

GAHC010059922026



2026:GAU-AS:4430-DB

**THE GAUHATI HIGH COURT**  
**(HIGH COURT OF ASSAM, NAGALAND, MIZORAM AND ARUNACHAL PRADESH)**

**Case No. : WP(C)/1716/2026**

SUKTARA BEGUM  
DAUGHTER OF ABUL KARIM, RESIDENT OF- VILLAGE- SIMLAI PATHAR,  
P.O. AND P.S. LANKA,, DISTRICT- HOJAI, ASSAM, PIN- 782446, (ON  
BEHALF OF HER FATHER ABUL @ ABDUL KARIM S/O- LT. HAFIZ ALI,  
AGED ABOUT 52 YEARS, R/O- VILL- JUTHANG BASTI (NOW SHIFTED TO  
SIMLAI PATHAR), P.S. LANKA, DISTRICT- HOJAI, ASSAM, WHO HAS BEEN  
DECLARED A FOREIGNER AND EXPELLED VIDE THE IMPUGNED  
ORDERS)

VERSUS

THE UNION OF INDIA AND 8 ORS  
TO BE REPRESENTED BY SECRETARY TO THE GOVT. OF INDIA, HOME  
DEPARTMENT, NORTH BLOCK, NEW DELHI

2:THE STATE OF ASSAM  
TO BE REPRESENTED BY COMMISSIONER AND SECRETARY TO THE  
GOVT. OF ASSAM  
HOME DEPARTMENT  
DISPUR  
GUWAHATI-06

3:THE STATE CO-ORDINATOR  
NATIONAL REGISTER OF CITIZENS (NRC)  
ASSAM  
BHANGAGARH  
GHY-5

4:THE ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA  
REPRESENTED BY CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER  
ASHOKA ROAD  
NEW DELHI- 110001

5:THE ADDITIONAL DIRECTOR GENERAL OF POLICE  
ASSAM (BORDER)  
BHANGAGARH  
GUWAHATI-5

6:THE SUPERINTENDENT OF POLICE (BORDER)  
HOJAI DISTRICT  
ASSAM

7:THE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER  
HOJAI DISTRICT  
ASSAM

8:THE SUPERINTENDENT OF POLICE  
HOJAI DISTRICT  
ASSAM

9:THE ELECTION OFFICER  
HOJAI  
ASSA

**Advocate for the Petitioner** : MR. T A CHOUDHURY, MR. R SARMA, J NABI

**Advocate for the Respondent** : DY.S.G.I., SC, ECI, SC, NRC, SC, F.T, GA, ASSAM

**BEFORE**  
**HONOURABLE MR. JUSTICE KALYAN RAI SURANA**  
**HONOURABLE MRS. JUSTICE SUSMITA PHUKAN KHAUND**

**ORDER**

**Date : 25.03.2026**

*(K.R. Surana, J)*

Heard Mr. R. Sarma, learned counsel for the petitioner. Also heard Mr. J. Sarma, learned CGC for respondent no.1; Ms. A. Verma, learned standing counsel for the respondent nos. 2, 3, 5, 6 and 8; Mr. N. Kalita, learned counsel, appearing on behalf of Mr. A.I. Ali, learned standing counsel for respondent no.4; and Mr. P. Sarmah, learned Addl. Senior Govt. Advocate for respondent nos. 7 and 8.

2. By filing this writ petition under Article 226 of the Constitution of India, the petitioner, namely, Suktara Begum, has assailed the impugned *ex parte* opinion dated 12.12.2012, passed by the learned Member, Foreigners Tribunal, Hojai, Sankardev Nagar, in Case No. FT/H/1006/2007- *State v. Abdul Karim*, by which Abdul Karim, the petitioner's father was declared to be a foreigner who has entered into India after 25.03.1971.

3. This writ petition was filed on 19.03.2026, to assail the *ex parte* opinion dated 12.12.2012, i.e. after an extraordinary delay of 13 years, 3 months, 7 days (or 4845 days). Hence, all sides were heard on delay and laches on part of the petitioner to assail the impugned *ex parte* opinion.

4. The learned counsel had submitted that in paragraph 4 of the writ petition, the petitioner has admitted that her father had received the notice of the proceeding, but it was further stated that the petitioner's father, due to ignorance, illiteracy and lack of legal knowledge, could not file his written statement. However, the learned Tribunal, without appreciating any evidence, and without giving a reasonable opportunity to the petitioner's father, declared him to be a foreigner. It was submitted that the investigation was not proper and the Border Police did not ask the father of the petitioner to produce any document to establish that he was an Indian citizen. The alleged statement of the father of the petitioner, recorded during investigation, was also signed by him. Thus, in the process, as the investigation was not fair, the petitioner was denied a fair trial. Moreover, it was also submitted that there was lack of communication from the learned advocate engaged by the petitioner's father and he was not aware that written statement was not filed by his engaged advocate and that an *ex parte* opinion was passed. It was submitted that the State had not produced any concrete evidence to show that her father was a

citizen of Bangladesh by producing his passport, entry documents, proof of address, etc.

5. It was also submitted that in the meantime, the father of the petitioner was taken into custody and initially detained in a detention camp and the petitioner has also come to know that after passing an expulsion order dated 26.12.2025, issued under the provisions of Section 2 of the Immigration (Expulsion from Assam) Act, 1950, the father of the petitioner was expelled without being given any opportunity of being heard. Thus, it was submitted that the fundamental rights of the petitioner, including her father, as guaranteed under Articles 14, 16 and 21 have been infringed by expelling petitioner's father, illegally and arbitrarily. It is submitted that unless an interim order is granted, the authorities would either prevent the petitioner's father from returning to India or expel him again.

6. It was also submitted that in the entire family, no proceeding was initiated against anyone else, which is sufficient to show that the father of the petitioner was not a foreigner, but an Indian like other family members. It was also submitted that as the father of the petitioner was born in India, he was an Indian citizen as per the provisions of Section 3 of the Citizenship Act, 1955.

7. Per contra, the learned standing counsel for the FT, Border matters and NRC had submitted that the explanation given for not contesting the proceeding and for delay in assailing the *ex parte* opinion is absolutely vague, and not supported by any documents or any other cogent and reliable materials.

8. The learned CGC and the learned Addl. Senior Govt. Advocate for the other appearing respondents have adopted the submissions made by the

learned standing counsel for the FT, Border matters and NRC.

9. As per the contents of the impugned *ex parte* opinion dated 12.12.2012, upon receipt of notice, the proceedee, namely, Abdul Karim, he had appeared and took time to file written statement, but subsequently, without filing the written statement, he had defaulted in appearing and thus, remained absent all throughout. Thus, *ex parte* opinion dated 12.12.2012, was passed against Abdul Karim, the father of the petitioner.

10. Thus, from the submissions made by the learned counsel for the petitioner, four following points of determination arise in this case:-

i. Whether the explanation for delay is sufficient to condone the delay of 13 years, 3 months, 7 days (or 4845 days) in assailing the *ex parte* opinion dated 12.12.2012?

ii. Whether after passing of the said *ex parte* opinion dated 12.12.2012, is the father of the petitioner was required to be heard again before apprehending and expelling him from the Country?

iii. On expulsion of Abdul Karim, pursuant to expulsion order dated 26.12.2025, any fundamental right of the petitioner or of Abdul Karim has been infringed?

iv. Whether the petitioner is entitled to any relief including interim relief?

On point of determination no. (i):

11. The submissions made by the learned counsel for the petitioner, as mentioned in paragraph nos. 4 to 6 above, by no stretch of imagination can be said to have sufficiently explained the enormous delay of 13 years, 3 months, 7 days (or 4845 days) taken to assail the said *ex parte* opinion dated

12.12.2012, by filing this writ petition on 19.03.2026. In this case, the default and delay is in three stages.

