

BORDER INSECURITY

Peace remains an elusive goal in the downward spiral of the Naga talks. Over the last few weeks, two parallel strands of fruitless action have been unravelling towards further confusion and miscommunication. First, the continued violence in Nagaland and neighbouring states — an ambush on a police patrol in Assam killing 10 policemen last month, then two episodes in three days of “unprovoked firing” on army and security personnel in Nagaland. The condition of the ceasefire is getting frayed. Second, the recent talks between the Centre and the chief ministers of Nagaland’s neighbouring states have generated sharp differences and organized protests against the Centre’s equivocation regarding the territorial extension of the ceasefire with the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (Isak-Muivah). The nature and implications of the second set of developments are worth pondering, particularly in its unfortunate effect on the Naga peace talks.

The Centre’s usual lack of interest, insight and decisive action in this matter has now given way to an enigmatic and dangerous fudging of crucial distinctions. The Centre itself seems to be internally divided on the issue, with the prime minister’s office and the ministry of home affairs sending out conflicting and confusing signals. The NSCN(I-M) seemed to think that the recent talks in Bangkok had assured them the extension of the ceasefire to all Naga-dominated areas, thus meeting a long and violently reiterated demand. The Centre concedes to have relented somewhat — it’s all quite vague — but on one absurd condition. The territorial extension of the ceasefire should not be construed by the NSCN(I-M) as a concession to the idea of a “greater Nagaland” or Nagalim. This does not allow the secessionists to have their cake, but lets them eat it. And, quite rightly, the chief ministers of Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh feel deeply compromised by this curious double-speak. They feel that their territorial integrity could be quite profoundly threatened by such a move, as significant bits of their states could be chewed off and made part of the Nagalim composite. The resulting complications could be endless. Not only would this set up an infinite regress in relations between identity and territory, threatening the entire federal topography of the nation, but this would also encourage the various other secessionist movements in the Northeast. All three parties to the peace negotiations — the Nagaland chief minister, Mr S.C. Jamir, the Centre and the NSCN(I-M) — have got caught up in this new tangle. The consequent breakdown of trust and clarity in the tripartite talks and the sectioning of Nagaland by its neighbours could only mean that any possibility of a resolution of this enervating impasse has receded further into a murkier distance.

THE TELEGRAPH

4 OCT 2000

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18 Planet-Sized Gas Balls Found In Distant Galaxy

ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON, Oct. 6. — Eighteen planet-sized gas balls, wandering free and unattached to any star, have been found in a star field some 1,200 light years away.

Astronomer Maria Rosa Zapatero Osorio of California Institute of Technology said it was the largest collection of isolated, free-floating planet-like objects ever found and astronomers are at a loss just what to call them.

"There is a problem of nomenclature," said Ms Zapatero, the first author of a study appearing in the journal Science.

She said the objects are not like traditional planets, which are bound by gravity to a central star such as the sun. And they are too small to be brown dwarfs, an object much smaller than a star, but bigger than a planet.

For now, she is calling them "planetary mass objects".

Other astronomy teams have found a total of about 50 planets outside the solar system, but all those were in orbit of central stars.

"The formation of young, free-floating planetary-mass objects like these are difficult to explain by our current models of how planets form," said Ms Osorio.

Planets in the solar system, such as the earth, are thought to have evolved from debris left after the formation of the sun. Planets formed in this way would be gravitationally locked into an orbit of a central star.

But both Gore and Bush lack something

SOME day the United States might regret having limited its presidency to a maximum of two terms for an individual. Neither of the two current contenders, Bush and Gore, come up to scratch compared to Bill Clinton, who combined vision with a subtle and sure grasp of policy issues and the ability to captivate an audience. Clinton took over recession-hit America and turned it into an economy that grows at five per cent annually, a clip that is the envy of Europe and Japan. Additionally, he has cut unemployment and crime and made women and minorities feel included, leaving America a more decent place than it was when he took over. Between Bush and Gore, Gore scores better on policy issues, but appears wooden and impersonal and lacks charisma. He now ties at dead heat with Bush in opinion polls, which is why televised verbal jousts between them assume importance.

Gore could pronounce the names of Milosevic and his rival Kostunica with a kind of pedantic accuracy, while Bush said vaguely "it's time for the man to go" a couple of times by way of reference to Yugoslav affairs. This cameo can sum up the difference between the two — while Gore can appear intimidatingly professorial, Bush is fuzzy in an affable sort of way, somebody one might like to have as an uncle, not as president. Bush has an additional problem, analogous to that of the BJP leadership in India — he appears a prisoner of the Christian Coalition, a powerful lobbying group comparable to the sangh parivar. He spoke in the debate about protecting the lives of all Americans including "unborn" ones, linking his campaign to the anti-abortion platform. Women, a powerful vote bloc in the US, prefer Gore way above Bush, as the latter has often appeared to be in favour of curtailing their right to obtain an abortion. Gore keeps hammering away at two issues women hold dear, education and health, while Bush would rather gift \$1.3 trillion from the budget surplus in tax cuts. Incidentally, Gore's approach suggests a way out of the sterile free market vs state debate now current in India. Intervention by government should aim at ensuring education for every Indian, as well as nutrition, potable water and primary health care; the rest should be left to individuals. Equality of opportunity is always a more attainable ideal than equality of results.

NOW THE SCRIPT

Setback to the Bodo homeland movement

THERE never was unity among Bodo leaders. The Udaychal agitation in the late 1960s fizzled out because of rivalry. The Bodo Accord of February 1997 could not be fully implemented because of a personality clash between interim Bodo Autonomous Council chief SK Bwiswamutuary and his deputy Premsing Brahma. The Asom Gana Parishad's return to power saw the reconstitution of the BAC with members from the People's Democratic Front, which supported the Mahanta government, marginalising the agitation leaders. But the party split, with one group running the show and the other trying to make common cause with the All Bodo Students' Union and the Bodo People's Action Committee for a separate state within Assam. Bodo leaders now feel the accord was "politically conspired" and did not meet the tribals' aspiration. It is clear that unless the leadership issue is settled, peace, unity, integrity and all-round development will remain elusive. New Delhi's declaration of a cease-fire with the militant Bodo Liberation Tigers cannot improve the situation.

It is not surprising that differences over the use of a language script is turning one against the other. The killing in August of the Bodo Sahitya Sammelan president B Brahma by National Democratic Front of Boroland militants will set the clock back. Although adoption of the Devnagri script in February by the Sabha was said to be "final", this was not by consensus. Curiously, it was the Sabha which had launched a mass movement for adoption of the Roman script, possibly because there are many Christians among NDFB (formerly Bodo Security Force) supporters. Its potential for mischief cannot be ignored as it has links with the NSCN-IM and Ulfa. Both the Bodo leaders and the Centre must redefine their objectives to restore peace in the region.

ICSSR to study North-East problems

Apratim Mukarji
New Delhi, October 11

IN A bid to accelerate the integration of North-East with the rest of the country, the Human Resource Development (HRD) Ministry has initiated a sustained campaign to study, analyse and bring to the fore the aspirations and problems of the troubled region.

HRD Minister Dr Murli Manohar Joshi has directed the Indian Council for Social Science Research (ICSSR) to launch a campaign to highlight the socio-

economic, political and strategic importance of the North-East in the overall development of the country. While the Guwahati centre of the ICSSR will be the hub of the campaign, the resident commissioners of the state governments in New Delhi have been asked to act in close collaboration with the Council's headquarters.

The Minister's move is being seen as part of the Vajpayee Government's strategy of addressing the grievances of the border states, many of which are facing insurgency.

While Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab received all sorts of attention and assistance, the North-East has remained largely outside New Delhi's overt concerns, barring the single-minded anti-insurgency approach and an occasional disjointed financial largesse.

The move should facilitate an intellectual and strictly scientific approach to understand in depth the problems and grievances of the highly diverse demography of the seven states. It will look into their socio-economic and developmental potentials and inform the

Centre regarding an effective programme of integration.

According to social scientists, the blame for exploitation of the ethnic differences mostly lies with the policy-makers in New Delhi. The scars, most of which are the result of years of neglect, misunderstanding and corruption, have to be taken care of, especially in view of hostile external forces. The HRD Ministry move, hopefully, will pave the way for a better informed, and therefore, a wiser Centre, adequately equipped to deal with the aspirations of the North-East.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

12 OCT 2000

Whose rights do we speak of anyway?

GUEST COLUMN



SANJOY HAZARIKA

COMMUNAL KILLINGS IN THE NORTH EAST BY EXTREMISTS DO NOT REPRESENT POPULAR FEELINGS

DURING THE recent celebrations of Human Rights Day, the focus was on State violations of human rights. Indeed, this approach has been appropriate for it is the State and its various agencies and representatives, in uniform or without it, which have been the dominant violator of the fundamental rights of people in this country — to life, liberty, security, freedom from want, fear and harassment.

The experience of India's North East has been little different. Indeed, it can be argued that of all the regions of India which have suffered at the hands of the security forces, it is this tragically beautiful area which has been hurt the most: first, the Nagas, then the Mizos and more recently Manipuris (both hill and plains folk) as well as Assam and Tripura. Kashmir and Punjab came very late onto the stage, more than 30 years after the first shots were fired in Nagaland seeking independence from India and the first of the security raids against what the media unthinkingly called "hostiles". That military campaign over the years has destroyed entire villages, uprooted communities and embittered generations. Today, thankfully, there are some changes for the better in Nagaland where a fragile but important ceasefire has held, despite many ups and downs over the past three years.

Friends from Punjab and Kashmir complain about human rights violations these days — or in recent years. Where were you when the people of the Naga Hills, of the Mizo Hills, of Manipur were being brutalised and terrorised? You were silent and ignorant, disinterested in something that was happening over 1,000 kilo-

17/12
17/12
meters away and which did not affect your daily lives, your prosperity or your comfortable existences. You were no different from the rest of India. Well, now that the hatred and violence are at your doorstep, nay inside your homes, (although conditions have changed dramatically in Punjab) you are suddenly more concerned about "human rights violations"!

sions such as that in Manipur and the National Human Rights Commission as well as different state high courts and the Supreme Court have also played significant roles.

Yet, when individual and community rights were devastated by security forces from the 1950s until the late 1970s, there were virtually no human rights groups worth the name to



What about the rights of the Marwaris and Biharis living in Assam?

That these days there are some checks on security forces in the North East is due in no small measure to the crusading efforts of activist lawyers and various human rights groups within and without the region. Those who figure on this roll call of honour include Nandita Haksar, who battled for the rights of the Nagas in the famous Oinam case of Manipur in the mid-1980s, when the security forces unleashed a reign of terror on villagers there; local activist groups such as the Naga Mothers' Association, the Mera Paibis (women rights groups in the Manipur Valley), the Naga Peoples' Movement for Human Rights and its various chapters, as well as MASS in Assam; journalists and groups such as the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL), the Other Media and the South Asian Human Rights and Documentation Centre (SAHRDOC). Various human rights commis-

sions such as that in Manipur and the National Human Rights Commission as well as different state high courts and the Supreme Court have also played significant roles. It was left to Amnesty International to do some documentation, however flawed, of those difficult and bloody days. Thus, the organised human rights campaign in India remains relatively young, still on the learning curve, although it has done commendable work already.

Indeed, anti-rights legislation still exist, such as the Armed Forces Special Powers Act which authorise security personnel to search and arrest without warrants and even shoot to kill without being questioned. But understanding of rights and the ability to challenge those who violate these provisions are now the weapons of the campaigners.

These days, human rights campaigners in the North East must look honestly and fearlessly at a threat which has existed for some time but only in recent years has come violently into the open.

Over the years, extortion (which some groups in Nagaland refer to as "tax collections"), ethnic killings, political slayings, kidnappings for ransom and now cold-blooded massacres have become identified with different militant factions in the region. Those who claim to fight and speak "on behalf of the people" — be they insurgents, militants, political parties or student activists and human rights campaigners — must check what the people have to say about them.

Such groups have, too often, turned against people. How else would you describe Nagaland militants who walk into the home of a car dealer and demand vehicles for their use, without paying a paisa? How would you define surrendered militants who grab building contracts at the expense of others because they have weapons and political clout? We are not speaking here of the reasons why some groups turned against India. Those are historic issues and need much explanation and understanding. We are asking here why they are terrorising the people of the very region, their own people.

The latest in the series of human rights violations has been the slaughter of Hindi speakers in western and upper Assam. Sunpura, which is the site of the major killings, is a backward region without electricity, drinking water, health facilities, good schools or decent roads. I was part of a small television team filming the Brahmaputra river when we visited it a year ago. There are many old Marwari families who have settled over a century ago and live in this neighbourhood under difficult conditions.

