It is to be hoped that these steps will change the sentiment in the economy.

Meanings of Difficult Words :

- **on the front foot** (phrase) – at an advantage; outclassing, outmanoeuvring (opponents).
- **holding rates/costs** (noun) – carrying rate/cost, inventory rate/cost; the rates/costs incurred to store inventory (held in stock as reserves).
- **sentiment** (noun) – way of thinking, point of view, general opinion/belief.
- **march** (noun) – progress, advance, development, headway.
- **endeavour** (noun) – activity, attempt, effort, try.
- **bring down** (phrasal verb) – decrease, reduce, lower/cut.
- **(have) one's hands tied** (phrase) – not able to act as one wishes.
- **inflation** (noun) – simply meaning "cost of living"; increase of price level of goods & services and vice versa decrease of currency value.
- **thanks to** (phrase) – owing to, due to, because of.
- **means** (noun) – method, way, procedure.
- **drive down** (phrasal verb) – force, impel, press, (price/rate to go down).
- **in jest** (phrase) – as a joke.
- **proceedings** (noun) – activities (with a set procedure).

- **The monetary policy committee** (MPC) (noun) – it is a six-member panel that is expected to bring “value and transparency” to rate-setting decisions. It will feature three members from the RBI — the Governor, a Deputy Governor and another official — and three independent members to be selected by the Government. The MPC will meet four times a year to decide on monetary policy by a majority vote.
- **hold** (verb) – cause to stay at a certain level.
- **discount** (verb) – disregard, pay no attention to, ignore, overlook.
- **point out** (phrasal verb) – indicate, mention, refer to.
- **at its disposal** (phrase) – for use by, in the hands of, in the possession of.
- **instrument** (noun) – mechanism, apparatus, system, means (to achieve/attain something).
- **unleash** (verb) – let loose, release, set free.
- **electric** (adjective) – dramatic, dynamic, stimulating, rousing.
- **bond yield** (noun) – bond yield is the annualized percentage return that an investor will obtain from buying a bond. In general, the yield of a bond is inversely proportional to its price. This means that as the yield increases, the price decreases (and vice versa).
- **basis point (BPS)** (noun) – a unit of measure used in finance to describe the percentage change in the value or rate of a financial instrument. One basis point is equivalent to 0.01% (1/100th of a percent) or 0.0001 in decimal form.
- **in a matter of seconds/minutes** (phrase) – within seconds/minutes; in a small amount of time.
- **cash reserve ratio (CRR)** (noun) – a certain minimum amount of deposit that the commercial banks have to hold as reserves with the central bank.
- **disburse** (verb) – pay out, give, spend/expend.
- **shave off** (verb) – remove, eliminate, cut.
- **repo rate** (noun) – it is the rate at which the central bank of a country (RBI in case of India) lends money to commercial banks in the event of any shortfall of funds.
- **rate cut** (noun) – a decision by a central bank (like RBI in India) to reduce its main interest rate to the banks (like SBI, ICICI & etc in India) when these commercial banks get money from the central bank. Once this rate goes down, the banks are in a position to give loans at lower interest rates to individuals and the industry.
- **prod** (verb) – stimulate, prompt, drive, spur.
- **fine-tune** (verb) – modify, alter, regulate.
- **liquidity** (noun) – the availability of liquid assets; liquidity means liquid assets; cash; (liquid asset is an asset which can be easily sold/converted into cash without losing its value); a measure of activity (i.e. the ability to buy or sell easily) in a market.
- **(at) the least (of)** (phrase) – something of the lowest importance/value.
- **accommodative** (adjective) – accommodating, cooperative, helpful.
- **revive** (verb) – revitalize, regenerate, reinstitute, bring back.
- **explicitly** (adverb) – clearly, unequivocally, without any doubt.
- **policy space** (noun) – it is about the freedom to choose the best mix of policies possible for achieving sustainable and equitable economic development given their unique and individual, social, political, economic, and environmental conditions.
- **benchmark** (noun) – standard, guideline, basis.
- **nod** (noun) – indication, signal, sign (of approval).
- **forbearance** (noun) – a refraining (stopping) from the implementation of something (such as a debt repayment) that is long-pending.
- **projection** (noun) – estimate, forecast, prospects/expectations.
- **reflect** (verb) – indicate, show, display, represent.
- **nascent** (adjective) – just beginning, developing, burgeoning.

- **sustain** (verb) – continue, carry on, prop up, retain.
- **conservative** (adjective) – cautious, careful, moderate.