- a. First phase of delay is on account of failure of the father of the petitioner to file written statement after his initial appearance. Then Abdul Karim chose not to appear and contest the proceeding. It is not the case of the petitioner that from his initial appearance till the *ex parte* opinion was passed and after the date of *ex parte* opinion till the father of the petitioner was apprehended, he was paying fees regularly to his engaged learned counsel. Thus, the default in not filing the written statement and evidence and thus, not contesting the proceeding has not been explained at all.
- b. Second phase of the delay is in applying for certified copy of the impugned *ex parte* opinion and other relevant copies of the Tribunal's record. The application for copies was made on 02.05.2016, which were promptly supplied on 02.05.2016 itself. Thus, there is an unexplained delay of 3 years, 4 months, 20 days for the father of the petitioner to apply for and obtain the certified copy of the *ex parte* opinion and other documents. Thus, though the certified copy of the opinion dated 12.12.2012 was obtained on 02.05.2016, the father of the petitioner, had not assailed the said *ex parte* opinion dated 12.12.2012 till the expulsion order was passed on 26.12.2025 and acted upon by taking him into custody. The date when the petitioner's father was taken into custody has not been pleaded or stated by the learned counsel for the petitioner.
- c. Thirdly, the *ex parte* opinion was passed on 12.12.2012, but this writ petition was filed on 19.03.2026, i.e. after 13 years, 3 months, 7 days.

Except for vaguely stating that the advocate did not inform about the *ex parte* opinion; the petitioner is illiterate and does not know legal procedure, no verifiable statement has been made by the petitioner.

12. It may be mentioned that as per the affidavit dated 19.03.2026, filed in support of the writ petition, the petitioner is aged 25 years and therefore, born sometime in the year 2001. Thus, on 12.12.2012, when the impugned *ex parte* opinion was passed, the petitioner would be about 11 years of age, which is not the age when it can be presumed that the petitioner would have the knowledge that the advocate engaged by her father did not give information about the *ex parte* opinion or not and at that age, the petitioner cannot say whether or not her father did not know legal procedures. That presumption is also not available because, the father of the petitioner had obtained the certified copy of the opinion on 02.05.2016. However, by not assailing the said opinion, the father of the petitioner is deemed to have waived his right to assail the impugned *ex parte* opinion dated 12.12.2012.

13. Thus, the explanation for delay, as submitted by the learned counsel for the petitioner, is vague and insufficient for the Court to overlook the enormous and extraordinary delay and laches of 13 years, 3 months, 7 days, to assail the said *ex parte* opinion.

14. It may be stated that no period limitation is prescribed for filing a writ petition. However, unless the petitioner demonstrates good and cogent reason, delay and laches would disentitle the petitioner to equitable relief, on the principle that delay defeats equity. If one needs any authority on the point, the decision of the Supreme Court of India in the case of *Mrinmoy Maity v. Chhanda Koley*, 2024 INSC 314: (2024) 0 Supreme(SC) 351, and *Chairman/Managing Director, U.P. Power Corporation Ltd. V. Ram Gopal*, (2020)

*13 SCC 225: (2020) 0 Supreme(SC) 93 (Full Bench)*. In the later case, while approving the decision of the Supreme Court of India in the case of *P.S. Sadasivaswamy v. State of Tamil Nadu, (1975) 1 SCC 152* and *S.S. Balu v. State of Kerala, (2009) 2 SCC 479*, it was held to the effect that limitation does not strictly apply to a proceeding under Articles 32 and 226 of the Constitution of India, nevertheless, such rights cannot be enforced after an unreasonable lapse of time and the High Courts were cautioned by observing that prolonged delay of many years ought not to have been overlooked or condoned. Paragraph 16 thereof [as extracted from *(2020) 0 Supreme(SC) 93* ] is quoted below:-

*16. Whilst it is true that limitation does not strictly apply to proceedings under Articles 32 or 226 of the Constitution of India, nevertheless, such rights cannot be enforced after an unreasonable lapse of time. Consideration of unexplained delays and inordinate laches would always be relevant in writ actions, and writ courts naturally ought to be reluctant in exercising their discretionary jurisdiction to protect those who have slept over wrongs and allowed illegalities to fester. Fence-sitters cannot be allowed to barge into courts and cry for their rights at their convenience, and vigilant citizens ought not to be treated alike with mere opportunists. On multiple occasions, it has been restated that there are implicit limitations of time within which writ remedies can be enforced. In *S.S. Balu vs. State of Kerala, (2009) 2 SCC 479* this Court observed thus:*

*"17. It is also well-settled principle of law that "delay defeats equity". ...It is now a trite law that where the writ petitioner approaches the High Court after a long delay, reliefs prayed for may be denied to them on the ground of delay and laches irrespective of the fact that they are similarly situated to the other candidates who obtain the benefit of the judgment."*

15. It may also be mentioned that the Supreme Court of India, in paragraph 46 of the case of *Urban Improvement Trust v. Vidhya Devi, 2024 INSC 980: (2024) 0 Supreme(SC) 1189*, has reiterated the law that undue delay in approaching the Court can be a ground for refusing relief and it has been expressed that only in exceptional cases, delay can be condoned. The said paragraph 46 is quoted below:-

*"46. As regards the appellant's challenge to the inordinate delay of 21 years in filing of the writ petitions by the respondents, we are of the view that the same needs to be considered in the facts and circumstances of the case. While it is true that the courts have consistently held that undue delay in approaching the court can be a ground for refusing relief, the courts have also recognized that in exceptional cases, where the impugned action is patently illegal or affects fundamental rights, the delay must be condoned."*

16. In respect of the legal proposition that delay and laches is fatal to belated challenge to the opinion of the Foreigners Tribunals, it may be relevant to refer to the decision of this Court in the case of *Jonali Das v. Union of India, 2018 (5) GLT 492: (2018) 0 Supreme (Gau) 1186*. Paragraph 9 thereof is as follows:-

*"9. In Azmat Ali @ Amzad Ali Vs. Union of India [W.P.(C) No.4971/2018, disposed of on 01.08.2018], this Court had observed as follows:-*

*"It is more than three decades that the issue of influx of foreign nationals has been in public domain in the State of Assam and has engaged the attention of the people. Interest of the State is of paramount importance in that unabated influx has the potential to affect the integrity and sovereignty of the country. Citizenship of a person, no doubt, is a very valuable right and should be zealously guarded. There is no gainsaying the fact that a person who is alleged to be a foreigner must be given due and reasonable opportunity to establish that he is a citizen of India. However, if a person does not take steps for safeguarding his interest, he does so at his own risk and peril as grant of opportunity cannot be an endless exercise. Right to a fair hearing or principles of natural justice cannot be permitted to lead to a farcical situation and to be an engine for defeating the very object of identification and deportation of foreigners."*

17. The Supreme Court of India, in the case of *Shivamma (Dead) by LRs v. Karnataka Housing Board & Ors., 2025 INSC 1104: 2025 Supreme(SC) 1679*, while dealing with the provision of Section 5 of the Limitation Act, 1963 has laid down certain guidelines. Though Section 5 of the Limitation Act, 1963 does not apply to a writ petition, but in the considered opinion of the Court,

when a writ petition is filed to assail the opinion of the Foreigners Tribunals, under certiorari jurisdiction, the same principles should apply, requiring the petitioner to provide at least some cogent and acceptable explanation for the inordinate delay in assailing the opinion.

18. Moreover, this Court, in the case of *Ajbahar Ali v. Union of India, (2025) 0 Supreme (Gau) 763*, had held to the effect that the plea of compliance with the principles of natural justice cannot be permitted to lead to a farcical situation and to be an engine for defeating the very object of identification and deportation of foreigners. A similar opinion has also been expressed by this Court in the case of *Abu Bokkor Siddique v. Union of India, 2019 (1) GLT 813*.

19. Thus, in the light of the discussions above, the Court is inclined to hold that delay is not properly explained so as to condone the delay and laches of 13 years, 3 months, 7 days (or 4845 days) in assailing the *ex parte* opinion dated 12.12.2012. The point of determination no. 1 is accordingly, answered in the negative and against the petitioner.