Such murders are aimed at triggering reprisals in other parts of the country, showing up the state government's 'failure' in the run up to assembly elections next year. The United Liberation Front of Asom, with its camps in Bhutan and top leaders in Bangladesh, remains a

force capable of vicious strikes. The pattern of killings is similar to those in the Punjab or the 1980s and in Kashmir of the 1990s and most recently in Chittisingpora, when specific communities were targeted. Those were ascribed to the Inter Services' Intelligence agency of Pakistan. One does not know if this agency does have a role in the latest killings in Assam, but the pattern is too similar for comfort.

The latest killings must be unequivocally condemned by all, especially human rights campaigners, without taking recourse to ifs and buts. Human rights can only have meaning when — spanning political differences — civil society opposes those who commit offences against human life, whether they are part of the State apparatus or those opposed to the State.

(Sanjoy Hazarika is with the Centre for Policy Research)

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

17 DEC 2000

Naga rebels revive China arms links

FROM CHANDAN NANDY

New Delhi, Oct. 9. Two months after the Centre ended the ceasefire with the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isak-Muivah), the government is receiving news that the outlawed insurgent outfit has revived clandestine contacts with China.

It is widely believed in government circles that covert contacts between the Chinese and the NSCN(I-M) were severed in the Eighties.

However, according to a recent intelligence input, the NSCN(I-M) has sent its main arms procurer Anthony Shimray to Kunming province in China to strike a deal for a "major" arms consignment that security agencies fear is to be smuggled into the Northeast.

Shimray was detained by the Thai police along with NSCN(I-M) general secretary Thuingaleng Muivah in Bangkok in January this year for entering the country with forged travel documents.

Both Muivah and Shimray had flown into Bangkok from Karachi where, Indian authorities suspect, they had gone to procure arms and ammunition.

The report says Shimray is "pressuring" the Chinese authorities in Kunming to urge the Kachin Independence Army

(KIA), a Myanmarese guerrilla group, to allow the arms cache through Kachin territory.

The KIA, the military wing of the Kachin Independence Organisation, is among the insurgent organisations in Myanmar which entered into a truce with the military junta in Yangon a few years ago following the death of its charismatic leader Bran Seng. For New Delhi, the KIA, was a bulwark against the NSCN(I-M) in the early eighties before Bran Seng's death.

Security forces in the Northeast are believed to found that about 70 armed cadre of the NSCN(I-M) have been sent to Tirap and Changlang, two districts in Arunachal Pradesh on the border with Myanmar.

Sources said they are expected to "escort" the arms consignment into Arunachal Pradesh from where it will be channelised to NSCN(I-M) bases in Nagaland and other parts of the Northeast.

Government officials are in a tizzy over the intelligence report. A large quantity of weapons is likely to be smuggled into India and may be used against the security forces and tribes in Nagaland.

"This itself would be a violation of the agreed ground rules between the Centre and the NSCN(I-M)," a senior official said.

THE TELEGRAPH

10 OCT 2000

Muivah's ISI links threaten Naga peace

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, Oct. 15. — Judging by the current status of dialogue with the NSCN-IM over extension of the ceasefire outside the state and a key militant leader's overtures to Pakistan's ISI, uncertainty looms over the three-year-old peace talks.

The government, which began formal negotiations with the group in 1997, is perturbed over NSCN-IM leader Mr Thuingaleng Muivah's "continued nexus" with the ISI, reports about which surfaced earlier this year.

Mr Muivah, according to official sources, is said to have visited Karachi in January and held discussions with the ISI's commander Lt Gen Usmani, who oversees the Intelligence agency's covert operation in the North-east.

The NSCN-IM general secretary was caught by Thai police at Bangkok on arrival from Karachi on a "fake" passport. He was recently released by a Thai court on bail.

According to sources, the government is now analysing certain reports suggesting that Mr Muivah's passport, visa and air tickets were arranged by one 'Pak agency', a Bangkok-based tourist operator run by one Mr Rafique Khan.

Interestingly, the Centre's pessimism about the fate of the talks is readily shared by the Nagaland government as well.

Taking a cue from the Naga rebel leader's continued attack on the government charging it with not being "sincere" to resolve the five-decade-old Naga problem, Nagaland chief minister Mr SC Jamir recently asked, "Does consolidation of arms and cadre strength during the ceasefire period or visiting Pakistan reflect sincerity" on part of the NSCN-IM leaders?

The talks with the NSCN-IM started during the PV Narasimha Rao regime and continued under both the United Front governments. During Mr IK Gujral's stint as the Prime Minister, the Centre announced a ceasefire for three months from August 1997 and periodically extended it.

Officials are now keeping their fingers crossed over the prospect of the ongoing talks following the militant group's charge that the Vajpayee government had "deliberately backtracked" on the original condition of ceasefire.

In a recent television interview in Bangkok after his release Mr Muivah said, "Three years after its declaration, the government is now raising the question that the ceasefire does not include

Naga-inhabited areas except the so-called Nagaland state. This is a new line, that was not our understanding".

"So deliberate backtracking is there," he had charged.

Apparently referring to the government's move to broaden the scope of dialogue by including other Naga militant groups, Mr Muivah also said, "If you say that you will talk to us, then you have to honour it. Apart from that, if you take the initiative to talk with anyone else we will not be a party to that".

In fact the issue of extension of ceasefire outside Nagaland and including the NSCN (Khaplang) in the peace parleys has caught the government on a wrong footing, with the BJP leadership facing problems in enlisting support of the governments of Assam, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh to extend the ceasefire.

Prime Minister Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee himself recently convened a meeting of chief ministers of these states where the proposal was vehemently opposed, mainly by Assam.

The government, especially the home minister, Mr LK Advani, also wants to doubly ensure that the gamut of talks be extended beyond one group.

Recently after a meeting with Mr Advani, the Nagaland chief

minister claimed that the issue of broad basing the scope of talks would be referred to the Prime Minister.

The government's chief negotiator, Mr K Padmanabhaiah, in a letter to the NSCN-IM chairman, Mr Isak Chishi Swu assured, "The government will consider extension of ceasefire with the NSCN-IM to other areas in the North-east subject to the condition that the outfit accepts and agrees to issue a statement that such an action will not be interpreted by them as a step towards recognition of their claim to a greater Nagaland".

The Naga issue dates back to the late 40s when the rebels led by a Z Phizo took up arms demanding sovereignty.

After two decades of violence and arson, a 16-point agreement was signed in June 1960 heralding statehood for the Nagas.

This was followed by a decade of comparative tranquility before insurgency was revived with the formation of the NSCN in 1980 which opposed the Shillong peace accord.

The NSCN, however, suffered a split in 1987 with Mr Swu and Mr Muivah heading one group and Mr Shang Nu Shangwang Khaplang, a native Naga from Myanmar, heading the other.

THE STATESMAN

16 OCT 2000

Orissa Govt
leaves irrigation
projects
in limbo

HT Correspondent
Balasore, October 15

THE ORISSA Government, which has projected an image of being "committed to bringing about a green revolution" in the State, has been accused of neglecting the irrigation sector.

Former Chief Minister J B Patnaik inaugurated the Kanpur irrigation project in Keonjhar district 20 years back. After 12 years of survey, in 1993, former Chief Minister Biju Patnaik laid the foundation of a barrage on River Baitarani at Basudevpur. The estimated cost was initially put at Rs 268.65 crore. The estimate shot up to Rs 336.81 crore in 1996 and was expected to cross Rs 550 crore.

So far only Rs 18 crore have been sanctioned for the project. In 1997 a team was sent to the site for survey and the report is still in the dark. Central Water Resource Minister Arjun Sethi recently visited Keonjhar to calm angry villagers demanding execution of the Chakdhar Irrigation project. Local BJP MP Ananta Nayak, MLA Mohan Majhi and Patna MLA Gourhari Nayak also demanded execution of the Kanpur project. The minister assured them that the project would be completed. The people have only to wait and watch, though they are fast losing hope.

Naga ceasefire crucial for lasting solution: Thakre

HT Correspondent
Kohima, October 15

THE CEASEFIRE between the Indian Government and the NSCN(IM) should continue so that a permanent solution to the Naga political problem could be reached, former BJP president Kushabhau Thakre said on Saturday.

He was here for the fortnight-long celebrations of the NDA Government's one year in office.

Other Naga underground outfits, too, should come forward for talks with the Indian Government, Thakre said. And for this "a peaceful atmosphere is necessary because it encourages development." Any solution, he emphasized, should be found and discussed "within the framework of the Indian Constitution." "Our Constitution is quite capable of accommodating various problems. Even other nations full of ethnic diversities consult our Constitution."

On the attack on Christians and churches, Thakre blamed people who deliberately want to spark a fight between Christians and non-Christians. "They want the BJP to be denigrated," he added. T

hakre dubbed all charges of RSS and Bajrang Dal attacking

Christians as non-issues and humbug.

"The real problem is lack of development, which cannot be achieved without peace." The BJP, he said, is trying hard to find a solution to the Naga problem.

Thakre indirectly ruled out any possibility of the party high command supporting the State unit's demand for removal of Governor Om Prakash Sharma.

The Governor had little to do with the prevailing situation in the State, he said. Asked if Sharma had any powers to exert control over the State, Thakre said he was unaware of any such provision. The State Government is in charge of the administration, he added.

On the corruption charges levelled against the State, he said the law would take its course, though it will be long winded. In the meantime, the BJP will try to mount public pressure against corruption. **Classes for Mizo MLAs:** The State finance department and the IT wing of the industry department organised two special study classes, for the Mizoram Assembly. Speaker R Lalawia said it was important for legislators to know what IT can do for the State for this would help the MLAs formulate better legislations for the people reports UNI.

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THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

7 6 OCT 2000

New Guwahati Police chief turns heat on SULFA men

Utpal Parashar
Guwahati, October 15

IT HAS been just a week since G P Singh took charge as Guwahati Police chief and his tough dealing with SULFA (surrendered ULFA) militants is already apparent.

Immediately after taking charge, Singh had declared that the city police would not tolerate illegal activities from SULFA. He had stated that the practice of SULFA men submitting tender by force would be stopped and steps would be taken to put an end to the collection of goonda tax.

On Thursday, Azara police arrested two gun-totting men, Diganta Sonowal, a senior SULFA leader, and his accomplice for threatening a CRPF truck driver. Sonowal had abused the CRPF driver for not letting him overtake the truck. The two of them were beaten up by the CRPF personnel in the truck and handed over to police.

They were booked under Section 341, 353, and 506 of IPC and Section 25 of the Arms Act. According to a police official, Singh personally attended the case.

The very next day, a senior SULFA leader was picked by police on charges of vandalism and assault at a popular snooker bar. The leader who is also an office-bearer of the Assam Olympic Association had allegedly damaged property and assaulted the bar's employees following a difference of opinion with the management over some business deals. However, he was let off after both the parties reached an agreement.

"In a city where incidents of armed SULFA men threatening motorists have mounted, the recent developments have brought a sigh of relief to many. It would be still more laudable if Singh could stop SULFA men from preventing others to file tenders for Government contracts," said Kirti Hazarika, a resident of

Chandmari.

A 1991 batch IPS officer, Singh was earlier posted with the CM's security and as SP Jorhat district. According to police sources, he had been assigned the prestigious Guwahati post for successfully eliminating ULFA's publicity secretary Swadhinata Phukan in an encounter a few months back.

BJP leader shot at: ULFA militants shot at a local BJP leader and abducted a businessman at Golokgunj in Dhubri district on Saturday night, police said.

Two ultras, armed with sophisticated weapons, came to the residence of BJP's Golokgunj block president Prem Sukh Sethia, and tried to abduct him. They shot at Sethia, injuring him seriously, when he tried to flee from their clutches.

The militants abducted a businessman Nitai Seal before decamping from the area, sources said.

Police are trying to nab the culprits reports PTI.

Cong bandh paralyses Tripura

Agartala, October 15

A DAWN-TO-DUSK bandh brought life to a stop in North Tripura's Kailashahar subdivision on Sunday. The 12-hour bandh was called by the opposition Congress to protest against the gunning down of a police official Tapan Das by NLFT militants at Golakpur tea estate on Saturday. Official sources said vehicles stayed off the road and business establishments, shops and markets downed their shutters. There was no report of any untoward incident.

In another incident, police arrested an extremist under National Security Act from Fatikroy area on October 12. While, tribal insurgents kidnapped two persons, including a girl from Moilak village on Saturday. Police also recovered a country made gun, six cartridges and two chargers after an encounter with a gang of miscreants in an area in West Tripura.

(UNI)

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

9 6 OCT 2000

Ulfa shifting training camps from Bhutan to Arunachal

P.P. Singh

GUWAHATI 17 OCTOBER

THE ULFA is shifting its training camp from Bhutan to Arunachal Pradesh and the mountains of upper Assam, following intense pressure by the security forces on its hideouts in the region.