Managing perceptions: On envoys visit to J&K

What should worry India is the ground reality in Kashmir, not the views of other countries

The Centre's decision to take another group of envoys on a guided tour of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), and the stated hope of the Ministry of External Affairs that these tours will become a regular feature, point to a belief that these visits have been productive. Clearly, the government, which has been under considerable international pressure to lift restrictions in the former State, has managed to arrange these three visits without any incident. The delegations have been taken to meet with local groups, and shown a glimpse of 'normalcy' in the Kashmir Valley, with shops open, people out on the streets, and boating on the Dal Lake. After these tours, no envoy has come forward with any negative account, which indicates that at least for the moment, the government's narrative has prevailed. The visits have also smoothed other diplomatic exchanges. U.S. Ambassador Kenneth Juster's trip to J&K paved the way for President Donald Trump's upcoming visit, and the latest visit by European Ambassadors was timed just before Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar travels to Brussels to prepare for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's trip next month for the EU-India summit. However, the government must recognise that these gains in the immediate present are superficial in the absence of a change in the situation in Kashmir.

It would not have escaped anyone's attention that these tours are tightly controlled, and the people meeting the foreign guests in the confines of the Raj Bhavan are handpicked by the government. In fact, European delegates who accepted New Delhi's invitation on this trip had earlier opted out in order to request freer access and meetings with leaders in detention, but the government refused to relent. The chimera of 'normalcy' seems patently fragile: the visit had to be postponed by a day due to a bandh call in the Valley; and just a day after the visit, the Internet was snapped once again due to security concerns. It is also puzzling how the government, which has repeated often that J&K is an "internal affair", squares it up with this new policy of conducting tours for the international community. The truth is, managing India's image is important, but the government's primary responsibilities still lie within its borders — responsibilities to the people of J&K, who have yet to see a return to normalcy; to those detained in and outside J&K, including sitting Member of Parliament and octogenarian Farooq Abdullah, against whom little evidence of wrongdoing has been furnished; and to the people of India as a whole, who are yet to see a credible path to the peace and prosperity that was promised when the momentous decision on Article 370 was announced last August. It is their legitimate expectations, not those of the international community, that must be a priority for the government.

Meanings of Difficult Words :

- **perception** (noun) – understanding, discernment, recognition/realization; interpretation.
- **envoy** (noun) – representative, delegate, messenger/spokesperson (on a diplomatic mission).
- **ground reality** (noun) – practical condition/situation.
- **point to** (verb) – indicate, suggest, denote.

- **productive** (noun) – useful, effective, beneficial, helpful.
- **incident** (noun) – affair, event, occurrence, happening.
- **delegation** (noun) – a body of representatives.
- **glimpse** (noun) – glance, brief look, sight.
- **normalcy** (noun) – a normal condition; normality, regularity.
- **come forward** (phrasal verb) – volunteer, step forward.
- **account** (noun) – explanation, description, narrative.
- **narrative** (noun) – a representation of a particular situation; portrayal/account.
- **prevail** (verb) – exist, be in existence, be present.
- **diplomatic** (adjective) – (delicate & sensitive) consular, foreign-policy, political.
- **exchange** (noun) – reciprocity, trade, interchange.
- **ambassador** (noun) – envoy, diplomat, consul.
- **pave the way for** (phrase) – clear the way for, create a situation to do something, precede, make provision for.
- **Brussels** (noun) – The headquarters of the European Union. Brussels is a **metonym** of the European Union.
- **summit** (noun) – meeting, conference, talk.
- **superficial** (adjective) – insignificant, unimportant, hollow, meaningless; artificial.
- **escape someone's attention** (phrase) – to fail to be noticed by someone.
- **confines** (noun) – limits, boundaries, borders (of a place).
- **handpick** (verb) – specially chosen, specially selected.
- **opt out** (phrasal verb) – decide not to participate in something.
- **freer** (comparative adjective of **free**) – casual, informal, unforced, natural.
- **detention** (noun) – confinement/incarceration, captivity, custody.
- **relent** (verb) – change one's mind, back down, give in.
- **chimera** (noun) – illusion, false impression, deceptive appearance.
- **patently** (adverb) – obviously, clearly, apparently/without doubt.
- **fragile** (noun) – weak, shaky/risky, feeble/unsound.
- **snap** (verb) – break suddenly.
- **puzzle** (verb) – perplex, confuse, bewilder/mystify.
- **affairs** (noun) – matters, activities, concerns.
- **square up** (phrasal verb) – face, tackle, deal with (a difficulty/problem) firmly.
- **lie** (verb) – be present, be contained, exist.
- **octogenarian** (adjective) – a person who is between 80 and 89 years old.
- **wrongdoing** (noun) – misconduct, criminal act, lawbreaking.
- **furnish** (verb) – provide, issue, give.
- **credible** (adjective) – acceptable, dependable, convincing.
- **prosperity** (noun) – success, comfort, good fortune, well being.
- **momentous** (adjective) – significant, important, serious, crucial/critical.
- **legitimate** (adjective) – valid, reasonable, reliable.

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Every Day May Not Be Good But There Is Something Good In Every Day.”