*On point of determination no. (ii):*

20. The point of determination no. 2 is whether after passing of the said *ex parte* opinion dated 12.12.2012, was the father of the petitioner was required to be heard again before apprehending and expelling him from the Country.

21. The provisions of Sections 2 to 4 of the Immigrants (Expulsion From Assam) Act, 1950, are extracted below:-

*“Section. 2 : Power to order expulsion of certain immigrants*

*If the Central Government is of opinion that any person or class of persons, having been ordinarily resident in any place outside India, has or have, whether*

*before or after the commencement of this Act, come into Assam and that the stay of such person or class of persons in Assam is detrimental to the interests of the general public of India or of any section thereof or of any Scheduled Tribe in Assam, the Central Government may by order-*

*(a) Direct such person or class of persons to remove himself or themselves from India or Assam within such time and by such route as may be specified in the order; and*

*(b) Give such further directions in regard to his or their removal from India or Assam as it may consider necessary or expedient:*

*PROVIDED that nothing in this section shall apply to any person who on account of civil disturbances or the fear of such disturbances in any area now forming part of Pakistan has been displaced from or has left his place of residence in such area and who has been subsequently residing in Assam.*

*Section. 3 : Delegation of power*

*The Central Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, direct that the powers and duties conferred or imposed on it by Section 2 shall, subject to such conditions, if any, as may be specified in the notification, be exercised or discharged also by-*

*(a) Any officer subordinate to the Central Government;*

*(b) The [Government of Assam, Meghalaya] or any officer subordinate to that Government.*

*Section. 4 : Power to give effect to orders, etc.*

*Any authority empowered by or in pursuance of the provisions of this Act to exercise any power may, in addition to any other action expressly provided for in this Act, take or cause to be taken such steps, and use or cause to be used such force, as may in its opinion be reasonably necessary for the effective exercise of such power."*

22. Having regard to the said provisions of Sections 2 to 4 of the Immigrants (Expulsion From Assam) Act, 1950, the Court is of the unhesitant opinion that after being declared as an illegal foreigner/ migrant, who has entered into India after 25.03.1971, vide *ex parte* opinion dated 12.12.2012, passed by the learned Member, Foreigners Tribunal, Hojai, Sankardev Nagar, in Case No. FT/H/1006/2007- State v. Abdul Karim, the father of the petitioner,

namely, Abdul Karim had no right to be heard either before or after the expulsion order was issued by the District Commissioner, Hojai, Sankardev Nagar under eCF No. 165918/62 dated 26.12.2025. No compliance with the principles of natural justice is further required to be followed after a proceedee before the Foreigners Tribunal is declared to be a foreigner. Correspondingly, no statutory or legal duty was cast upon the District Magistrate, Hojai, Sankardev Nagar, who has not even been arrayed as a respondent in this writ petition, to give any opportunity of hearing to Abdul Karim, a declared foreign national.

23. In other words, by giving an opportunity to the declared foreign national of being heard, would amount to allowing a collateral challenge to the opinion rendered by a Foreigners Tribunal.

24. It must be taken note of the fact that the Supreme Court of India, in the case of *Sarbananda Sonowal v. Union of India*, (2005) 5 SCC 665, in paragraph 73, has held to the effect that the procedure under the Foreigners Act, 1946 and the Foreigners (Tribunals) Order, 1964 is just, fair and reasonable and does not offend any constitutional provision. In paragraph 63, the Supreme Court of India had observed that there can be no manner of doubt that the State of Assam is facing external aggression and internal disturbance on account of large-scale illegal migration of Bangladeshi nationals and that it, therefore, becomes the duty of the Union of India to take all measures for protection of the State of Assam from such external aggression and internal disturbance as enjoined in Article 355 of the Constitution of India. In paragraph 70, it was observed that the influx of Bangladeshi nationals who have illegally migrated into Assam pose a threat to the integrity and security of the North Eastern region and that their presence has changed the demographic character of that region and the local people of Assam have been reduced to a status of

minority in certain districts.

25. Accordingly, the point of determination no. (ii) is answered in the negative by holding that after the passing of the impugned *ex parte* opinion dated 12.12.2012, Abdul Karim, the projected father of the petitioner was not required to be given any opportunity of being heard before apprehending and expelling him from the Country and/or before or after passing of the expulsion order dated 26.12.2025, referred to above.

On the point of determination no. (iii):

26. In respect of the said point, it is not disputed that Abdul Karim, the projected father of the petitioner was declared to be a foreigner of post 25.03.1971 stream.

27. This is perhaps an appropriate moment to refer to the historical background of the foreigners' issue plaguing the State of Assam, which, as per media reports, is altering the demography of the State. This led to a long-drawn student agitation. The statement to that effect has been elaborately referred to in the case of *Sarbananda Sonowal v. Union of India & Ors.*, (2005) 5 SCC 665, which was decided by the Full Bench of the Supreme Court of India. Some portions of the said judgment are quoted below: -

*"2. ... It is further averred that in view of the problem of illegal migration of foreigners into Assam and their continued presence therein, a State-wise protest movement of students was organized which continued for a long period. As a result of the students' movement and ensuing negotiations, a memorandum of settlement dated 15-8-1985 was entered into between All Assam Students' Union and the Union of India and the State of Assam, which is commonly known as "Assam Accord". The terms of the Accord specifically provided that steps would be taken to detect and deport illegal migrants from Assam and it also contained a clause that "the Government will give due consideration to certain difficulties expressed by AASU/AAGSP regarding the implementation of the Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunals) Act, 1983." The Accord further provided that foreigners who have entered into India after 25-3-1971 will continue to be*

*detected, their names deleted from the electoral rolls and they will be deported from India. In pursuance of this provision, the Citizenship Act, 1955 was amended by Act 65 of 1985 and Section 6-A was inserted with the heading "Special Provisions as to Citizenship of Persons covered by the Assam Accord." It provides that the term "detected to be a foreigner" shall mean so detected under the Foreigners Act and the Foreigners (Tribunals) Order, 1964 framed thereunder. Under the said provision a person of Indian origin as defined u/s 6-A(3) who entered into Assam prior to 1-1-1966 and has been resident in Assam since then is deemed to be a citizen of India. However, if such a person entered into Assam between 1-1-1966 and before 25-3-1971 and has been detected to be a foreigner under the Foreigners Act then he is not entitled to be included in the electoral list for a period of 10 years from the date of detection. This amendment of the Citizenship Act makes it clear that the question of determination or detection of a foreigner is to be governed by the provisions of the existing Central legislation, viz. the Foreigners Act, 1946 and the Foreigners (Tribunals) Order, 1964.*

\* \* \*

**4.** ... A true copy of the latest status report filed by the Government in Writ Petition No. 125 of 1998, which has been filed seeking deportation of all Bangladeshi nationals from India, has been filed as Annexure R-1 to the Counter Affidavit and paragraphs 3 to 7 of the said status report are being reproduced below:

*"3. Continuing influx of Bangladeshi nationals into India has been on account of a variety of reasons including religious and economic. There is a combination of factors on both sides which are responsible for continuing influx of illegal immigration from Bangladesh. The important "Push Factors" on the Bangladesh side include: -*

- a) steep and continuous increase in population;*
- b) sharp deterioration in land-man ratio;*
- c) low rates of economic growth particularly poor performance in agriculture;*

*The "Pull Factors" on the Indian side include: -*

- a) ethnic proximity and kinship enabling easy shelter to the immigrants;*
- b) porous and easily negotiable border with Bangladesh;*
- c) better economic opportunities;*
- d) interested religious and political elements encouraging immigration;*

*4. It is difficult to make a realistic estimate of the number of illegal immigrants from Bangladesh because they enter surreptitiously and are able to mingle easily with the local population due to ethnic and linguistic similarities. The demographic composition in the districts bordering Bangladesh has altered with the illegal immigration from Bangladesh. The districts of Assam and West Bengal bordering Bangladesh have recorded*

