

The Assam Tribune, 28/Dec/1981

Encroachment On Govt Land Near Sualkuchi

By A Staff Reporter

GUWAHATI Dec 27—At a time when the people of Assam have been agitating for saving the State from being swamped by lakhs of foreign nationals there has been a systematic attempt to encroach upon Government land near Sualkuchi a prosperous village famous for Silk handloom industry.

According to a report received here, a big gathering of people of Bangladesh origin tried to encroach upon the Ahotbori reserve forest some months ago but they could not do so due to stiff opposition by the people of Sualkuchi. Those people are now said to have been trying to occupy land near Phulbari hills. The encroachers reportedly being instigated to occupy government land by a section of the people known to be opposed to the agitation by the people of the State.

This insidious attempt by the anti-movement elements

to grab land in and around Sualkuchi has already been condemned. The attention has also been drawn of the Government to the possible reactions of land grab in the area. The report received here has pointed out that an extensive area of Sualkuchi extending from Bamun Sualkuchi to Keotpara is being eroded by the Brahmaputra. Every year in the past families rendered homeless due to erosion prayed land for rehabilitation in Phulbari Hills. But the Government did not allow any people to be rehabilitated in Phulbari lands. Public opinion in Sualkuchi is that none should be allowed to encroach upon Government land in and around Sualkuchi in view of the fact the Sualkuchi is one of the most densely populated villages in Assam situated on the bank of the Brahmaputra and highly susceptible to ero-

sion. Besides land may be necessary for the expansion of mulberry and other cultivation for expansion of the silk industry. The people of Sualkuchi have been requesting the Government to protect the Ahotbori and Phulbari lands to meet any situation caused by the Brahmaputra. Besides there has been a large number of families awaiting rehabilitation. If those lands are at all to be distributed the case of erosion affected people should get preference. But in no case the present set of people who are trying to grab those lands should be allowed to do so. This is the common feeling of the people of Sualkuchi.

The report further indicated that red flags are being raised on Phulbari lands by the encroachers indicating that the grab is complete. The people have expressed their serious concern at the illegal action of the anti-movement elements.