Dilip Bora,, DIG of Central Western Range, said on Tuesday that the Bhutanese people were also turning more hostile, resulting in frequent food shortages.

Mr Bora also said that one militant had been killed when the Guwahati police attacked four Ulfa members who were travelling on bicycles at Kurkuria village under Khetri police station.

The police later recovered five AK-47s from the militants. The killed Ulfa member has been identified as Diganta Saikia from Tinsukia.



OPERATION SUCCESSFUL: A.K. 47 rifles seized from Ulfa militants on display in Guwahati on Tuesday — Caroline Singh

Mr Bora said there is an food shortage in the Ulfa camps; the cadres are on "half ration" and are getting very little to eat. There is also a shortage of rice.

He said the process of shifting from Bhutan started from the first of this month.

Referring the attack on militants, the SGP of Guwahati, G.P. Singh, said the encounters were linked to yesterday's killing of two militants in Guwahati.

A diary found from the militants contained the names of those killed on Monday.

The Economic Times

18 OCT 2000

Ulfa men move out of Bhutan

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

GUWAHATI, Oct. 18. — Ulfa militants are moving out of Bhutan and trying to set up camps in Arunachal Pradesh, according to indications available with Assam police.

The DIG (central and western range), Mr Dilip Borah, said police became aware of the ultras' plan from intercepted messages and other sources. The militants have been told to move out in small numbers to avoid detection.

Mr Barua said a police team

caught up with one such group — comprising four militants — at Kurkuria on the Sonapur-Chandrapur Road on the outskirts of the city around 9 a.m. yesterday. In the ensuing encounter, one of the militants, identified as Dulu Dutta, alias Diganta Saikia, was killed while the others managed to escape into nearby hills.

Five AK-47 rifles were seized from the spot.

The DIG said the militants were travelling on bicycles. Two of them, riding on one bicycle, fled when challenged,

while the other two fired at the policemen.

Three of the rifles recovered all were packed in a gunnybag, leading police to believe that they were being shifted and were not primed for operation.

Mr Borah said the militants still holed up in Bhutan were facing a lot of hardship as only half the ration is being supplied to them. He warned that those who would not surrender would meet the same fate as Dulu's.

Police have infiltrated the

outfit and was receiving genuine information about the ultras' movements, Mr Borah said. He pointed at the recent successes by police to buttress his claim. "Without inside information we could not have achieved such good results."

Police killed two Ulfa militants, including a woman, in the city on Sunday night. The two were members of the outfit's intelligence wing. The documents seized revealed that the UNLF of Manipur had supplied 19 AK-47 rifles, 50 pistols and a large quantity of ammuni-

tion to the Ulfa in January 1999.

The Ulfa and the NDFB have recently come under pressure from the Bhutan government to leave its soil.

The country's National Assembly had also given the government the go ahead for a military operation against the militants if the latter failed to leave on their own. The Indian Army has trained about 2,000 personnel of the Royal Bhutan Army in counter-insurgency operations to take on the mili-

THE STATESMAN

99 OCT 2000

NLFT kills four, ultra lynched

Mizo CM for truce extension to other parts of N-E

Syed Sajjad Ali,
Agartala, October 22

NLFT REBELS shot dead three more tribals in their continuing strikes against the people of their own community who denounce the insurgency in Tripura.

The victims were supporters of the CPI(M), the party which is in a tough position in State's hills and remote areas over the threat perception of the outlawed underground group.

The killings caused fear and

panic in Dewanbari (East Piliak) in Baikhora, south district. Sources said a NLFT hit squad arrived in the house of Gobordhan Tripura on Saturday at 8 pm and fired from automatic weapons killing him and his two young sons on the spot.

"Gobordhan Tripura (65), his two sons, Sachindra (30) and Sukhendu (20) were virtually executed by the NLFT hit squad," said a police officer. The rebels numbering 12 first cordoned off the house and they sprayed bullets from AK-47 and SLR.

On the other hand, trigger-happy rebels were taught a lesson by the tribal villagers of Lalmaibari and Ramdopobari in Melaghar of west district. The villagers chased a group of rebels, who came to extort money, and lynched one of them on the spot.

In a fresh incident, rebels killed a Bengali at Rojoni Sardar Para in Kalyanpur on Sunday. Police said the victim, Binod Das (45) was working in a paddy field when the incident occurred. Police later recovered the body.

New V-C for Orissa varsity

Bhubaneswar, October 22

SENIOR BUREAUCRAT Sahadev Sahoo has been appointed the new vice-chancellor of Orissa University of Agriculture and Technology (OUAT) by State Governor and Chancellor M. M. Rajendran, according to official sources.

An IAS officer of the 1964 batch and a former State Chief Secretary, Sahoo would replace Raj Kishore Bhujabal, the present vice-chancellor of the university. Bhujabal was also a former State chief secretary.

The Governor has also appointed Prof. Alekh Chandra Sarangi, presently professor in Sanskrit at the Utkal University, as the new vice-chancellor of the Sri Jagannath Sanskrit University at Puri.

A linguist proficient in French, German and Japanese languages, Sarangi worked as a visiting professor at the Udayana university at Bali in Indonesia from 1990-91. (PTI)

Negligence led to jailbreak: Minister

Kohima, October 22

NAGALAND JAIL Minister Sedam Khaming said on Saturday that negligence on the part of the Mokochung prison administration had led to the escape of under-trials. He directed the IG (Prison) to initiate appropriate action against the prison officials and staff responsible for the jailbreak.

Fifteen under-trials, including 11 militants from three outfits, fled the district jail in the early hours of October 18 after removing a 10-inch-thick brick wall of a bathroom with a sharp object. This is the third jailbreak at Mokochung within a span of 15 months, he said.

Khaming said negligence on the part of the jail administration had been continuing for a considerable period of time. This, he said, ultimately led to the jailbreak.

mainly led to the jailbreak. "The jailor, Chuba Phom had come to Kohima on official duty on the day of the jailbreak and it is mysterious why the services of the department staff were not properly utilised for ward duties," he said.

Khaming said the jail superintendent, A. A. Ssumi, had failed to submit a complete list of jail wardens. Prison authorities have been asked to submit the details urgently so that necessary action can be taken.

The wardens, he said, were not on duty at the time of the incident. The three unauthorised wardens, who had been put on duty on that night, are in police custody on charges of dereliction of duty. The under-trials were shifted from Tuensang district jail in August after it collapsed because of heavy rains, he added. (PTI)

Oken Jeet Sandham
Kohima, October 22

MIZORAM CHIEF Minister Zoramthanga's startling disclosure that he was approached by both the Union Home Ministry and the NSCN(IM) to broker a peace deal between the outfit and the Centre has taken the people of the North-East by surprise. Equally surprising is his ready acceptance of the role of a mediator in the long-drawn out Naga problem.

Speaking to The Hindustan Times over the phone from Calcutta on Sunday, the former underground member of late Lalenga's Mizo National Front (MNF), Zoramthanga said, "No, it will not complicate matters at all."

Because, he said, the approach of the PMO and the Union Home Ministry was the same for the same process. "When we (MNF) were talking to the Centre for a solution to the Mizo problem, the Prime Minister talked to us sometimes while we talked to the Home Ministry officials. It is the same Government," the Chief Minister said.

On Nagaland Chief Minister S. C. Jamir's repeated remarks that the Naga problem was different than that of Mizos, Zoramthanga said: "Well, they are Nagas. We are Mizos. We are different. But we all have to strive for peace and unity in the region."

On NSCN(IM)'s threat that it would pull out of the ongoing peace process once the Centre started involving other Naga underground groups, the Mizoram Chief Minister said not only the NSCN(IM) but also all the underground organisations in the North-East should come forward for negotiating talks with the Centre.

Asked whether extension of the ceasefire to other parts of the North-East would amount to the granting recognition to the "greater Nagaland concept" as claimed by some North-East Chief Ministers, Zoramthanga said if the States of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh could be divided to form separate States why should the concept of greater

It (expansion of truce) should be welcomed by not only the Chief Ministers of the North-East but all the public leaders, NGOs and individuals because it is a right step towards creating a conducive atmosphere for peace talks'

Minister said. On Nagaland Chief Minister S. C. Jamir's repeated remarks that the Naga problem was different than that of Mizos, Zoramthanga said: "Well, they are Nagas. We are Mizos. We are different. But we all have to strive for peace and unity in the region."

Orissa pays old age pension to 106-year-old

Bhubaneswar, October 22

THE ORISSA Government has started paying old age pension to a 106-year-old man, ignored by the administration till now, after an intervention by the State's Lokpal.

The case of Ghasinath Pradhan, a resident of Madhupur village under Rairakhol subdivision in Sambalpur district, was taken up

in his court and directed the sub-collector at Rairakhol to pay him old age pension.

Pradhan was being paid the pension from July last. A farmer, Pradhan is now resting at home but villagers said that they have never known him to have fallen ill. He does not smoke nor drink and spent his years working hard in the fields. (PTI)

Lokpal's Justice

Oriya daily recently, according to official sources. The Lokpal registered a miscase

Kissa coach ka getting curiouser and curiouser

By V. Srivatsa

The Times of India News Service

NEW DELHI: The choice isn't clear at all. Should the mantle of the Indian cricket coach fall on Greg Chappell or John Wright? Or should it be someone else altogether? Like Geoff Marsh.

Going by the deliberations of the Cricket Board, Marsh still appears the number one choice. After calling former Australian captain Greg Chappell as well as John Wright for an interview in Chennai on Monday, board president A.C. Muthiah resurrected Marsh's name to add a new twist to the appointment of a foreign coach.

Former board president Raj Singh Dungarpur had been the first to propose Marsh's name, but the stiff conditions of the former Australian opening batsman had set some board officials thinking. Apparently, the board wanted Marsh,

but only if he could scale down his terms—some \$6,000 a week. He also wanted an assistant coach to help him out, plus five air passages for his wife and two daughters.

Although board officials insist that money is no consideration in getting the right coach, Marsh's conditions were considered too stiff because no Indian coach, not even superstar Kapil Dev, has got that kind of money. The board kept trying to get Marsh around. During the recent ICC knockout tournament in Nairobi, Australian Cricket Board president Dennis Rogers is believed to have offered Mr Muthiah his good offices to broker a deal between the Indian board and Marsh. Obviously, it worked and Marsh is back in the running again. He has written to the board to say that he's very much interested in the job but that he couldn't reply in time because he was out of town.

ULFA rebels gun down 15 settlers

The Times of India News Service

GUWAHATI: In a fresh spate of violence that rocked Upper Assam, groups of militants massacred 15 people, all Bihari settlers, in two separate incidents on Sunday evening. Most of the victims were petty traders or cultivators. The banned United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) is suspected to be behind both the incidents.

Umesh Kumar, deputy inspector-general of the eastern range, said a group of ten youths, all carrying AK-47 assault rifles and dressed in army uniforms, swooped down on Kokojan number four village at about 6.30 p.m. on Sunday. They ordered all the people to assemble at one place and opened fire indiscriminately.

The volley of bullets left ten persons dead and four seriously injured. One of the persons succumbed to his injuries on the way to the Assam Medical College Hospital at Dibrugarh.

Later, the miscreants set fire to a few huts and shops before escaping from the spot. Massive combing operations have been launched in the area to arrest the suspects.

In an earlier incident in neighbouring Dibrugarh district, three armed ULFA militants shot dead a local businessman from point blank range on Sunday evening. However, local villagers who heard the gunfire gave the miscreants hot chase. In sheer panic, the rebels fired at the crowd, killing three people and injuring four others. Among the dead was a three-year-old child.

indiatimes.com POLL

YESTERDAY'S POLL RESULTS

Are Pakistani military exercises along the border a cause of concern for India?

Yes	No	Can't Say
74%	21%	5%

8,285 VOTES IN ALL

* The poll reflects the opinions of Net users who chose to participate, and not necessarily of the general public.

TODAY'S QUESTION

Does the spurt in Assam militancy call for immediate Central attention?

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Most humiliating these economy measures — only one escort car in front, two jeeps in the rear!

THE TIMES OF INDIA

24 OCT 2000

Fernandes to visit N-E

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

BAREILLY, Oct. 24. — The defence minister will visit the North-east this weekend to "see exactly what is the situation there" following statements by the Arunachal Pradesh chief minister that the Chinese had been repeatedly violating the Line of Actual Control.

While he had received no information to this effect from other quarters, Mr George Fernandes said here today that his visit would be "primarily" aimed at making an assessment of the conditions prevailing there. However, he made it clear that there was "no tension, no stand-off situation."

Mr Fernandes said he "presumed" that when the chief minister, Mr Mukut Mithi, had spoken of the LAC being violated (a claim the Chinese govern-

ARUNACHAL CM ALLEGES LAC VIOLATION

ment has strongly denied) he had spoken on the basis of "adequate information." He made no further comment on the subject.