*growth of population higher than the national average. The States of Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura have also recorded high rates of population growth. Illegal immigrants from Bangladesh have also been using West Bengal as a corridor to migrate to other parts of the country.*

5. *The large-scale influx of illegal Bangladesh immigrants has led to large tracts of sensitive international borders being occupied by foreigners. This has serious implications for internal security.*

6. *The types of illegal migrants are as follows: -*

- a) *those who came with valid visa/documents and overstayed;*
- b) *those who came with forged visa/documents; and*
- c) *those who entered surreptitiously.*

7. *During talks between the Prime Ministers of India and Bangladesh in February, 1972, the Prime Minister of Bangladesh had assured the return of all Bangladesh nationals who had taken shelter in India since 25-3-1971. Accordingly, a circular was issued by the Government of India on 30.9.1972, setting out guidelines for action to be taken in respect of persons who had come to India from Bangladesh. According to this circular, those Bangladesh nationals who had come to India before 25-3-1971 were not to be sent back and those who entered India in or after the said date were to be repatriated."*

\* \* \*

**17.** *A copy of the report dated 8-11-1998 sent by Governor of Assam, Lt. Gen. S.K. Sinha (Retired), former Deputy Chief of Army Staff, has also been filed along with this application. The report is a long and comprehensive one which was prepared after thorough inspection of border areas and districts, discussion with Indian Ambassador in Bangladesh and talks with political leaders. Some portions of the report are being reproduced below: -*

"1. *The unabated influx of illegal migrants from Bangladesh into Assam and the consequent perceptible change in the demographic pattern of the State has been a matter of grave concern. It threatens to reduce the Assamese people to a minority in their own State, as happened in Tripura and Sikkim.*

2. *Illegal migration into Assam was the core issue behind the Assam student movement. It was also the prime contributory factor behind the outbreak of insurgency in the State. Yet we have not made much tangible progress in dealing with this all important issue.*

3. *There is a tendency to view illegal migration into Assam as a regional matter affecting only the people of Assam. It's more dangerous dimensions of greatly undermining our national security, is ignored. The long cherished design of Greater East Pakistan/Bangladesh, making in-roads into strategic land link of Assam with the rest of the country, can lead to severing the entire land mass of the North-East, with all its rich resources from the rest of*

*the country. They will have disastrous strategic and economic consequences.*

\* \* \*

## *MIGRATION INTO ASSAM*

### *HISTORICAL BACKGROUND*

*7. Failure to get Assam included in East Pakistan in 1947 remained a source of abiding resentment in that country. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in his book "Myths of Independence" wrote - "It would be wrong that Kashmir is the only dispute that divides India and Pakistan, though undoubtedly the most significant. One at least is nearly as important as the Kashmir dispute, that of Assam and some districts of India adjacent to East Pakistan. To these Pakistan has very good claims". Even a pro-India leader like Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in his book "Eastern Pakistan; its population & economics" observed, "Because Eastern Pakistan must have sufficient land for its expansion and because Assam has abundant forests and mineral resources, coal, petroleum etc., Eastern Pakistan must include Assam to be financially and economically strong. (emphasis by us)*

\* \* \*

### *CONTRIBUTORY FACTORS*

*10. Besides the above considerations, there are other contributory factors facilitating infiltration from Bangladesh. Ethnic, linguistic and religious commonality between the illegal migrants and many people on our side of the border enables them to find shelter. It makes their detection difficult. Some political parties have been encouraging and even helping illegal migration with a view to building vote banks. These immigrants are hardworking and are prepared to work as cheap labour and domestic help for lower remuneration than the local people. This makes them acceptable. Moreover, with corruption being all pervasive, corrupt officials are bribed to provide help. Recently, a racket has been busted in Lakhimpur. Four individuals were found to have been providing forged citizenship certificates and other documents to illegal migrants for the last 14 years.*

\* \* \*

### *ILLEGAL MIGRANTS*

*15. ...Mr. Mulan described this as invasion using military terminology which in present geostrategically context, underscores the strategic aspect of the problem. It is unfortunate that to this day, after half a century of independence, we have chosen to remain virtually oblivious to the grave danger to our national security arising from this unabated influx of illegal migrants. Third, the prophecy that except the Sibsagar district, the Assamese people will not find themselves at home in Assam, is well on its way to becoming true as reflected by the present demographic pattern of Assam.*

*16. Mr. Inderjit Gupta, the then Home Minister of India stated in the*

Parliament on May 6, 1997 that there were 10 million illegal migrants residing in India. Quoting Home Ministry/Intelligence Bureau sources, the 10-8-1998 issue of India Today has given the breakdown of these illegal migrants by States: -

|                    |                    |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| West Bengal -      | 5.4 million        |
| Assam -            | 4 million          |
| Tripura -          | 0.8 million        |
| Bihar -            | 0.5 million        |
| Maharashtra -      | 0.5 million        |
| Rajasthan -        | 0.5 million        |
| Delhi -            | <u>0.3 million</u> |
| Making a total of- | 10.83 millions     |

*Communitywise growth*

|               | Assam  |         | India  |         |
|---------------|--------|---------|--------|---------|
|               | Hindus | Muslims | Hindus | Muslims |
| (1) 1951-1961 | 33.71  | 38.35   | 20.29  | 25.61   |
| (2) 1961-1971 | 37.17  | 30.99   | 23.72  | 30.85   |
| (3) 1971-1991 | 41.89  | 77.42   | 48.38  | 55.04   |

*EXPLANATORY NOTE*

... In the case of Muslims, the Assam growth rate was much higher than the All India rate. This suggests continued large scale Muslim illegal migration into Assam.

\* \* \*

(d) Muslim population in Assam has shown a rise of 77.42 per cent in 1991 from what it was in 1971. Hindu population has risen by nearly 41.89 per cent in this period.

(e) Muslim population in Assam has risen from 24.68 per cent in 1951 to 28.42 per cent in 1991. As per 1991 census four districts (Dhubri, Goalpara, Barpeta and Hailakandi) have become Muslim majority districts. Two more districts (Nagaon and Karimganj) should have become so by 1998 and one district Morigaon is fast approaching this position.

\* \* \*

20. The growth of Muslim population has been emphasized in the previous paragraph to indicate the extent of illegal migration from Bangladesh to Assam because as stated earlier, the illegal migrants coming into India after 1971 have been almost exclusively Muslims.

21. Pakistan's ISI has been active in Bangladesh supporting militant

*movement in Assam. Muslim militant organization have mushroomed in Assam and there are reports of some 50 Assamese Muslim youths having gone for training to Afghanistan and Kashmir.*

#### **CONSEQUENCES**

*22. The dangerous consequences of large scale illegal migration from Bangladesh, both for the people of Assam and more for the Nation as a whole, need to be emphatically stressed. No misconceived and mistaken notions of secularism should be allowed to come in the way of doing so.*

*23. As a result of population movement from Bangladesh, the specter looms large of the indigenous people of Assam being reduced to a minority in their home State. Their cultural survival will be in jeopardy, their political control will be a weakened and their employment opportunities will be undermined.*

*24. The silent and invidious demographic invasion of Assam may result in the loss of the geostrategically vital districts of lower Assam. The influx of these illegal migrants is turning these districts into a Muslim majority region. It will then only be a matter of time when a demand for their merger with Bangladesh may be made. The rapid growth of international Islamic fundamentalism may provide for driving force for this demand. In this context, it is pertinent that Bangladesh has long discarded secularism and has chosen to become an Islamic State. Loss of lower Assam will sever the entire land mass of the North East, from the rest of India and the rich natural resources of that region will be lost to the Nation.*

**18.** *Since extensive reference has been made in the affidavits to the Assam Accord, it is necessary to notice the main provisions thereof. It is a Memorandum of Settlement which was signed on 15-8-1985 by the President and General Secretary of All Assam Students' Union and Convenor of All Assam Gana Parishad on the one hand and Home Secretary, Government of India and the Chief Secretary, Government of Assam on the other, in the presence of Shri Rajiv Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India. The main clauses of the settlement which have a bearing on the case are being reproduced below:*

