

Facts about Bangladeshi Migration to Assam

The Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India released migration data regarding 2011 census.

The data on foreign migrants do not distinguish between a legal migrant and an illegal migrant, but it is important indicator of the volume and pattern of overall international migration in India and more specifically in the state of Assam.

Census of India releases two types of migration data—Migration by Birth place and Migration by place of last residence. When a person is enumerated in Census at a place which is different from her/his place of birth, she/he would be considered a migrant by place of birth. It denotes internal migration. A person would be considered a migrant by place of last residence, if she/he had last resided at a place other than her/his place of enumeration. It denotes international migration.

The total number of international migrants has increased by 7%, from 51.55 lakh in 2001 to 54.91 lakh in 2011. If we compare foreign migrants who arrived in India during the two succeeding decades (1991–2001 and 2001–2011) then we find number of Bangladeshi migrants' flow to India has declined from 2.79 lakh during 1991–2001 to 1.72 lakh during 2001–2011 which means there is 50% decline in migrants' flow to India from Bangladesh between the last two decades.

Accordingly, there is sharp decline (25%) in the total number of Bangladeshi migrants in India, from 30.84 lakh in 2001 to 23.04 lakh in 2011. The proportion of Bangladeshi migrants in 2001 was about 60% of total international migrants in India, which has sharply reduced to 42% in 2011.

The number of Pakistani migrants has also declined from 9.97 lakhs in 2001 to 7.07 lakhs, that is a decline of about 29%. Pakistani migrants are second largest international migrants after Bangladeshi migrants.

There is huge increase (30%) of migrants from Nepal. Number of migrants from Nepal has made a quantum jump from 5.96 lakhs in 2001 to 7.78 lakhs in 2011. Nepal still holds its 3rd position in terms of number of international migrants in India.

India seems to have become a preferred destination of American and African migrants. Number of American migrants in India has increased from a meagre 26 thousand in 2001 to 4.00 lakhs in 2011. African migrants have also increased from 64 thousand in 2001 to 3.81 lakh in 2011.

There is every need to analyse this data so as to understand the socio-economic and political factors that are influencing these trends. At present we confine to the bare facts and trends.

According to the 2011 census data on foreign migrants, out of 54.91 lakh foreign migrants in India, only 1.10 lakh foreign migrants are residing in Assam, the largest number of foreign migrants being enumerated in West Bengal (20.05 lakhs) followed by Bihar (3.98 lakhs), Uttar Pradesh (3.55 lakh) and Maharashtra (3.24 lakhs). In fact, as per 2011 Census reports, there are 12 states in India where number of foreign migrants is higher than Assam.

Out of the total 11.12 lakh foreign migrants who arrived in India during the decade 2001–2011, the major destination is West Bengal (1.83 lakhs). Only 11,000 foreign migrants came to Assam during the same decade (2001–2011). Also, there are 17 states, other than West Bengal, which saw arrival of higher number of foreign migrants than Assam during the decade 2001–2011 like Maharashtra (1.83 lakh), Bihar (1.20 lakh), Kerala (1.03 lakh) etc.

The Census data of 2011 reveals that out of a total of 1.72 lakh Bangladeshi migrants who arrived in India during 2001–2011, only 1,916 migrants from Bangladesh were enumerated in Assam. The major destination for Bangladeshi migrants still continued to be West Bengal. It is worthwhile to mention here that successive census since 1971 shows that the number of Bangladeshi migrants who arrived in Assam during 1971–2001 is only 31,151. Another interesting revelation from the 2011 census data is that American migrants (2,618) who came to Assam during the decade 2001–2011 is about 37% higher than the Bangladeshi migrants who arrived in this state during the same period. Bangladeshi migrants constitute only 16.6% of the total international migrants (11,508) who came to Assam during the period 2001–2011.

For more than a decade, there is a consistent and deliberate propaganda that illegal Muslim migrants from Bangladesh are flooding Assam and are spreading all over India as a part of terrorist chain. The Maharashtra government led by Shiv Sena and BJP arbitrarily transported Bangladeshi migrants residing in Mumbai to borders with Bangladesh. The NRC conducted in Assam proved that this is false propaganda. The Census-2011 also proved the same.

The Census data reveals that there is no indication of large scale migration in Assam, illegal or otherwise, from foreign countries, especially from Bangladesh, after 1971, and more particularly during the last census decade (2001–2011).

(Courtesy: Sabrangindia)