The lines of communication in that sector — roads in particular — would be another matter attracting Mr Fernandes' attention. "There has been a lot of neglect in the area, there has been no construction over the decades and I'd like to see what is being done", he said.

Mr Fernandes also said "there is no substance" to reports in some Pakistani newspapers that a massive exercise was being conducted by the Pakistan army along a long stretch of the international border with India. "There has been no movement of nine divisions" he declared, admitting that the media reports had generated

concern.

The Pakistan army was conducting an exercise involving more than one division, plus the local troops, he said, but that was taking place about 75 km from the border.

The bilateral agreement on informing each other of major exercises did not apply to something being conducted at that distance from the international border, the minister said.

His recent visit to some forward areas in Himachal Pradesh, the Siachen sector, and the meeting of the Unified Command in Srinagar had reconfirmed the assessment that army and other security forces "have again come on top" in the Valley and Srinagar, Mr Fernandes said. "The overall situation is okay, there is no cause for anxiety," he said.

The posting of young IAS officers to J&K had not figured during deliberations of the Unified Command, counter-insurgency operations and development activity were their focus, he said.

He expressed hopes that the outcome of the buyers-sellers meet in Srinagar would be positive. Short of weaponry, the security forces could meet almost all their needs from local purchases. Officials of the quality assurance and procuring agencies participated that meet, he said.

"Providing jobs" was critical to the development effort, and should the security forces make substantial purchases of local products, the economy of the state would benefit.

Helping to provide jobs for the people would also have an important psychological spin-off, the minister said.

THE STATESMAN

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Assam rebels buy their time in Bhutan

DIPANKAR ROY
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

TAMALPUR (Nalbari), Oct. 24. — Ulfa and NDFB militants have had no problem staying in Bhutan all these years because the outfits have been doling out large amounts of money to Bhutanese officials, according to a former NDFB militant.

Mr Phukan Basumatary, who surrendered in April, and has since set up a farming society with seven other former rebels near here, told **The Statesman** that the NDFB paid Rs three lakh annually for the camp where he had stayed.

Mr Basumatary said when left the organisation, which is waging an armed struggle for a sovereign Bodoland, the NDFB had about half a dozen camps in the jungles of the Himalayan kingdom. The Ulfa had several camps and the two outfits were on good terms, with their defence units working in close coordination, though the camps were not in the same area.

"So you can imagine the kind of money the Bhutanese officials received every year from us. And if it is true for us, it must also be true of the Ulfa too, he said. Why should they forgo such an easy source of income," he said. Till recently Ulfa and NDFB militants could also move about quite freely in the towns with arms. "But nowadays, weapons are not allowed to be carried around, though there is no bar on their coming to towns", he said.

Bhutan recently had admitted that certain officials were helping the Ulfa by carrying out various errands, but said there was nothing official about such aid, he added.

Asked whether the NDFB and Ulfa would be able to withstand an offensive by the Bhutanese security forces, Mr Basumatary said he did not think such a situation would ever arise. Bhutan's National Assembly had given the government the go ahead to begin military operations to remove the militants from the country unless they moved out on their own, he said.

It is not the lure of money alone, he said. "They (Bhutanese security forces) alone would not be able to match the combined firepower and expertise of the Ulfa and the NDFB who have a large arsenal of sophisticated weapons, including universal machine guns and sniper rifles besides huge stocks of explosives," he said.

Besides, Bhutan would know that getting on the wrong side of Ulfa and NDFB could lead to serious consequences for people of that country. The supplies of essentials like food to Bhutan which pass through Assam could be cut off and their road communication could be disrupted by blowing up bridges inside that country, he said.

"No, I don't think they can afford to get away by adopting such a strategy," he said.

■ Editorial: Bhutan is cleared? page 6

Unicef aid for Manipur projects

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

IMPHAL, Oct. 24.- About seven lakh children die of diarrhoea every year and over seven million children are affected by lack of good quality water in India.

Getting fresh water in India is the most challenging task ahead of the country in the coming years, this was stated by Dr Subhaschandra, state representative, Unicef, India Country Office, at the launching ceremony of two multimillion rupees Unicef-sponsored projects in Imphal West District last Friday.

The Integrated Water, Sanitation and Nutrition project and the Integrated School, Sanitation project at the total cost of Rs 322.53 lakh are being jointly taken up together for the first time in India by Unicef and the state government in Manipur.


The project, which is on trial basis is being taken up in two blocks of Imphal West district and will cover 387 schools and all the 'anganwadi' centres. It is a two-and-a-half year project and slated to end in December 2002. If successful, it will be applied to other districts of the state.

"We cannot talk of child rights without first ensuring the survivability of the children, he said. We must ensure they live before we talk of their participatory rights and other children related right," he asserted.

THE STATESMAN

28 OCT 2000

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 North Eastern Railway
CORRIGENDUM TO TENDER NOTICE NO. 4/TRACK/2000
Corrigendum No. 1 to advertised tender notice no. 4/Track/2000, the following correction is hereby issued :-
(i) Item No. (1) of the tender notice viz open tender No. 646/2000 due on 01.11.2000 which pertains to supply of 1,00,000 Nos. ERC MK-III clip, may be treated as cancelled.
CPRO/W-130
(XEN/TP), Gorakhpur For & behalf of President of India

Political touch suspected behind ULFA killings

Rahul Karmakar
Guwahati, October 25

THE MASSACRE of 15 people in two adjacent districts of Upper Assam within a gap of 90 minutes, has more to it than meets the eye.

The police have been quick to pin it on the outlawed United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA), said to be on the run. But the manner in which 11 people were killed at No 4 Kakojan village near Doomdooma in Tinsukia district -- they were made to line up in the marketplace and shot -- does not conform to the ULFA's style of functioning.

Nor does the killing of the four people at Naoholia in Dibrugarh district through indiscriminate firing after the 'suspected ULFA militants' had gunned down trader Radheyshyam Agarwal.

Then again, all the victims were non-Assamese, most of them being Biharis. The ULFA never had any record of targeting a particular community, although its sister

organisations like the NDFB in Bodo-inhabited areas and United Peoples Democratic Solidarity in Karbi Anglong have been killing Nepalis, Bengalis and Biharis at will and in bulk.

And ULFA chairman Paresh Baruah's statement that his boys had no hand in the mindless twin massacre, makes one doubt whether the outfit has been dragged in for the sake of convenience.

The police has not been able to catch any of the villains of this Chattisinghpura-like execution, but it insists upon the ULFA theory. "How long does it take to change strategies? The ULFA has lost its mass base and is desperate. So it has take to strike terror and be in the currency again," said a senior police official.

The views of Governor Lt Gen (retd) S K Sinha are somewhat similar. "The ULFA has not been known for mass killings and ethnic cleansing, but this act of cowardice proves it has become completely demoralised," he said

"If the government says the ULFA is behind this massacre, then it has been making tall claims of having broken the backbone of the outfit," said former Chief Minister and State chief of Nationalist Congress Party Sarat Chandra Sinha. "The political angle cannot be ruled out."

That the Upper Assam massacre may have a political ring to it, is being suspected from the fact that one of the victims Keshav Kanu was a BJP activist. A Tinsukia district BJP leader told *The Hindustan Times* that the party strongly condemned the killings. "This isn't as simple as it sounds, particularly as our party has been on the ascendancy in recent times."

Local leaders remind that senior BJP leaders like Bangaru Laxman had made several trips to tea garden areas in Upper Assam. They add that the ruling AGP has become wary of the growing stature of the BJP, which would be contesting the Assembly elections in a big way. The elections are due in April-May next year.



Medha Patkar speaking to mediapersons during a dharna against Narmada dam project in Bhopal, where she launched a five-day protest fast against the recent court order on the project. Photo: AP

Ulfa mows down nine at Nalbari

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

GUWAHATI, Oct. 27. — Ulfa militants mowed down nine people and injured six at Nalbari town around 6.30 p.m. today. Most of the victims were non-Assamese traders.

In another incident, suspected NDFB militants gunned down three Assam policemen at Anandabazaar in Nalbari district last night.

Nalbari police said a group of militants with automatic weapons came in Tata Sumo and stopped in front of a furniture shop which had people milling around lighting *diyas* on the occasion of Diwali.

They fired from inside the vehicle killing nine people on the spot. They fled even before people could realise that what they had heard were gunshots and not firecrackers. The injured have been brought to Gauhati Medical College Hospital.

The massacre comes within days of the Ulfa killing 15 non-Assamese people in two separate incidents in Dibrugarh

and Tinsukia districts.

The Ulfa denied its involvement in today's massacre, but police claim they have enough evidence against the outfit.

Till before the Dibrugarh-Tinsukia incidents, the Ulfa was never known to have targeted a particular community. The outfit only warned of retaliation against communities whose names are borne by army regiments engaged in counter-insurgency operations in the state. The Ulfa's new strategy has worried the police.

In the other incident, a police patrol comprising eight personnel was ambushed by NDFB militants at Anandabazaar around 8.30 p.m. last night. Three policemen were killed.

The NDFB has been at the receiving end for the past few weeks and has lost more than 45 members. Recently the outfit, which demands a sovereign Bodoland, warned people that they would travel in trains at their own risk from 20 October. Till now the militants have not translated the threat into action.

Depression alert in six districts

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
& AGENCIES

CALCUTTA, Oct. 27. — The state government alerted Midnapore, North and South 24-Parganas, Howrah, Hooghly and Nadia as a depression in the Bay of Bengal lay centred 350 km south of Calcutta this afternoon.

A spokesman of the Calcutta weather office said the depression was expected to intensify and likely to move northward. It could cross the West Bengal coast and enter Bangladesh by tomorrow evening.

The Indian Meteorological Department deputy director, Mr Mihir Guha, said: "The system is heading towards north-west Orissa coast at present, but it may change direction towards Bangladesh." He said the possibility of a cyclonic storm remained.

The finance minister, Mr Asim Dasgupta, said the depression had advanced by 100 km and was moving northerly.

■ See DEPRESSION: page 4

KBK SYNDROME STRIKES AGAIN IN INDUSTRIAL ORISSA

Woman sells child for Rs 400

K RAVI
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

BHUBANESWAR, Oct. 27. — The death of Sumitra Mund and her son at Angul on 15 October had sounded the warning bell that the "KBK syndrome" was prevalent even in the most industrialised areas of Orissa. The sale of a newborn by his mother on 25 October confirms this.

The death of Sumitra and her son, allegedly due to governmental apathy and malnutrition, had jolted the district administration to action. She died of starvation — a word synonymous with the KBK areas — Koraput, Bolangir and Kalahandi.

The district authorities had rushed in with assistance. They shifted the three other children of Sumitra to a child care centre and denied that the death was due to starvation. They pressed contractors working under Mahanadi Coalfield to engage people in the slums as labourers.

Sumitra, like many others in the slums, was finding it difficult to sustain her family as there was no work during the Puja vacation.

She fell sick and died unattended.

Ten days later, the other aspect of the KBK syndrome has surfaced in Angul district. The authorities are probing the alleged sale of a new-born boy for just Rs 400.

Sources said Mami Naik, a daily wage earner, had given birth to a boy at Angul hospital. She is said to have told several people at the hospital that she wanted to give away the baby not necessarily by selling it.

A worker engaged by Kalyani, an organisation entrusted with sanitation and cleaning of the hospital, agreed to take the baby boy and later gave her Rs 400.

A district officer told *The Statesman* today that it might not have been a case of economic distress leading to the sale of the infant.

Local people say Mami wanted to give away the baby and it was not for a price. Therefore, it cannot be said she sold the baby, they argue.

Some say Mami's distress was "social" in nature and not economic. Her husband had deserted her and was living in Rairakhole in Sambalpur district. Perhaps she feared that the villagers of Sanakerajanga, where she was presently staying, would ostracize her.

THE STATESMAN

28 OCT 2000

Probe panel pat on back for N-E rights body

FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT

Imphal, Oct. 27: The Independent People's Inquiry Commission headed by former Bombay High Court judge, Justice H. Suresh has lauded Manipur Human Rights Commission for "taking up many human rights violation cases in the state".

However, the independent inquiry panel was not happy over the functioning of National Human Rights Commission.

In its interim report, Justice Suresh said the Manipur Human Rights Commission had referred more than 20 cases concerning custodial deaths to the NHRC. However, the NHRC has not done the needful in this regard.

"The NHRC appears to have not informed the state commission of the steps taken by it for over one year. Nor has the NHRC bothered to hold a single sitting in

Manipur. This is a shocking state of affairs," the interim report said.

The report is being sent to both the central and state authorities for a reply.

Sources said a final report would be made public as per the response of the authorities. The report also made recommendations on different cases.