#### **“Memorandum of Settlement**

*The Government have all along been most anxious to find a satisfactory solution to the problem of foreigners in Assam. The All Assam Students' Union (AASU) and the All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP) have also expressed their keenness to find such a solution.*

*2. The AASU through their Memorandum dated 2-2-1980 presented to the late Prime Minister Smt Indira Gandhi, conveyed their profound sense of apprehensions regarding the continuing influx of foreign nationals into Assam and the fear about adverse effects upon the political, social, cultural and economic life of the State.*

*3. Being fully alive to the genuine apprehensions of the people of Assam, the then Prime Minister initiated the dialogue with the AASU/AAGSP.*

*Subsequently, talks were held at the Prime Minister's and Home Minister's levels during the period 1980-83. Several rounds of informal talks were held during 1984. Formal discussions were resumed in March 1985.*

*4. Keeping all aspects of the problem including constitutional and legal provisions, international agreements, national commitments and humanitarian considerations, it has been decided to proceed as follows:*

*Foreigners Issue*

*5.1 For purposes of detection and deletion of foreigners, 1-1-1966 shall be the base date and year.*

*5.2 All persons who came to Assam prior to 1-1-1966, including those amongst them whose names appeared on the electoral rolls used in 1967 elections, shall be regularised.*

*5.3 Foreigners who came to Assam after 1-1-1966 (inclusive) and up to 24-3-1971 shall be detected in accordance with the provisions of the Foreigners Act, 1946 and the Foreigners (Tribunals) Order, 1964.*

*5.4 Names of foreigners so detected will be deleted from the electoral rolls in force. Such persons will be required to register themselves before the Registration Office of the respective districts in accordance with the provisions of the Registration of Foreigners Act, 1939 and the Registration of Foreigners Rules, 1939.*

*5.5 For this purpose, the Government of India will undertake suitable strengthening of the governmental machinery.*

*5.6 On the expiry of a period of ten years following the date of detection, the names of all such persons which have been deleted from the electoral rolls shall be restored.*

*5.7 All persons who were expelled earlier, but have since re-entered illegally into Assam, shall be expelled. (emphasis supplied by us)*

*5.8 Foreigners who came to Assam on or after 25-3-1971 shall continue to be detected, deleted and expelled in accordance with law. Immediate and practical steps shall be taken to expel such foreigners. (emphasis supplied by us)*

*5.9 The Government will give due consideration to certain difficulties expressed by the AASU/AAGSP regarding the implementation of the Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunals) Act, 1983."*

*Subsequent thereto the Citizenship Act, 1955 was amended and Section 6-A was introduced w.e.f. 7-12-1985. The relevant provisions of Section 6-A are being reproduced below:*

*"6-A. Special provisions as to citizenship of persons covered by the Assam Accord.—(1) For the purposes of this section—*

*(a) 'Assam' means the territories included in the State of Assam*

*immediately before the commencement of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 1985;*

- (b) 'detected to be a foreigner' means detected to be a foreigner in accordance with the provisions of the Foreigners Act, 1946 (31 of 1946) and the Foreigners (Tribunals) Order, 1964 by a Tribunal constituted under the said Order;*
- (c) 'specified territory' means the territories included in Bangladesh immediately before the commencement of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 1985;*
- (d) a person shall be deemed to be of Indian origin, if he, or either of his parents or any of his grandparents was born in undivided India;*
- (e) a person shall be deemed to have been detected to be a foreigner on the date on which a Tribunal constituted under the Foreigners (Tribunals) Order, 1964 submits its opinion to the effect that he is a foreigner to the officer or authority concerned.*

*(2) Subject to the provisions of sub-sections (6) and (7), all persons of Indian origin who came before the 1st day of January, 1966 to Assam from the specified territory (including such of those whose names were included in the electoral rolls used for the purposes of the General Election to the House of the People held in 1967) and who have been ordinarily resident in Assam since the dates of their entry into Assam shall be deemed to be citizens of India as from the 1st day of January, 1966.*

*(3) Subject to the provisions of sub-sections (6) and (7), every person of Indian origin who—*

- (a) came to Assam on or after the 1st day of January, 1966 but before the 25th day of March, 1971 from the specified territory; and*
- (b) has, since the date of his entry into Assam, been ordinarily resident in Assam; and*
- (c) has been detected to be a foreigner;*

*shall register himself in accordance with the rules made by the Central Government in this behalf under Section 18 with such authority (hereafter in this sub-section referred to as the registering authority) as may be specified in such rules and if his name is included in any electoral roll for any assembly or parliamentary constituency in force on the date of such detection, his name shall be deleted therefrom.*

*Explanation.—In the case of every person seeking registration under this sub-section, the opinion of the Tribunal constituted under the Foreigners (Tribunals) Order, 1964 holding such person to be a foreigner, shall be deemed to be sufficient proof of the requirement under clause (c) of this sub-section and if any question arises as to whether such person complies with any other requirement under this sub-section, the registering authority shall,*

- 
- (i) *if such opinion contains a finding with respect to such other requirement, decide the question in conformity with such finding;*
  - (ii) *if such opinion does not contain a finding with respect to such other requirement, refer the question to a Tribunal constituted under the said Order having jurisdiction in accordance with such rules as the Central Government may make in this behalf under Section 18 and decide the question in conformity with the opinion received on such reference.*
- (4) *A person registered under sub-section (3) shall have, as from the date on which he has been detected to be a foreigner and till the expiry of a period of ten years from that date, the same rights and obligations as a citizen of India [including the right to obtain a passport under the Passports Act, 1967 (15 of 1967) and the obligations connected therewith], but shall not be entitled to have his name included in any electoral roll for any assembly or parliamentary constituency at any time before the expiry of the said period of ten years.*
- (5) *A person registered under sub-section (3) shall be deemed to be a citizen of India for all purposes as from the date of expiry of a period of ten years from the date on which he has been detected to be a foreigner.*
- (6) *(Omitted as not relevant.)*
- (7) *Nothing in sub-sections (2) to (6) shall apply in relation to any person—*
- (a) *who, immediately before the commencement of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 1985, is a citizen of India;*
  - (b) *who was expelled from India before the commencement of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 1985, under the Foreigners Act, 1946 (31 of 1946).*
- (8) *Save as otherwise expressly provided in this section, the provisions of this section shall have effect notwithstanding anything contained in any other law for the time being in force."*

28. In the said decision of *Sarbananda Sonowal (supra)*, the Supreme Court of India has also equated the influx of illegal migrants into Assam as an external aggression. The correctness of the said observation is not in dispute. This can also be seen if one cares to visit the length and breadth of the State. Due to reasons, which can be answered by competent authorities, the illegal immigrants are seen to have been allowed to settle in non-cadastrally mapped

areas, alluvial soil (called *char* area in Assam), Govt. land, forest land, etc. Thus, there are no land records available regarding when the settlements of illegal migrants came into existence. Be that as it may, we may refer to the observations made by the Supreme Court of India in paragraph nos. 21 to 26, 32, 34, 46, 56, 59, 63 and 82 of the case of *Sarbananda Sonowal (supra)*, which have not been reiterated and/or replicated in this order to maintain brevity.

29. Thus, with the said factual background and law laid down by the Supreme Court of India, the Government has a duty to preserve the unity and integrity of the Country and as unabated influx from the specified territory of Bangladesh has been equated to an act of aggression, it may be stated that it is perhaps a wrong perception in a section of media report projecting that religious persecution is going on in the State of Assam, which appears to be an example of misinformation warfare being carried out against the Country in general and the State of Assam in particular.

