

## Laying the foundation stones to the Places of Horror: A Reality Check on the upcoming Detention Centers of India

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### INTRODUCTION

While the country remains occupied in critical conversations on Shaheen Bagh, travel bans on comedians, and the conquest of Delhi in this election season, what remains unspoken of, is the challenge of detention camps which India will soon find itself into, if the government of the day decides to hit the hammer on the nail. The 'Chowkidaar' lead government claiming to protect the Indian subcontinent from 'infiltrators' may actually be offering a thorned rose instead of a lotus. While the Indian democracy and the economy is gasping for breath, the distress caused in attempts to hold on to one's citizenship has made the international community take notice and witness India move towards a dead end.

The issue that must be addressed is that, does the government realize, that passing the Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB) in the parliament might have been a cake walk, but the real test would be in managing the millions whose names would not appear in the National People's Register. The drive of the government in developing a list with the names of those who the state recognizes as citizens, is indeed for many, an disguised mechanism to detect 'illegal immigrants' and to 'deport them to their respective lands'. Whether the denial or acquiring of citizenship has anything to do with one's religious identity, still remains as an heated argument, but, what does remain apparent is that those whose names do not find its way into the National People's Register might be the potential guests to the novel detention centers of India. The burning yet unanswered questions that remain are, whether India is ready to build and construct these detention centers and whether these errands seem as effortless and unchallenging as the BJP government presumes it to be? The answers to which remain ambiguous.

However what one must not overlook is that, Prime Minister Modi might forget to put sugar in his tea, but what he cannot afford to forget are the costs involved in construction and maintenance of these camps, protection of the human rights of those detained, and deportation of the detainees to name a few of the difficult tasks the government would have to fulfill. Politician Sambit Patra might scream 'Tum Pakistani ho' (You

are a Pakistani) to every Anti -Citizenship Amendment Act protestor but the economic and social consequences of the decision that India ventures into will be rather darker than the BJP's fate.

Then where does the problem of detention centers lie? Why does the whole idea of detention centers seem so threatening and concerning? It's because detention centers in India, would be nothing but castles made on sand. Hans Schenk in his work 'Residential Immobility in Urban India' claims what India faces today is a spurt in the Urban Population Density and Land Use Density. In simple words, since 1991 till date, the immense growth in urban population has lead invariably to the growth of urban areas. The growing trends of indiscriminate increase in the urban use of land in the States of West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Haryana and others depict, that with escalation in population, the pressure on land is also increasing, and what remains highly evident is that it leaves most urban areas in a difficult position to provide for residential areas. In 2017, Delhi witnessed more than 70 residential complexes being built on areas what used to be graveyards. If in the capital of the country, the Indian community finds it difficult to find space for the dead, then where does the government aim to construct huge detention camps for the living, who would be in millions? Hence the government will conveniently seep into rural areas and remote areas to construct detention centers, compromising on potential agricultural lands and tax payer's money. The upcoming detention camp at Goalpara situated in a remote area of Assam, promises to house as many as 3,000 illegal immigrants. Individuals trapped in the isolated detention camps, away from media coverage, public scrutiny, and access to human rights groups and civil society will be victims to human rights violations, medical negligence, torture and even pushed to the extent of being asked to share the same space with convicts, as documented in other camps in Assam.

Even for the sake of an argument, if PM Modi does eventually succeed in asking state governments to follow center's directives and construct detention camps, the question would then boil down to whether the Indian economy can bear the financial burden that would come with it.

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## CONCLUSION

The Union budget of the BJP government for 2020, yet again lacks farsightedness, and manifest repeated blunders in its economic policy. Falling growth rates from 8.1% in 2018 to 4.5% in 2019 coupled with mounting job losses and severe credit crunch with no attempts being made to strengthen the financial sector is indeed alarming and disappointing. In such a scenario of mounting inflation and massive unemployment the economic consequences of detention camps may be just worth considering. Will the economy survive this paralyzing shock when bread earners would cease to feed the mouths of their children, only to be left to the mercy of the 'Chowkidaar' to be the sole decider of their fate.

It is said one must learn from one's mistakes, but what does an ordinary citizen do when the government passively watches and therefore legitimizes the violations going on in Assamese detention camps. What should an average citizen do when the government instead of resolving a worrisome issue, announces to do more harm than good? Why does the government fail to understand that criticizing its bigotry ridden citizenship policy and its welfarist rhetoric demonstrates love for one's country and one's people? The BJP government must realize that the lotus might just wilt now as the Lady of Justice takes off her blindfold and takes notice of all that is being said by human rights observers about detention camps which would hopefully no longer remain a forgotten tale.

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