The independent inquiry suggested that the police should procure a list of all CRPF personnel posted at Lamdan village regarding the rape of a housewife.

"All the CRPF personnel should be paraded for identification after getting a list of CRPF personnel present on that day", Justice Suresh recommended.

On July 17, a housewife of Lamdan village was allegedly gangraped by CRPF personnel.

It was also suggested that the assistant commandant of the CRPF who heads the Lamdan post

should be considered as an "accused".

On the "third-degree" torture of one Pranam Singh by Assam Rifles personnel in July, the independent inquiry recommended a High Court probe.

As regards the CRPF firing at Tera Bazar in Imphal in 1993, Justice Suresh recommended prosecution of the personnel involved and their removal from service. Five persons had been killed in the indiscriminate firing. Recommendations also stressed on the need for compensation to the victims' families.

The independent commission also took up cases on the mysterious disappearance of one Jayab Ali after he was allegedly picked up by Assam Rifles personnel. It also probed the disappearance of Kangangbam Loken, who was allegedly picked up by the Army in 1980.

THE TELEGRAPH

28 OCT 2000

Assam CM asks Ulfa militants to trade arms for the farms

P.P. Singh

BANBHAG SALMARI (Nalbari) 29 OCTOBER

IT WAS only last year when men like Minto Dutta and Avinash Bordoloi, then members of Ulfa, symbolised guns and terror for the common man. Today, however, these very Ulfa members have decided to shun the path of violence and help the state achieve green revolution by adopting multi-purpose farming in Nalbari district.

The Assam chief minister P.K. Mahanta while formally launching on Saturday, the harvesting of their first paddy crop at the Udayan Multipurpose Co-operative Society, praised the effort of these boys and assured the fullest cooperation to all those who shun the path of violence.

Mr Mahanta said: "The government is only asking peace from you and in return it will give you progress, prosperity and development."

Mr Mahanta said with 16.35

65-2 20/10 9-11-80
lakh unemployed youth in the state and with no major industrial house due to set up their units owing to the poor image of the state because of violence by the militants, the farm and non-farm sectors offer the biggest scope of employment to the youth in the state.

"These boys have adopted the right approach of not only helping themselves but also the people of the state by helping to usher in green revolution in the state," he said.

While condemning the killings of ten innocent people in the nearby Nalbari town by Ulfa militants, he said the difference between the two groups is visible. While one group is busy killing people of the state, another group today is helping the people of the state achieve self-sufficiency in food grains and thereby gain self respect.

He said with more and more young people coming forward to help make the state self-sufficient

in food grains and other basic needs, it will not be long when the state will no longer have to depend on other states like Andhra Pradesh for fish and eggs.

He said at least 80 per cent of the money goes out from the state for procuring essentials including food products. He said the government was giving more emphasis on developing the rural economy.

This move was very similar to Mr Mahanta's first tenure when he had started the concept of small tea growers. Currently, they were going ahead with green revolution with the help of small farmers and they had already achieved substantial success here too.

The Assam agriculture minister Chandra Mohan Patowari, the spirit behind the green revolution, while addressing the function, called upon other former Ulfa members to take up agriculture related rehabilitation projects and assured them of all help.

The Economic Times

31 OCT 2000

31 OCT 2000

XG-10 The ULFA again 20/10

TWO MAJOR incidents of extremist violence in Assam's Tinsukia and Nalbari districts have shattered the relative peace which the state has enjoyed in recent months. That the killings have coincided with the stage-managed surrender by a batch of ULFA militants and Chief Minister Prafulla Mahanta's claim about the restoration of law and order as the AGP Government's biggest achievement underline the futility of such exercises. By now the pattern is familiar. Each time an effort is made to write the ULFA's obituary, it strikes back. The same is true of other insurgent outfits. That the chauvinist outfit has suffered an erosion in its support base is evident. Whatever sympathy the ULFA once enjoyed evaporated following its declaration during the Kargil war that the Pakistani infiltrators were 'freedom fighters'. Today, more and more people tend to view the outfit as terrorist and extortionist.

The two major incidents which killed nearly two dozen innocent people may have had the intended objective of demonstrating the extremists' fire power and their ability to hit where it hurts. While the law and order situation has improved in Assam, sporadic incidents of violence have continued. The ULFA is fighting shy of confronting the army. As a result, there have been fewer incidents of ambushes. But it may have resorted to attacking 'soft' targets like the migrant Bihari labourers and traders to stay in the limelight. The ULFA may not command the same firepower as it did in the late Eighties and early Nineties, but it is one secessionist group which has spurned all overtures of peace from the Centre and the state Government. It was Hiteswar Saikia who succeeded in splitting the organisation, thereby weakening the group. Now that the negotiations with Naga militants have ensured peace in Nagaland and violence has subsided in Manipur, the ULFA militants may be working overtime to derail the peace processes by resorting to mindless violence.

For a number of years, the ULFA has successfully exploited the Assamese people's long-standing sense of alienation and neglect. But today they are no longer influenced by the extremists' promise of an independent El Dorado. By targeting 'outsiders' and creating a sense of insecurity among people engaged in commercial activity in the state, ULFA may be trying to endear itself to the dwindling numbers of chauvinists. If the outfit has spurned all efforts to end violence, it is perhaps because the state Government has not shown enough determination to crack down on the militants. Rather than organising fake surrenders, the Government should concentrate on toning up the administration and the intelligence gathering machinery.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

30 OCT 2000

Mithi seeks Centre's help to curb militancy

Mamang Dai
Itanagar, August 31

ARUNACHAL PRADESH Chief Minister Mukut Mithi submitted a seven-point memorandum to Defence Minister George Fernandes on development and deployment of security forces in the State. The Defence Minister was on a two-day visit to the State.

Mithi drew Fernandes' attention to the militancy-hit Tirap and Changlang districts and urged the Centre to deploy Army in the area which was being used as a corridor by militants operating in Nagaland, Assam and hideouts in Myanmar. The Centre had still not acted upon a similar request by the State Government, he added. The withdrawal of the 192 Mountain Brigade from Tirap in 1997 and the absence of properly-manned Army posts along the border had given rise to militant activities, the memorandum said.

On the flood that hit parts of the State on June 11, Mithi said the State Government had made a tentative assessment of losses based on a flood-damage report and the loss amounted to Rs 139.10 crore. A memorandum had been submitted to the Union Agriculture Minister, who inspected the flood damage in June, but the State had not received any responses from the Centre. A meeting of the com-

mittee of secretaries in the Cabinet Secretariat was held in August 16 to discuss the flood damage in Arunachal Pradesh.

The State has been asked to prepare a detailed project report on the schemes in the flood-affected areas to be considered for funding from the non-lapsable pool. This decision to grant funds from the non-lapsable pool would reduce the share of Arunachal Pradesh to bridge the gaps in infrastructure

roads to the Border Road Organisation (BRO). The roads either lead to the international border or terminate short of the international boundary and therefore assume strategic importance. These roads will also contribute towards the socio-economic development of the State, the memorandum said.

A battalion of Arunachal Pradesh Scouts should be raised like that of the Ladakh Scouts to guard the borders with China, Myanmar and Bhutan, Mithi said, adding that a Sainik school should be set up in the State. Mithi said though other States have two to three Sainik schools, Arunachal has none.

The large number of mules tracks, porter tracks and feet suspension bridges, which are the only means of communication for military and paramilitary forces in the border areas, were also mentioned in the memorandum. The State Government spends Rs 5 crore to maintain the tracks. The memorandum urged the defence ministry to allocate special funds to maintain these roads and bridges.

The Centre should help the State develop the region as an eco-tourism spot and the defence ministry should throw open Bulma in Tawang district, Walong and Dong, the millennium sunrise village, in Lohit district for tourists.

Minister visits militancy-hit Tirap

DEFENCE MINISTER George Fernandes visited Khonsa, the headquarters of Tirap district, on Thursday. Arunachal Governor Arvind Dave and Chief Minister Mukut Mithi accompanied the minister.

Fernandes addressed a meeting at the Nehru stadium in Khonsa and said insurgency was the main area of concern for the North-East. The minister said he was aware that several unemployed youths in Tirap had taken to insurgency and urged them to shun the path of violence and work for the unity and integrity of the nation. The Centre had given priority to the development of border areas in the North-East, he said.

MTC, Itanagar

development, the memorandum said.

The State urged the Centre to provide Rs 140 crore as special dispensation for restoration work in the flood-hit areas. The State Government was facing a funds crunch and asked the Centre to waive of the cost of evacuation and relief operations by IAF helicopters, which amounts to Rs 185 lakh.

The memorandum also urged the minister to hand over 10 State

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

SEP 2 2000

NSCN-IM threatens to end ceasefire

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, Sept. 3. — The National Socialist Council of Nagalim (NSCN-IM) chairman, Mr Isak Chishi Swu, has reportedly written to the Prime Minister, threatening to back out of the ceasefire agreement if the government does not implement its "commitment" to declaring a ceasefire in all "Naga areas".

"Right from the beginning of the ceasefire, 1 August 1997, it was mutually agreed that the ceasefire would cover all the Naga inhabited areas and from time to time the government through the Prime Minister's emissaries assured us and bought time to implement this. But they have failed to do so and the Nagas feel they have been betrayed and cheated", Mr Swu told the *North-east Sun* magazine in an exclusive interview in Bangkok.

Alleging that New Delhi was not serious about solving the Naga problem and wanted to restrict the ceasefire to only Nagaland, Mr Swu, without

disclosing the date, said he had in his letter to the Prime Minister given a deadline to the government to carry out its commitment, failing which there will be a breakdown of the ceasefire.

According to the *Sun*, official sources have confirmed the letter and said the deadline set by the NSCN was 15 September. The government was seized of the matter.

The NSCN-IM general secretary, Mr Muivah, who was interviewed in jail in Bangkok, told the *North-east Sun* on 26 August that the government was "backtracking on the mutually agreed commitment".

He claimed that during the talks in Bangkok on 29 and 30 July, the government side had clearly stated that the ceasefire was between the two parties, covered all Naga areas and there would be no fighting between the forces and the NSCN in these areas.

Mr Swu said it was important for the NSCN's chief negotiator, Mr Muivah to be released

from jail so that he could take part in talks with the government as he carries the mandate of the Naga people.

He said the NSCN had made a commitment to the peace process but the government was "backing out" of its commitments.

He claimed that at the end of the two-day meeting in July, both sides had agreed to extend the ceasefire and prepared the text of the agreement, to be released simultaneously.

"On our part I signed it and released it as it was mutually agreed but they have not released the jointly agreed text", he alleged.

According to the NSCN chief, it was agreed right from the beginning that the government and NSCN would be two entities to the accord and hence the ceasefire should extend to all areas where the NSCN is functioning and not just Nagaland.

"It is not acceptable to us. It will be very serious and the peace process will be threatened", he added.

THE STATESMAN

4 SEP 2000

75 rebels to surrender in Tripura today

FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT

Agartala, Sept. 3: Altogether 75 militants of the banned All-Tripura Tiger Force, will lay down arms at the Assam Rifles ground here tomorrow.

Tripura finance minister Badal Choudhury, education minister Anil Sarkar and tribal welfare minister Aghore Debbarma are expected to attend the surrender ceremony.

Brig. B.K. Panwar of the Assam Rifles told The Telegraph today that Commando Force leader Giyen Debbarma would be among the 75 rebels "formally" laying down arms.

He said the rebels had been staying at the Assam Rifles headquarters since being "escorted" here from the Teliamura-Ampi area two months ago.

The Assam Rifles official said the surrender ceremony would have been held earlier had the government not objected to the rebels depositing only 303 rifles and some small firearms instead of sophisticated weapons. "The issue has been resolved and we expect the surrender ceremony to go off without a hitch tomorrow," the official said.

In another development, official sources today confirmed a split in the ranks of the banned National Liberation Front of

Tripura. The matter was first reported in the latest edition of Choba, the mouthpiece of the All-Tripura Tiger Force.

The publication said Joskua Debbarma alias Jogendra, the self-styled chairman of the "NLFT government", had been expelled from the group following differences with his comrades.

Confirming Jogendra's ouster, official sources said the rebel leader had since formed a splinter outfit, the Borok National Council of Tripura.

The reason behind the split is believed to be a clash of egos between Jogendra and Monto Koloi, chief of the NLFT's political wing. Koloi had asked all ageing

NLFT activists to surrender after the Autonomous District Council elections in May.

However, Jogendra opposed the decision, leading to formation of the Borok National Council of Tripura in June.

Determined to make the fledgling outfit a force to reckon with, Jogendra has sought logistical

and material help from the People's Liberation Army of Manipur.

A senior official expressed concern over the move, saying there could be fratricidal clashes between the NLFT and the Borok National Council of Tripura after the latter acquired a decent armoury.