30. In the aforesaid context, when the father of the petitioner is a declared foreign national, the Court is unable to hold that the said declared foreign national has suffered violation of any fundamental rights, including Articles 14, 16, 21, 22 and 39A of the Constitution of India. In this regard, reference may be made to the decision by the Supreme Court of India in the case of *Hans Muller of Nuremburg v. Superintendent, Presidency Jail, Calcutta & Ors., (1955) 1 SCC 167*. The said case was one under Section 3(1)(b) of the Preventive Detention Act, 1950. In that case, a German National was taken into preventive detention in order to make arrangements of his expulsion from India, which required satisfaction to be recorded by the competent authority under Section 3(1)(b) of the said Act. While deciding the issue, reference was made to

the provisions of the Foreigners Act, 1946, but it was not the subject matter of adjudication. It would be appropriate to quote paragraphs 34 to 37, 40 and 41 thereof hereinbelow: -

**34.** *Article 19 of the Constitution confers certain fundamental rights of freedom on the citizens of India, among them, the right "to move freely throughout the territory of India" and "to reside and settle in any part of India" subject only to laws that impose reasonable restrictions on the exercise of those rights in the interests of the general public or for the protection of the interests of any Scheduled Tribe. No corresponding rights are given to foreigners. All that is guaranteed to them is protection to life and liberty in accordance with the laws of the land. This is conferred by Art. 21 which is in the following terms:-*

*"No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law."*

**35.** *Entries 9, 10, 17, 18, and 19 in the Union List confer wide powers on the Centre to make laws about, among other things, admission into and expulsion from India, about extradition and aliens and about preventive detention connected with foreign affairs. Therefore, the right to make laws about the extradition of aliens and about their expulsion from the land is expressly conferred; also, it is to be observed that extradition and expulsion are contained in separate entries indicating that though they may overlap in certain aspects, they are different and distinct subjects. And that brings us to the Foreigners Act which deals, among other things, with expulsion and the Extradition Act which regulates extradition.*

**36.** *The Foreigners Act confers the point to expel foreigners from India. It would be the Central Government with absolute and unfettered discretion and, as there is no provision fettering this discretion in the Constitution, an unrestricted right to expel remains.*

**37.** *The law of extradition is quite different. Because of treaty obligations it confers a right on certain countries (not all) to ask that persons who are alleged to have committed certain specified offences on the territory or who have already been convicted of those offences by their courts, be handed over to them in custody for prosecution or punishment. But despite that the Government of India is not bound to comply with the request and has an absolute and unfettered discretion to refuse.*

\* \* \*

**39.** *The Extradition Act is really a special branch of the law of Criminal Procedure. It deals with criminals and those accused of certain crimes. The Foreigners Act is not directly concerned with criminals or crime though the fact that a foreigner has committed offences, or is suspected of that, may be a good ground for regarding him as undesirable. Therefore, under the Extradition Act warrants or summons must be issued; there must be a magisterial enquiry and*

*when there is an arrest it is penal in character; and- and this is the most important distinction of all - when the person to be extradited leaves India he does not leave the country a free man. The police in India hand him over to the police of the requisitioning State and he remains in custody throughout.*

**40.** *In the case of expulsion, no idea of punishment is involved, at any rate, in theory, and if a man is prepared to leave voluntarily he can ordinarily go as and when he pleases. But the right is not his. Under the Indian law, the matter is left to the unfettered discretion at the Union Government and that Government can prescribe the route and the port or place of departure and can place him on a particular ship or plane. [See Ss. 3(2)(b) and 6, Foreigners Act]. Whether the Captain of a foreign ship or plane can be compelled to take a passenger he does not want or to follow a particular route is a matter that does not arise and we express no opinion on it. But assuming that he is willing to do so, the right of the Government to make the order vis-à-vis the man expelled is absolute.*

**41.** *This may not be the law in all countries. Oppenheim, for example, says that in England, until December 1919, the British Government had*

*"no power to expel even the most dangerous alien without the recommendation of a court, or without an Act of Parliament making provision for such expulsion, except during war or on an occasion of imminent national danger or great emergency" (Oppenheim's International Law, Vol. I, 7<sup>th</sup> edition, page 631).*

*But that is immaterial, for the law in each country is different and we are concerned with the law as it obtains in our land. Here the matter of expulsion has to be viewed from three points of view: (1) does the Constitution permit the making of such a law? (2) does it place any limits on such laws? and (3) is there in fact any law on this topic in India and if so, what does it enact? We have already examined the law making power in this behalf and its scope, and as to the third question the law on this matter in India is embodied in the Foreigners Act which gives an unfettered right to the Union Government to expel. But there is this distinction. If the order is one of expulsion, as opposed to extradition, then the person expelled leaves India a free man.*

*It is true he may be apprehended the moment he leaves, by some other power and consequently, in some cases, this would be small consolation to him, but in most cases the distinction is substantial, for the right of a foreign power to arrest except in its own territory and on its own boats is not unlimited. But however that may be, so far as India is concerned, there must be an order of release if he is in preventive custody and though he may be conducted to the frontier under detention he must be permitted to leave a free man and cannot be handed over under arrest.*

31. Thus, the said decision of *Hans Muller of Nuremburg (supra)*, decided by the Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court of India, confirms and

reaffirms the absolute and unfettered power of the Government to order expulsion of a foreigner. In this case, Abdul Karim, the father of the petitioner is a "declared foreign national" and such declaration was made by the Foreigners Tribunal having jurisdiction.

32. It may be stated that in the rest of the Country, except the State of Assam, it is the Executive, who can order expulsion of a foreigner. However, in respect of persons who have entered into the territory of India (Assam) from the specified territory (which includes erstwhile East Pakistan before 25.03.1971 and Bangladesh, after 25.03.1971) are subjected to proceeding before the jurisdictional Foreigners Tribunal and thereafter, they are subjected to deportation and/or expulsion.

33. In light of the observations made in the case of *Sarbananda Sonowal (supra)* that Assam is facing external aggression and reference being made to the excerpts of "Eastern Pakistan; its population & economics", the book by pro-India leader Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, where it is observed, "*Because Eastern Pakistan must have sufficient land for its expansion and because Assam has abundant forests and mineral resources, coal, petroleum etc., Eastern Pakistan must include Assam to be financially and economically strong.*", the question would arise as to how can the Country deport a "declared foreign national", who has entered into Assam illegally after 25.03.1971, if the specified territory, i.e. the present Republic of Bangladesh refuses to acknowledge and/or admit that the proceedee as their subject and denies taking those persons into their Country. In the considered opinion of the Court, the State has unfettered power to cause expulsion of a declared foreign national. Therefore, in the event a "declared foreign national" cannot be expelled due to

any reason whatsoever, including the policy in force, then the only way open to the State would be to prevent a declared foreign national from getting employment, purchase land, marry Indian national, etc., perhaps by framing appropriate policy and/or by detaining such "declared foreign national" in the holding areas earmarked for the purpose. Accordingly, the act of the appropriate Government to keep in holding camps, a "declared foreign national" and/or "foreigner" as declared by a Foreigners Tribunal, cannot be faulted with or equated to arrest as is understood under Criminal Procedure Code and/or Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023, which confers certain procedural safeguards for citizens of India, who are arrested in connection with some criminal offence.

34. In this case, the father of the petitioner cannot be said to be facing deportation. Rather, the said declared foreign national is facing expulsion as an illegal migrant i.e. as a declared foreign national, who has entered into India (Assam) from a specified territory after the cut-off date of 25.03.1971. The said two terms, i.e. "deportation" and "expulsion", in the opinion of the Court, cannot be interchangeably used, as "deportation" is carried out for a person, whose entry into the Country was lawful, but his subsequent stay in the Country is illegal or unlawful, but the word "expulsion" is generally used for expelling an illegal migrant.

35. It appears that just because Abdul Karim, the declared foreign national has been able to stay in this Country for a long time even after reference was registered in the year 2007 and *ex parte* opinion was passed on 12.12.2012, he cannot be said to have any right that a citizen of this Country may have, against arbitrary arrest and expulsion from the Country.

