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## Assam Students Protest Immigration Case Withdrawals

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Tensions have escalated in Assam after the All-Assam Students' Union (AASU) launched protests against a recent state government directive calling for the withdrawal of Foreigners Tribunal cases involving Hindu immigrants from Bangladesh. Demonstrations took place in Guwahati and several other districts, reflecting growing public concern over the potential impact on the region's demography and indigenous identity.

The state's decision, revealed through internal communications, reportedly instructs district commissioners and police officials to review and potentially drop cases against individuals eligible for citizenship under the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), 2019. The directive primarily concerns Hindu migrants from Bangladesh who entered India before December 31, 2014.

AASU, a prominent and influential student body in Assam, condemned the move as unconstitutional and warned that it threatens the fragile ethnic balance in the state. Leaders of the organization argue that withdrawing tribunal cases undermines the Assam Accord of 1985, which set March 24, 1971, as the cut-off date for detecting and deporting illegal immigrants, regardless of religion.

Protesters marched through the streets carrying banners and shouting slogans, demanding that the government reverse the directive. They also called for transparency regarding the number of tribunal cases being considered for withdrawal and clarity on how the process aligns with existing legal frameworks.

This is not just about legal procedures, this is about protecting the identity, culture, and future of the indigenous people of Assam, said AASU Chief Advisor Samujjal Bhattacharya, who also accused the government of prioritizing political gains over constitutional obligations.

Assam has long been sensitive to issues of migration, particularly from neighboring Bangladesh. Waves of immigration over the decades have led to tensions between communities, often surfacing in elections, census exercises, and NRC (National Register of Citizens) updates.

While the state government has yet to issue a public statement defending the directive, officials close to the administration argue that it is consistent with the CAA's mandate to protect persecuted minorities from neighboring countries. However, this argument has failed to assuage local fears, particularly among groups that view the directive as a move to dilute Assamese identity and push a religiously motivated citizenship agenda.

Several regional political parties, including the Assam Jatiya Parishad (AJP), have also voiced their opposition. AJP leaders stated that the government's actions threaten to reopen wounds that have barely healed since the NRC debates and called for an all-party discussion to address the situation.

Legal experts are divided on the issue. Some argue that the withdrawal of tribunal cases without due process could face challenges in court, especially if it bypasses existing legal mechanisms established under the Foreigners Act and the NRC framework.

As protests continue across Assam, the issue is likely to dominate political discourse in the coming weeks. With student unions, opposition parties, and legal advocates raising alarms, the government faces mounting pressure to provide clear legal justification for its directive while managing the growing unrest in the state.