THE TELEGRAPH

2 SEP 2000

NAGA CEASEFIRE

Recognition Of An Entity

By SANJOY HAZARIKA

THE renewal of the ceasefire between the Government of India and the main Naga militant organisation, the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (I-M), and the reopening of talks between the two sides at Bangkok came as a breath of fresh air in a tense situation.

That the Naga ceasefire was overshadowed by the events in Jammu and Kashmir was only predictable. In Kashmir, the Hizbul Mujahideen, the only major Kashmiri armed group of significance (one is referring to the non-foreigner elements) declared a ceasefire, held discussions with senior Indian Government officials, then set an impossible deadline and withdrew the truce unilaterally. The last move was announced in Islamabad under the full glare of international media and the backing of the Pakistani Government.

The ceasefire extension in Nagaland and the first round of talks between the Naga militant leadership and Indian officials were relegated to the inside

pages of most newspapers. In some papers, they did not even merit a mention. Television networks, without exception, did as bad and shoddy a job of reporting this development as they did with the devastating flood in Arunachal Pradesh in June, triggered by a natural landslide and flash flood in Tibet.

BORDER CLAIMS

There is another aspect of the media, especially the Indian media. No matter how often they may have met Issak Chisi Swu, chairman of the NSCN (I-M) and Thiungelang Muivah, general secretary of the group, who is now in a Thai prison, most journalists do not really understand them or their goals and beliefs.

One acknowledges the significance of the Naga movement for independence and identity. In the course of a long and arduous struggle, they have suffered at the hands of the armed forces and other agencies of the State as well as from their own militant factions. Yes, there is a history to the Naga movement. But there are demands which have the capacity to plunge the North-East into greater conflict.

One such problem stems from the determination of the NSCN (I-M) to create a Nagalaim, carving out chunks of territory from where they say Nagas live in Assam, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh and adding them to the existing state of Nagaland. Earlier claims by other leaders sought to include parts of Myanmar which they termed Eastern Nagaland. But there is realisation now that India can negotiate its own land not that of others.

The Nagas say that history is on their side. But there are

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many versions of history and most parts of the world go by written texts and documents which have some antiquity and not documents put together by colonialists and imperialists who came to this part of the world barely 250 years ago. In the process, geography has changed history. Of course, the converse is also true.

One must take into consideration the public view as well as the political reality of what exists on the ground level. The

knowledge that geography has changed history as much as the other way. During the recent ceasefire talks in Bangkok, the NSCN (I-M) was represented by Raising, the former "Home Minister", not by Swu, who is the head of the organisation. Raising is a close aide of Muivah, who is currently serving time in a Bangkok prison for entered the country illegally. Both men are members of the Tangkhul tribe, which is influential in Manipur but has no presence in Nagaland. Swu is a Sena from Nagaland.

The true significance of the talks is the recognition accorded to the NSCN (I-M) as an entity. This means that the ceasefire is with the organisation and not limited to a geographical area. In other words, the ceasefire, according to this interpretation, now has been virtually extended to parts of Manipur and Assam where the I-M has cadres. As a result, national security forces such as the Army and the paramilitary groups (Assam Rifles, Central Reserve

Police Force) could observe a truce with the Nagas in such areas as North Cachar Hills of Assam, the hill districts of Manipur or elsewhere in the North-East where they are operating.

The real significance of this does not appear to have struck the state governments and certainly not the media. The state governments may now well have to go it alone in their confrontations with the Naga militants if this interpretation of the "entity" concept is accepted by the Government of India.

TALKS SECRET

Without announcing it from the rooftops, the Centre is acknowledging that the NSCN (I-M) has some legitimacy behind its demands for a larger land area. This may be a subtle thing that the negotiators have done but it is happening without the consent of or consultation with the neighbouring states, a move that could fuel further anger against the Centre.

A prominent Naga thinker and peace advocate has called for a freezing of the sovereignty issue but has asked the government of India to acknowledge this as a major problem. This is true for Kashmir although problems have been complicated by Pakistani intrusion. Until 1976, the Naga issue was made seemingly intractable by Chinese and Pakistani meddling. That changed and much else also did.

For years talks were held at the Prime Ministerial level and then at that of the interlocutor and emissary. All talk abroad is secret. That is accepted — no pictures of negotiators standing in a public place and smiling. The question is how all this will benefit the people, now and in the future. Will it ease their pain, their fear, their misery? Or will it make them more hurt, more afraid, more desperate?



NSCN (I-M) seeks the merger of parts of three neighbouring states with Nagaland to form part of their Nagalaim. But has anyone bothered to find out what the people in these areas want? Why can both sides not agree to send teams of researchers and surveyors to conduct a detailed study on what these border communities seek? What about discussions within the Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh state assemblies on the subject? No state or Central Government can afford to go against the will of these legislatures.

The Naga leaders must take civil society in all three states into confidence. A viewpoint cannot be said to be immutable for all time to come. There already exists inside Assam territory a large and well-armed Naga Government police post (near Jorhat city) where visitors are told they need Inner Line Permits to pass a gate because they are entering Nagaland!

HOME ALONE

This is a preposterous situation to which the Central Government has been party by not taking any action against the offender. Action need not be physical: it can be punitive through the arena of fiscal disincentives and denial of funds.

Land may be a focus of identity. But how much land do you need for identity formation and protection at a time when non-land issues are becoming the basis of life for millions of people? How much land is needed for two or three million people? And what about the 32 million in the neighbourhood? Do they not have any rights? Do they not count?

A sense of history must be tempered by an assessment of reality. Not reality as seen through the prism of those who believe they are right at all times but by accepting the

70 rebels lay down arms in Tripura

FROM SEKHAR DATTA

Agartala, Sept. 4: Altogether 70 militants of the Commando Force, a unit of the All-Tripura Tiger Force, today "formally" came overground after years of being on the run.

Led by Jiyen, alias Gouranga Nath Debbarma, the rebels laid down arms at a surrender ceremony organised by the Assam Rifles and attended by Tripura finance minister Badal Chowdhury.

All 70 militants, including two women, sang the national anthem and the song *Sare jahan se acha* to the accompaniment of the Assam Rifles band. One of the women held a two-year-old child in her arms.

Addressing the surrendered rebels, both Chowdhury and Brig. Basant Kumar Panwar of the Assam Rifles promised to help them build their lives afresh.

The finance minister said those who had returned to the mainstream deserved to be lauded for their "mature judgment". He said the goal of "sovereignty" was an illusory one, something militants in both Nagaland and Mizoram had already realised.

Chowdhury said the state government was ready to give every militant willing to surrender an opportunity to lead a normal life.

Echoing the minister's feelings, Brig. Panwar termed today's surrender ceremony as "the beginning of a larger process". He said more surrenders were likely in the next few months.

The Assam Rifles official spoke in Bengali and the Kokborok dialect.

Though the surrender of 70 militants was touted as a "major success for the security forces", Assam Rifles officials and bureaucrats alike appeared to be disappointed over the quantity and quality of arms deposited by those who came overground.

The rebels deposited eight .303 rifles, 12 countrymade guns, two revolvers, two pistols, three countrymade cannons and some ammunition. They also handed over a sheaf of Tiger Force documents to the Assam Rifles authorities.

The surrendered militants will be kept in a rehabilitation camp at Ambasa in Dhalai district for a year and paid a monthly stipend of Rs 2,000 each. They will later be provided either government jobs or loans. The rebels have sought withdrawal of all court cases against them, government jobs and release of one of their arrested comrades.

Jiyen Debbarma told newsmen that the government was morally obliged to fulfil these three demands. He also said the two women in the 70-member group — Dhanyalaxmi Reang and Milanbala Kaipeng — should be given the facilities surrendered rebels were entitled to.

THE TELEGRAPH

5 SEP 2000

Church, public organisations hail NSCN(K) truce offer

Sandham Oken Jeet
Kohima, September 5

THE CHURCH and other public organisations of Nagaland have welcomed the unilateral truce offer of NSCN(K) though its rival has turned it down.

The ex-Parliamentarians Association of Nagaland has termed the truce offer by NSCN(K) as a "realistic and pragmatic approach" and said it needed the support of all sections of the Naga society. The truce offer is certainly going to usher in a congenial atmosphere conducive to the peace process, the association secretary Tochi Hauso said in a statement.

Hauso described the NSCN(I-M) president Isak Chishi Swu's apology as "statesman-like". He said it was a pleasant surprise for everybody in Nagaland. "Real peace process must be restored by cessation of all forms of violence and killings to enable people to meet each other without any inhibitions".

He suggested that a consensus worked out through a democratic process could be the basis of a political dialogue with the Government of India. All sections of the society, all factions of the Naga national workers, political workers, intellectuals and NGOs should come under a common platform to reach a consensus, he said.

Nagaland Baptist Church Council (NBCC) said the recent developments regarding the Naga peace process were very encouraging and could be the beginning of lasting peace. Isak Chishi Swu's apology, both factions of the NSCN declaring Zunheboto as a peace zone and General Kholi Konyak's truce offer to NSCN (IM) were all positive signs for peace, the NBCC said.

The NBCC, which played an important role in brokering peace between the NNC (GFN) and the Government of India in 1964, reiterated that every Naga longed for peace and cessation of all violence.

The president of the Chakhesang Public Organisation (CPO) P Pusazo Luroo lauded the truce offer by NSCN (K) to its rival faction.

He appealed to the many underground groups in Nagaland to forgive and forget, which he said was the only method of reconciliation. It would be foolish for Nagas to dig out past mistakes, he said. "Therefore we should bury our differences for the sake of the future".

Luroo, however, said NSCN (K)'s truce offer to NSCN (IM) would have been better if it had been extended to all Naga-inhabited areas of just the State.

President of the Naga National Party (NNP) Ng. Hungyo praised the NSCN (K) unilateral truce offer to rival group. He dubbed the offer as "positive response to the people's call for peace, unity and solution". "The forget-and-forgive policy was definitely pointing towards unification, which will stop fratricidal killing once and for all.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

6 SEP 2000

Scattered tribes in search of an identity

In India, insurgencies divide themselves into four broad types. These are often overlapping and confounding categories. The first has roots in a colonial legacy of disputes, best exemplified by the Kashmir insurgency. The second, ideology-inspired insurgencies like that of the armed Naxalite movements. The third type is founded on classic factors like economic backwardness and underdevelopment. The United Liberation Front of Asom is an archetype of this category.

The Naga insurgency fits into the fourth groove: insurgency stemming from "temperamental ethnicity". The Bodo impasse in Assam also has similar connotations. Initially, the Bodos said they wanted a "homeland": a term with a marked emotive content, indicating a "feeling of homelessness".

The Naga crisis is an ethnic construct. It resulted not so much from the need to preserve the ethnic character of the Nagas than from a fear of its extinction. On the basis of their Mongoloid stock, the Nagas considered themselves different from the Aryans. Therefore, they were reluctant to remain with the heartland fearing persecution and extinction. This is the crux of the Naga imbroglio. Ethnic paranoia, whipped up into a full-blown political agenda, is the soul of insurgency in Nagaland.

The Naga ethnicity is subject to the dynamics of evolution. The Nagas are not a single tribe but comprise several cognate sub-tribes and clans like Angamis, Kacha Naga, Ao, Kalyo Kengu and Semas, among others. These sub-tribes have often jostled with one another to assert themselves much in the same way as India's princely states fought—a pointer to the fact that the Naga tribe was continuously evolving.

The census of 1991 lists 35 Naga sub-

tribes and reports that 17 of them are in the state of Nagaland and the rest scattered across the lower reaches of Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and the bordering Myanmar.

What sets apart separatism in Nagaland from other movements in the Northeast, particularly the ULFA in Assam or the resurgent Hynniewtrep National Liberation Council in Meghalaya, is the fact that there has never been a time during the history of Indian independence when the Nagas considered themselves Indian first and Naga later. This is probably the reason why it is called the "mother of all insurgencies".

The root of the problem is deeply embedded in the pre-independence period when a group of 20 Nagas belonging to the Naga Club petitioned the Simon Commission against including the Nagas in the proposed reformed scheme of India.

The memo was submitted to Clement Atlee on his visit to Kohima on January 10, 1929 (the text is kept with the Naga Literature Society in Mokokchung). The Naga Club comprised the cream of the Naga intelligentsia which later became the Naga National Council, which then produced the two breakaway factions of the National Socialist Council of Nagalim.

This historical background has often been used by the Nagas to legitimize their stand. The ULFA movement is a corollary to this. The birth of ULFA is at best described as a case of belated inspiration from the legendary Naga insurgent, A.Z. Phizo (1900-1990). Phizo can be attributed with having singlehandedly shaped the greater Naga ethnic consciousness and identity. He was a hardliner and the fact that he prevailed over moderates changed the entire course of the Naga destiny. There were moderates too, or should

The Naga imbroglio will take more than just a truce to resolve. It requires a redressal of misplaced ethnic sentiments, writes Zia Haq



NSCN(I-M) cadres: temperamental ethnicity

we say less paranoid ones, who identified themselves with the ethos of the pan-Indian history.