36. It would be relevant to quote hereinbelow paragraph nos. 74 to 79 of the case of *Sarbananda Sonowal (supra)*:

**74.** *We consider it necessary here to briefly notice the law regarding deportation of aliens as there appears to be some misconception about it and it has been argued with some vehemence that aliens also possess several rights and the procedure for their identification and deportation should be detailed and elaborate in order to ensure fairness to them.*

**75.** *In Introduction to International Law by J.G. Starke (1st Indian re-print 1994) in Chapter 12 (page 348), the law on the points has been stated thus: -*

*"Most states claim in legal theory to exclude all aliens at will, affirming that such unqualified right is an essential attribute of sovereign government. The courts of Great Britain and the United States have laid it down that the right to exclude aliens at will is an incident of territorial sovereignty. Unless bound by an international treaty to the contrary, states are not subject to a duty under international law to admit aliens or any duty thereunder not to expel them. Nor does international law impose any duty as to the period of stay of an admitted alien."*

*Like the power to refuse admission this is regarded as an incident of the State's territorial sovereignty. International law does not prohibit the expulsion en masse of aliens. [Ed: In Introduction to International Law by J.G. Starke (1st Indian re-print 1994 (page 351)]. Reference has also been made to Article 13 of the International Covenant of 1966 on Civil and Political Rights which provides that an alien lawfully in the territory of a State party to the Covenant may be expelled only pursuant to a decision reached by law, and except where compelling reasons of national security otherwise require, is to be allowed to submit the reasons against his expulsion and to have his case reviewed by and to be represented for the purpose before the competent authority. It is important to note that this Covenant of 1966 would apply provided an alien is lawfully in India, namely, with valid passport, visa etc. and not to those who have entered illegally or unlawfully. Similar view has been expressed in Oppenheim's International Law (Ninth Edn. 1992 - in paragraphs 400, 401 and 413). The author has said that the reception of aliens is a matter of discretion, and every State is by reason of its territorial supremacy, competent to exclude aliens from the whole or any part of its territory. In paragraph 413 it is said that the right of States to expel aliens is generally recognized. It matters not whether the alien is only on a temporary visit, or has settled down for professional business or any other purposes on its territory, having established his domicile there. A belligerent may consider it convenient to expel all hostile nationals residing or temporarily staying within its territory; although such a measure may be very harsh on individual aliens, it is generally accepted that such expulsion is justifiable. Having regard to Article 13 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966, an alien lawfully in a State's territory may be expelled only in pursuance of a decision reached in*

*accordance with law.*

**76.** *In R. v. Bottrill, (1947) 1 K.B. 41: [1946] 2 All E.R. 434, it was said that the King under the Constitution of United Kingdom is under no obligation to admit into the country or to retain there when admitted, any alien. Every alien in the United Kingdom is there only because his presence has been licensed by the King. It follows that at common law the King can at will withdraw his license and cause the Executive to expel the alien, whether enemy or friend. For holding so reliance was placed on Attorney-General for Canada v. Cain, [1906] AC 542, where Lord Atkinson said: -*

*"One of the rights possessed by the Supreme power in every state is the right to refuse to permit an alien to enter that state, to annex what conditions it pleases to the permission to enter it, and to expel or deport from the state, at pleasure, even a friendly alien, especially if it considers his presence in the state opposed to its peace, order, and good government, or to its social or material interests."*

*In Chae Chan Ping v. United States, 1930 U.S. 581, the United States Supreme Court held:*

*"The power of exclusion of foreigners being an incident of sovereignty belonging to the Government of the United States, as a part of those sovereign powers delegated by the Constitution, the right to its exercise at any time when, in the judgment of the Government, the interests of the country require it, cannot be granted away or restrained on behalf of anyone. The powers of Government are delegated in trust to the United States, and are incapable of transfer to any other parties. They cannot be abandoned or surrendered. Nor can their exercise be hampered, when needed for the public good, by any considerations of private interest. The exercise of these public trusts is not the subject of barter or contract."*

*This principle was reiterated in Fong Yue Ting v. United States, 149 U.S. 698, where the court ruled: -*

*"The government of each state has always the right to compel foreigners who are found within its territory to go away, by having them taken to the frontier. This right is based on the fact that, the foreigner not making part of the nation, his individual reception into the territory is matter of pure permission, of simple tolerance, and creates no obligation. The exercise of this right may be subjected, doubtless, to certain forms by the domestic laws of each country; but the right exists none the less, universally recognized and put in force. The order of deportation is not a punishment for crime. It is not a banishment, in the sense in which that word is often applied to the expulsion of a citizen from his country by way of punishment. It is but a method of enforcing the return to his own country of an alien who has not complied with the conditions upon the performance of which the government of the nation, acting within its constitutional authority and through the proper departments, has determined that his continuing to reside here shall depend.*

*He has not, therefore, been deprived of life, liberty or property, without due process of law; and the provisions of the Constitution, securing the right of trial by jury, and prohibiting unreasonable searches and seizures, and cruel and unusual punishments, have no application."*

**77.** *In Nishimura Ekiu v. United States, 142 US 652, it was adjudged that, although Congress might, if it saw fit, authorize the courts to investigate and ascertain the facts upon which the alien's right to land was made by the statutes to depend, yet Congress might entrust the final determination of those facts to an executive officer, and that, if it did so, his order was due process of law and no other tribunal, unless expressly authorized by law to do so, was at liberty to re-examine the evidence on which he acted, or to controvert its sufficiency. Thus according to United States Supreme Court the determination of rights of an alien even by Executive will be in compliance of due process of law.*

**78.** *In Louis De Raedt v. Union of India, (1991) 2 SCC 554, the two foreign nationals engaged in missionary work had come to India in 1937 and 1948 respectively with proper documents like passport and visa etc. and were continuously living here but by the order dated 8th July, 1987 their prayer for further extension of the period of stay was rejected and they were asked to leave the country by 31-7-1987. They then challenged the order by filing a writ petition. This Court held that the power of the Government of India to expel foreigners is absolute and unlimited and there is no provision in the Constitution fettering its discretion and the executive government has unrestricted right to expel a foreigner. So far as right to be heard is concerned, there cannot be any hard and fast rule about the manner in which a person concerned has to be given an opportunity to place his case.*

**79.** *In State of Arunachal Pradesh v. Khudiram Chakma, 1994 Supp (1) SCC 615, following Louis De Raedt, (1991) 3 SCC 554, it was held that the fundamental right of a foreigner is confined to Article 21 for life and liberty and does not include the right to reside and stay in this country, as mentioned in Article 19(1)(e), which is applicable only to the citizens of the country. After referring to some well-known and authoritative books on international law it was observed that the persons who reside in the territories of countries of which they are not nationals, possess a special status under international law. States reserve the right to expel them from their territory and to refuse to grant them certain rights which are enjoyed by their own nationals like right to vote, hold public office or to engage in political activities. Aliens may be debarred from joining the civil services or certain profession or from owning some properties and the State may place them under restrictions in the interest of national security or public order. Nevertheless, once lawfully admitted to a territory, they are entitled to certain immediate rights necessary to the enjoyment of ordinary private life. Thus, the Bangladeshi nationals who have illegally crossed the border and have trespassed into Assam or are living in other parts of the country have no legal right of any kind to remain in India and they are liable to be deported.* (emphasis supplied by us)

37. When the issue of unabated influx from the specified territory i.e. Bangladesh, is leading to demographic changes in the State of Assam, which may not be seriously impacting or affecting the rest of the Country, but is leading to widespread civil discontent in the State of Assam, it would not be permissible for constitutional safeguards that are available for the "citizens" of the Country to be extended to a "declared foreign national" like the father of the petitioner.