But Phizo wiped out the moderates with shrewd political manoeuvres. Phizo walked out of the NNC in 1949 but made a resurgent comeback when he defeated T. Aliba Imti, a moderate, to

tion subsequently underwent thorough politicization under Phizo which culminated in the demand for an independent state on August 14, 1947. The date is particularly significant because Phizo knew a delay in the declaration could have delegitimized the demand for independence.

The fact that the Nagas were, in fact, treated with some degree of alienation legitimizing their separatist stance cannot be wished away. The Hydell agreement gave 10 years of self-rule for them. But this was unilaterally scrapped by India to wrest full control. This is a wound that is still fresh. The Nagas still feel let down by this forceful cohesion.

Instead of placating the hurt sentiments and making them feel at home, the administration systematically stymied all possibilities of bringing about a sense of belonging in the Nagas.

Speaking in generic terms, the history of governance of the northeastern tribes has always been against their assimilation into the pan-Indian ethos. Administrative legislation like the Inner Line Regulation in 1873 barred the entry of outsiders into the Naga hills. The Home Rule regime kept the Nagas outside the purview of the provincial Congress government that was headed by Gopinath Bordoloi.

The Assam Frontier Tracts Resolution, 1880, made general laws redundant *vis-à-vis* the Nagas. These were undoubtedly British instruments to divide and rule. The Englishman, Michael Scott, a member of Nehru's Naga peace mission along with Jayaprakash Narayan and Bimala Prasad Chaliha, made a startling disclosure in the London *New Statesman*. It says, "We cannot evade our responsibility for the present tragedy...It was Britain's imperial policy which kept Nagaland isolated from India". This follows that there was very little

understanding and exchange of ideas. The worst that could happen was the dismantling of the Indian frontier administration service to carve out the present Indian administrative service. The IFAS officers were understanding and sensitive to tribal issues. But the IAS administrators seemed to ride roughshod over the tribals.

Policy formulation continues to be shoddy. The latest wedge between the Centre and the NSCN (Isak-Muivah) in the recent Bangkok conclave is the inclusion of Naga-inhabited areas outside Nagaland under the purview of the cease fire.

The Centre is not ready to extend the ceasefire to Manipur's Ukhrul, Senapati and Tamenglong districts, fearing this would strengthen the NSCN (I-M) stand. But the fact that the Naga diaspora is a crucial component of the greater tribal ethos cannot be ignored.

The Manipur districts are dominated by Tangkhul Nagas and the jailed insurgent leader, Thuingaleng Muivah is a Tangkhul. Swaraj Kaushal, former Central negotiator, has caused irreparable damage by constantly downplaying the Naga diaspora. In fact, this was the cause of his face-off with the prime minister, A.B. Vajpayee, leading to his exit from the Naga peace process.

It will take more than the existing truce to resolve the Naga impasse. Cradled in an emotional bedrock, it demands redressal of misplaced sentiments.

Theoretically speaking, most nations, including the United States, which witnessed 50 years of internal strife, have passed through discontents in its ethnic cauldron. "The state matures through civil wars," Stalin had once said. It is in India's interest to look at the Naga imbroglio in this perspective.

That the Naga diaspora is a crucial component of the greater tribal ethos cannot be ignored

MOMENT OF TRUTH

Isak-Muivah faction can make or mar peace

IT is now up to the Isak-Muivah faction of the National Socialist Council of Nagalim to decide whether or not to honour the ceasefire. The Centre has rejected the demand that the truce be extended to Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur. But even when making the announcement, GK Pillai, joint secretary (North-east) of the Union home ministry, has been disappointingly vague which is normal. He merely said the Centre would stick to what was agreed with the NSCN-IM in August 1997. He neither confirmed nor denied repeated claims by NSCN-IM chairman Isak Swu that "right from the beginning it was mutually agreed that the ceasefire would cover all Naga-inhabited areas". Even after the July talks in Bangkok, Swu said it was after he received an assurance from the Indian mediator that this provision would be included in the announcement that he agreed to extend the ceasefire by another year. Delhi's reluctance to come clean is said to be the root cause of the friction. It is regrettable that even after three years the terms and conditions of the truce continue to be mired in controversy. It is still not too late for Delhi to take a bold decision by terminating the ceasefire which has been such a farce. It was observed more in the breach. The NSCN-IM insists the ceasefire is only between them and the security forces, implying that the others do not come under its purview.

The Centre has realised the mistake of talking to the NSCN-IM alone. It ignored pleas by the Naga Ho Ho (the apex body of tribal chiefs), NGOs and church leaders to involve all warring groups — NSCN-K and Naga National Council. The purpose of the truce is to promote an atmosphere for dialogue, which has failed to make headway. The moment of truth is at hand. Whether the NSCN-IM's threat to pull out is empty bluster will soon be known.

THE STATESMAN

Karbi ambush an NSCN bid to expand truce area

HT Correspondent
Guwahati, September 14

THE ASSAM Police has strong reasons to believe that the bid of the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (NSCN-IM) to expand the scope of its ceasefire to the Naga-inhabited areas of Assam was the motive behind the ambush on a police patrol in Karbi Anglong district on Wednesday afternoon.

The ambush, executed by the NSCN(I-M)-backed United People's Democratic Solidarity (UPDS) seeking statehood for Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills districts, killed nine policemen and injured four near Borlangphar police outpost on the Diphu-Lumding road. A militant was also killed in the retaliatory fire.

"This ambush and earlier killings in these two hill districts, bordering Nagaland and Manipur, bear the NSCN(I-M) stamp," said the Additional Director General of Police (operations) GM Srivastava. "The outfit has stepped

up its operations in the border areas and we intend to counter it with three extra companies of security forces."

Police officials feel that the NSCN(I-M) has been using the UPDS to expand the area of its

Police officials feel that the NSCN(I-M) has been using the UPDS to expand the area of its ceasefire beyond the boundaries of Nagaland towards realising the goal of carving out a Greater Nagaland

ceasefire beyond the boundaries of Nagaland towards realising the goal of carving out a Greater Nagaland region, comprising parts of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and Manipur besides Nagaland.

"The outfit's motive is to desta-

bilise the Naga-inhabited areas in Assam so that the Government is forced to include Assam within the scope of the ceasefire. The NSCN(I-M)'s intention became apparent two months back when a dozen members of the outfit were killed in a fierce gun battle with security forces in a dense forest in Cachar district," a senior official said.

The NSCN(I-M)'s effort to expand the ceasefire area has been strongly opposed by the Manipur Chief Minister W Nipamacha Singh, while the Arunachal Pradesh Government has hinted at deploying the armed forces to thwart any designs by Naga outfits. The Assam Government has chosen to remain silent on the issue.

Police officials smell a link between the ascendancy of the UPDS and the stepped-up demand of the NSCN(I-M) to expand the truce area. The UPDS burst on the scene last April, killing 10 labourers in a forest 25 km from Diphu in Karbi Anglong. The number of UPDS victims has increased to over 60 since then.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

15 SEP 2000

Nagaon, Moriagaon Ulfa units surrender

P.P. Singh

NAGAON 15 SEPTEMBER

THE ULFA suffered one of its biggest blows ever on Friday when Pranab Boro alias Swanil Dekaraja, commander of its Nagaon and Moriagaon district unit Kalong Kopali Anchalik Parishad, came overground with almost the entire district unit and surrendered before Assam chief minister P.K. Mahanta at Nagaon.

The militants brought with them eight AK-47/56 rifles, four US carbines, an M-21 and an M-16, five .32 pistols, six .38 revolvers and three 9 mm pistols besides hand grenades and a large quantity of ammunition and explosives with electronic detonators.

Thus, Mr Mahanta who was hard hit by Ulfa militants during the previous two Lok Sabha polls, especially in his hometown Nagaon, has succeeded in breaking the backbone of Ulfa in the twin districts of Nagaon and Moriagaon.

Besides Pranab Boro, those who laid down arms before the chief minister were the four commanders of its shakhas (branches) Deepak Bora of Luit Puria



Two-hundred top Ulfa men of Kalong Kopali Anchalik Shakha came overground on Friday at Nagaon in Assam before state chief minister P.K. Mahanta. — Caroline Singh

Branch, Jayanta Raja of Kaliabhomra branch, Upandra Bora of Kalali branch and Ranjan Mahanta of Rangmili shakha.

Addressing the function, Pranab Boro said the Ulfa cadre has realised the futility of their struggle as the people of the state are now no longer supporting them. "That's the reason why more and more people are com-

ing overground and the leadership is finding it tough to keep them in the camps of Bhutan," he said.

Mr Mahanta, while addressing the function, invited the top leaders of the outfit to come overground. "Violence is affecting the common man. It is driving away industry and resulting in increased unemployment. Ulfa

and other militant groups are largely responsible for this," he said.

The chief minister said the prime concern of his government now is the militants taking shelter in camps in neighboring countries. He claimed that it was because of his government's repeated requests that the Union government had taken up the matter with neighbouring countries including Bhutan, Bangladesh and Myanmar. "It will not be long before results of these efforts start becoming visible," he added.

Later, talking to the media, Mr Mahanta said with peace returning to the state, there is now less justification to deploy the army.

But, he added quickly, there is still need for the army to keep up the pressure on the militants on the international borders so that they are not allowed to sneak in the state and create any disturbance.

The chief minister assured that all those who have come overground will be suitably rehabilitated in accordance with the economic package announced by the Union government.

The Economic Times

15 SEP 2000

Muivah release to help resume peace talks: NSCN(I-M)

HT Correspondent/Agencies
Kohima, September 19

THE RELEASE of Thuingaleng Muivah from a Thailand prison on bail would help resume the Naga peace talks, the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (I-M) said on Tuesday.

NSCN(I-M) chairman Issac Swu, in a statement, thanked all organisations and individuals who helped secure Muivah's release.

"The time is here for every one of us to praise God for His wonderful grace in releasing Muivah and opening the way for early resumption of the long-stalled Indo-Naga peace process," Swu said.

"NSCN declares its profound gratitude to the Naga people and their friends for the outstanding efforts and sacrifices in securing the release of Muivah from a Thai prison on September 13."

Swu also thanked Thailand, human rights organisations from across the world and Indian

lawyers. "Your concern and support for peace and justice shall be praised for all times to come."

"It is the Thai Government's business, I have nothing to say on this," Chief Minister S C Jamir said on Muivah's release.

Thai immigration officials arrested Muivah in January at Bangkok airport for trying to jump bail and attempting to enter Thailand with forged travel papers.

He appeared periodically at a Thai court to answer the charges and was scheduled to appear again on September 22.

NSCN(K) official discharged: The NSCN(K) has discharged its Lotha region's acting chairman Robin Lotha for "anti-

NSCN work". He was charged with harassing people and harbouring extortionists, ignoring repeated warnings. The MIP secretary-in-charge of the GRRN/NSCN(K) released the press note that pleaded lack of options other than discharging Lotha.

Thai officials arrested Muivah in January at Bangkok airport for trying to jump bail and attempting to enter Thailand with forged documents

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

20 SEP 2000

Treat Naga problem on par with Kashmir

HT Correspondent
Kohima, September 19

THE NAGA issue should be tackled as a national problem, on par with Kashmir, with extensive debates and discussions in Parliament, media and other national fora, Chief Minister S C Jamir said.

He was delivering the keynote address at a training-cum-workshop organised for party-men by the Nagaland Pradesh Congress Committee that concluded on Monday.

Jamir advocated transparency in policies so that people across the country become aware of the facts and implications of the political problem, similar to that of Kashmir that is on the national agenda. To treat it as a regional law and order problem would be dangerous, Jamir warned.

Nagaland is an integral part of the country, the Chief Minister reiterated and any settle-

ment would have to be found within the Indian Constitution. Concepts such as sovereignty and independence sound attractive, but these are unrealistic in the current context, he said.

The fear of the gun should not stop people from expressing their views. It is high time that violence is shunned and democratic traditions re-established to help bring back peace, he said.

Violence has dominated Naga society for five decades and people now crave for peace and consequent prosperity, Jamir, who is also NPCC president, said. With natural resources such as oil, gas, forest produce and minerals in plenty in the State, progress is inevitable.

Jamir appreciated the ongoing peace process between the Centre and the NSCN(I-M). But, he said, "We are not aware of the progress that has been made.

People are becoming impatient. They need to know the agenda on which the talks are based. It is their future that is at stake, after all".

The Centre's dialogue with one group could be counterproductive, Jamir said. All factions, NGOs, intellectuals should be involved and the final solution should be acceptable to the people, he emphasised.