38. Even the United States of America, one of the developed Countries, is starting to feel the pinch of illegal immigrants and the nature of steps taken by it are in the public domain, on which the Court does not comment. The point is that the petitioner has knowledge from certified copy of *ex parte* opinion dated 12.12.2012, obtained on 02.05.2016, that her father is a declared foreign national, yet the petitioner has not pleaded in the writ petition why and for what purpose, she expects the constitutional rights and safeguards, reserved for citizens of the Country to be extended to a "declared foreign national", against whom expulsion order dated 26.12.2025, from the Country, has been passed. If any such rights are ordered or reserved, in the opinion of the Court, it would amount to giving special premium and protection to a declared foreign national, which is not envisaged in the Constitution of India, or laws framed thereunder, i.e. Foreigners Act, 1946 and Immigration (Expulsion from Assam) Act, 1950.

39. Therefore, even if the father of the petitioner is again found in the Country, even after being expelled, nothing would prevent the State to take appropriate action against the said declared foreign national; to take fresh steps for his expulsion from the Country; and to keep him in special camps till he is

expelled to prevent him from roaming freely in the Country.

40. The Court is unable to accept that any legal and fundamental right of the petitioner or Abdul Karim, a declared foreign national, purportedly under Articles 14, 16, 18, 21, 22 of the Constitution of India, has been violated. As laid down in the case of *Sarbananda Sonowal (supra)*, Abdul Karim, the said declared foreign national is not found to have any fundamental right in India to move freely or to reside at any place of his choice or to carry out any vocation, trade or calling. What is guaranteed under the Constitution of India and would be available even to a declared foreign national, is the right to life, without any right to move freely within the Country, or to reside at any particular place of choice, or to carry out any vocation, trade or calling as the declared foreign national may so desire.

41. Thus, in light of the discussions above, the Court is inclined to hold that on expulsion of Abdul Karim, pursuant to the *ex parte* opinion dated 12.12.2012, and the expulsion order dated 26.12.2025, no fundamental right of the petitioner or of Abdul Karim has been infringed. The point of determination no. (iii), is accordingly, answered in the negative and against the petitioner.

*Point of determination no. 4:*

42. In considering the point as to whether or not the petitioner is entitled to any relief including interim relief, the Court is of the considered opinion that no fundamental right of the petitioner, namely, Suktara Begum is found to have been infringed. Moreover, as the father of the petitioner, namely, Abdul Karim, has been declared as a foreigner (i.e. illegal migrant), vide the impugned *ex parte* opinion dated 12.12.2012, against which he had slept over till his expulsion, any right that he might have to assail the *ex parte* opinion

dated 12.12.2012, is lost due to delay and laches of 13 years 3 months, 7 days.

43. Thus, neither the petitioner, Suktara Begum, nor her father, namely, Abdul Karim, is entitled to any relief. In light of the impugned *ex parte* opinion dated 12.12.2012, Abdul Karim, having been admittedly expelled from the Country, he is not found entitled to any relief whatsoever.

44. As the extraordinary delay of 13 years 3 months, 7 days, from the date of *ex parte* opinion i.e. 12.12.2012, till 19.03.2026, the date when this writ petition is filed, has not been properly explained, on the ground of delay and laches alone, this writ petition is held to be not maintainable. Thus, the challenge fails.

45. The declared foreign national, Abdul Karim, had obtained the certified copy of the impugned opinion on 02.05.2016, is deemed to have waived his right to assail the said *ex parte* opinion dated 12.12.2012, having full knowledge that he was declared to be a foreigner.

46. Moreover, after having been admittedly expelled, the *ex parte* opinion dated 12.12.2012, has been executed. Thus, after it has been acted upon and executed by expulsion of Abdul Karim, the present writ petition has to fail.

47. It may be mentioned that the learned counsel for the petitioner had made an attempt to refer to certain documents annexed to this writ petition to show that the proceedee, Abdul Karim was not a foreigner. It was submitted that the petitioner has all the documents to prove that he is an Indian citizen. In the said context, this Court is reminded of the fact that this Court is exercising certiorari jurisdiction and thus, cannot act as a Court of original jurisdiction so as to convert itself into a Foreigners Tribunals and start examining and appreciating

the documents annexed to the writ petition, which were hitherto not presented before the learned Foreigners Tribunal. This Court is not exercising appellate jurisdiction. The petitioner has failed to show that the impugned opinion is vitiated by any error apparent on the face of the record. Accordingly, the Court is of the considered opinion that in exercise of certiorari jurisdiction under Article 226 of the Constitution of India, the High Court ought not to substitute its view over the opinion of the learned Foreigners Tribunal, which is not found to be vitiated by any error whatsoever. If one needs any authority on the point, the decision of the Supreme Court of India, in the case of *Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences v. Bikartan Das, 2023 INSC 733: (2023) 0 Supreme(SC) 763*, may be referred to. Paragraph 77 thereof is quoted below:-

*77. The purpose of certiorari, as we understand, is only to confine the inferior tribunals within their jurisdiction, so as to avoid the irregular exercise, or the non-exercise or the illegal assumption of it and not to correct errors of finding of fact or interpretation of law committed by them in the exercise of powers vested in them under the statute. The accepted rule is that where a Court has jurisdiction it has a right to decide every question which crops up in the case and whether its decision is correct or otherwise, it is bound to stand until reversed by a competent Court. This Court in G. Veerappa Pillai v. Messrs Raman and Raman Ltd. Kumbakonam, Tanjore District and Others, (1952) 1 SCC 334 observed:*

*"26. Such writs as are referred to in Article 226 are obviously intended to enable the High Court to issue them in grave cases where the subordinate tribunals or bodies or officers act wholly without jurisdiction, or in excess of it, or in violation of the principles of natural justice, or refuse to exercise a jurisdiction vested in them, or there is an error apparent on the face of the record, and such act, omission, error, or excess has resulted in manifest injustice. However extensive the jurisdiction may be, it seems to us that it is not so wide or large as to enable the High Court to convert itself into a court of appeal and examine for itself the correctness of the decision impugned and decide what is the proper view to be taken or the order to be made."*

48. In this case, the stand of the petitioner is that her father was

taken into custody after the expulsion order was passed on 26.05.2025. The learned counsel for the petitioner could not show as to which fundamental right of the petitioner would be violated if the *ex parte* opinion is not set aside. Rather, it is the interest of the Country which would suffer if Abdul Karim, the father of the petitioner, who has been declared as illegal migrant, is allowed to defeat the process of expulsion of detected illegal foreigners/ migrants, by allowing such illegal migrants endless time to assail the *ex parte* opinion passed by the learned Tribunals.

49. By showering sympathy in this particular case, this Court would be encouraging unscrupulous practice of not appearing before Courts and Tribunals, despite notice being duly served on the proceedee.

50. The Court is of the considered opinion that if such belated petitions are entertained after 13 years, 3 months, 7 days, all delays, irrespective of the number of days, will have to be condoned at the drop of the hat. It would also render the provisions of Order 3(8) and Order 3(14) of the Foreigners (Tribunals) Order, 1964, otiose, redundant or meaningless. In the process, external aggression, as held in the case of *Sarbananda Sonowal (supra)*, would be encouraged.

51. Thus, the challenge to the impugned *ex parte* opinion dated 12.12.2012, passed by the learned Member, Foreigners Tribunal, Hojai, Sankardev Nagar, in Case No. FT/H/1006/2007- *State v. Abdul Karim*, by which Abdul Karim, the petitioner's father was declared to be a foreigner who has entered into India illegally from Bangladesh after 25.03.1971, fails. The consequences of the said opinion shall follow.

52. The point of determination no. (iv) is accordingly, answered in

the negative and against the petitioner by holding that she and her father, namely, Abdul Karim, a declared foreigner national, are both not entitled to any relief.

53. Consequently, this writ petition is dismissed at the "motion stage" without issuing notice upon the respondents.

54. There shall be no order as to cost.

55. The learned standing counsel for the FT, Border matters and NRC shall communicate a downloaded copy of this order to the Home and Political (B) Department, so as to send a copy of this order to be made a part of the record of the learned Foreigners Tribunal for future reference.

**JUDGE**

**JUDGE**

**Comparing Assistant**