But the State Government "is prepared to face the consequences" if the NSCN(I-M) withdraws from the current ceasefire with the Centre. "They (NSCN-I-M) will break the ceasefire to their disadvantage because people are fed up with them," Jamir said.

The militant outfit has threatened to pull out of the ceasefire if it is not extended to Naga-inhabited areas of Assam, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh.

According to Jamir, the 16-Point

Agreement of 1960 made possible the birth of Nagaland. The deal stipulated that the administrative and development expenditure of the State would be met out of Central grants.

Statehood has been beneficial to the people and much progress has been made in 37 years, Jamir said. He, however, deplored the Centre's "abrupt" change in funding pattern in 1989-90 that halted special Central assistance to bridge the State's revenue gap.

Development has been affected as a result. Mounting expenditure on law and order and Government machinery along with unchanged non-plan expenditure has worsened things, Jamir said. He was critical of the Centre's insensitivity towards the State's repeated pleas to review the situation.

Mukul Wasnik and AICC general-secretary Oscar Fernandes attended the workshop.

JamirSpeak

TIME FOR PEACE IN NAGALAND

THERE ARE ENCOURAGING signals for the resumption of talks with insurgents in Nagaland, to bring about a negotiated settlement and lasting peace. A three-year-old ceasefire was extended by both sides; the Ceasefire Monitoring Group has met and the rebel Naga leader, Mr. Thuingaleng Muviah, has been released on bail in Thailand (where he was arrested last year for travelling with forged documents). The only point of debate now centres on extending the ceasefire to what the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN), led by Mr. Muviah, calls all 'Naga areas'. This demand has raised two serious questions — one, it involves other States in the Northeast, inhabited by the Nagas; and two, this should not be construed by the ultras as a euphemism for their demand in recent years for 'Nagalim' or Greater Nagaland. While every reasonable demand must be considered by the Centre, New Delhi cannot compromise on the territorial integrity of any of the neighbouring States in the region. That could spark fresh problems and complicate the peace process even more. There may be nothing wrong in extending the ceasefire to other areas in the Northeast, without in any way legitimising the demand for Nagalim. If the NSCN agrees to clarify this point, substantive negotiations can begin in the near future.

Unfortunately, the Naga peace process has undergone several twists and turns in the past three years, when a ceasefire has been in place. Of course, there have been violations of the ceasefire and trading of charges by the rebels and the security forces. Unless an atmosphere of trust is created and the ceasefire definitely covers all citizens, it could be meaningless. The not-too-infrequent ambushes and the counter insurgency operations have only soured the pitch and evented the peace process from achieving

anything tangible in three years. The change of Government at the Centre could have retarded the process, but the Vajpayee Ministry has now acquired a reasonable degree of stability. Again, the change of the Centre's negotiator on Nagaland added to the confusion. The replacement of Mr. Swaraj Kaushal by the former Home Secretary, Mr. K. Padmanabhaiah, could have unsettled the talks, but the rebels took it in the right spirit. Also, the seasoned bureaucrat brings loads of experience and expertise with him. It is now time to kick-start the negotiations with all the insurgent groups in Nagaland, perhaps on parallel tracks to begin with. They can be fused into a final round of parleys when the time is ripe for a settlement.

Obviously, the NSCN leader, Mr. Muviah, will have to be in Thailand, till the disposal of the case against him. But he is at least free and available for consultations both to his colleagues and the Government's negotiators. That could make a qualitative difference when serious talks begin. There is another aspect that the Centre and the Prime Minister must consider. A Congress(I) delegation recently met Mr. Vajpayee and impressed on him the need to involve the Chief Minister of Nagaland, Mr. S. C. Jamir, in the peace talks. It is not fair to leave out the State Government when it has to not only maintain law and order but also deal with the rehabilitation of insurgents when they lay down arms and join the mainstream. The Centre cannot close its eyes to the crimes, the extortion and the harassment that some of the rebels indulge in. The State administration has to bear the burden of these problems and deal with the victims. Keeping these developments in mind, the Prime Minister and the Home Minister must review the Naga peace process and provide a clear direction and focus to future negotiations.

CLIMATE OF VIOLENCE

27/9 Khasi insurgents ride again SF-8

ONE expected the Meghalaya government to tackle the insurgency problem in its infancy. Formed with the blessings of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isak-Muivah), the existence of the Hinniewtrep National Liberation Front came to light only in July 1992. The previous Salseng Aizawl government took steps to ensure the outfit did not grow in strength. In 1991 the state police forced the surrender of the lesser known Achik Liberation Magrik Army, a Garo outfit, and it was expected that the HNLF would fall in line. But not only has it intensified its activities, an Alma offshoot is reportedly engaged in harassing traders and ministers through extortion. Life in cosmopolitan Shillong has been disturbed since the killing of a CRPF havildar on August 15. It has been a familiar pattern in the past to create a climate of tension before the Pujas or Independence day. Shillong has not been the same since the 1986 ethnic outrages. It is to be hoped that the state administration will not allow it to degenerate into a law and order problem during the Hindu festival.

The crux of the problem is that chief minister EK Mawlong's position is only fooling itself if it seeks to justify a crackdown after the Centre agrees to its proposal to ban the HNLF. Outlawing militant outfits has made little difference; they continue to assert themselves. What comes as little surprise is the Union Home Ministry's offer of "direct" negotiations with the Khasi outfit, bypassing the state administration. What if the insurgents were to suggest that talks be held outside India and in the presence of a third party? Delhi has made too many mistakes in the past. The lesson of the NSCN(I-M) and Ulfa should not be lost on it.

THE STATESMAN

22/9/92

Centre, NSCN (IM) agree to extend ceasefire by one year

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, July 31

HT-14
118

THE CENTRE and the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isak-Muivah) on Monday agreed to extend the ceasefire in Nagaland by one year from August 1, 2000 and move forward with the peace process in order to find a political solution to the Naga issue.

Talking to reporters here today, a Home Ministry spokesperson said: "It is felt that there is need for mutual trust."

"The agreed ground rules will be

implemented during the current cease-fire period in letter and spirit, he added.

The spokesman further said that at the peace talks in Bangkok, the two sides "decided to further extend the ceasefire for a period of one year, with effect from August 1, 2000."

The decision to extend the ceasefire came after the former Union Home Secretary Mr K Padmanabhaiah held talks on July 29 and July 30 in Bangkok with the chairman of the NSCN (I-M), Mr Isak Swu.

9 N 5 4 2

The other NSCN leader T Muivah is in a Thailand prison undergoing a term for trying to enter Thailand with forged travel documents and later jumping bail.

Meanwhile, a statement by chairman Isak Swu said: "It has been decided to extend the cease-fire for a year starting from August 1."

The ceasefire agreement is between the Government of India and NSCN as two entities.

Both has decided to move forward with the peace process to bring about a lasting political solution to the Indo-Naga issue."

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

- 1 AUG 2000

Nine killed, 5 injured in Assam train blast

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

GUWAHATI, July 31. — Nine persons were killed and five injured when a blast ripped through two compartments of the 5716 UP Katihar-Tezpur Town Express at Sonmohori between Rangiya and Goreswar stations on the Northeast Frontier Railway around 6 pm today, according to NFR officials.

The NFR's chief public relations officer said the blast had created a crater measuring about one-and-half metre in diameter and one metre in depth on the metre gauge section. The explosives were planted under a culvert.

The official said that the deceased included security forces personnel and civilians. Intelligence sources said that the blast was the handiwork of the Ulfa.

Today's blast comes within 36 hours of another

blast which derailed 12 wagons of a goods train near Rangiya junction yesterday. The National Democratic Front of Bodoland is suspected to have triggered yesterday's blast.

The NFR spokesperson said that services on the broadgauge section, which were disrupted yesterday following a blast, were restored at 8 pm today.

However, services on the metre gauge section have now been disrupted following this evening's blast. The official said that medical vans from Rangapahar, New Bongaigaon and New Guwahati have been rushed to the spot. Senior NFR, GRP and police officials are camping at the site.

Militant outfits in Assam have made it a practice to target the railways and oil installations in the run-up to the Independence Day and Republic Day.

THE STATESMAN

- 1 AUG 2000

Anti-terrorism Bill ruffles N-E

FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT

Imphal, Aug. 6: Human rights groups in the Northeast have constituted a special committee to launch a campaign against the proposed Prevention of Terrorism Bill, 2000.

Chairman of the Northeast Co-ordination Committee on Human Rights, Surjit Chongtham, told a news conference here today that the panel would mobilise public opinion against the anti-terrorism Bill with the help of legislators and MPs from the region.

"Several draconian laws like the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act and the National Security Act are already in force in the Northeast. The new Bill is nothing but another instrument to ter-

Rights bodies to mobilise public opinion against proposed law

rorise the people with," he said. Chongtham said the "all-India co-ordination committee" constituted recently would not allow the proposed Bill to be passed in Parliament, come what may.

Echoing his views, convenor of the Manipur-based Committee on Human Rights, L. Pardesi, said public awareness about the danger posed by "black laws" was essential.

He said the majority of the people were unaware about the "draconian provisions" in the anti-terrorism Bill.

The rights activist said the

proposed legislation was "more dangerous" than the much-maligned Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act. "Over 76,000 people were detained under TADA between 1985 and 1995, but only one per cent of them were convicted. This proves that 99 per cent of those detained were people who were needlessly accused of anti-national activities," he added.

Pardesi said the people of the Northeast could not afford to relax and allow the Centre to enact another legislation aimed at terrorising them in the name of bringing

anti-national activities to a halt. Naorem Sanajaoba, who teaches Law at Gauhati University, said the National Human Rights Commission's stand on the anti-terrorism Bill was justified.

"The commission has rightly pointed out that criminal laws already in force are enough to deal with terrorists," he said.

Terming the proposed Bill as "anti-people" and one that "violates the spirit of the Constitution", Sanajaoba urged the people to resist any move to get it passed.

The professor of Law also asked the Manipur Human Rights Commission to raise its voice against the anti-terrorism Bill. "It is unfortunate that the commission is yet to take a stand on the issue," he said.

THE TELEGRAPH

7 AUG 2000

Nipamacha backs terrorism Bill

FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT

Imp⁸hal, Aug. 8: Manipur chief minister Wahengbam Nipamacha Singh has raised the hackles of human rights activists by backing the proposed Prevention of Terrorism Bill, 2000.

He told the chief ministers' conference in New Delhi recently that the United Front of Manipur government had no objection to the Bill being passed in Parliament.

But law minister Gangmumei Kamei today denied that the coalition ministry had "unanimously agreed" to support the proposed legislation.

Kamei told **The Telegraph** that the chief minister did not seek the law department's opinion before announcing his government's support for the anti-terrorism Bill.

He said the UFM government was yet to discuss the issue.

The Manipur coalition com-

Manipur CM stand raises hackles of rights activists

prises the Federal Party of Manipur, of which Kamei is the president, and Nipamacha Singh's Manipur State Congress Party.

Asked whether he differed with Nipamacha Singh on the proposed anti-terrorism Bill, the law minister said he would not like to take a stand without a thorough perusal of its provisions.

Speaking at the chief ministers' conference on Friday, Nipamacha Singh urged Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee to "go ahead with the Bill".

He said the proposed legislation could be used to deal with the problem of militancy in the North-east in a more effective manner.

However, the chief minister admitted that a section of non-governmental organisations, including women's groups, would per-

haps never be convinced about the need to introduce such a legislation.

The Manipur Human Rights Commission, which had remained mum on the issue, today joined the ranks of those opposed to the proposed Bill.

Commission members said their stand was the same as that of the National Human Rights Commission, which believes that criminal laws already in force are enough to deal with terrorism.

Lauding the Manipur rights commission for finally taking a stand on the issue, Kamei said he respected its decision to oppose the Bill. The law minister, who was instrumental in constituting the rights commission in 1998, said a national task force headed by former Union home secretary

N.N. Vohra recently made certain suggestions "in sync" with the anti-terrorism Bill. However, these suggestions were opposed by the state law department in writing, he said.

One of the suggestions made by the task force was that prosecution powers be handed over to the home department.

Three drown

At least three persons were drowned in the Siang river while constructing a rope-wire suspension bridge in the East Siang district recently.

Official sources said the villagers and government officials of Pangin, Korang, Yaksi and Dosing have completed the bridge over the Siang river on self-help basis. The Sangram bridge connecting Pangin and Boleng had been washed away by flash floods on July 11. The bodies of the victims could not be recovered, sources added.

THE TELEGRAPH

- 9 AUG 2000

Settling the Naga issue

By Rajindar Sachar

DEEP suspicion, complaints of breach of promises by the Government of India and a confusing situation continue to bedevil the prospect of a solution to the Naga question. A breakthrough was, however, made when the then Prime Minister, Mr. I. K. Gujral, made the following announcement in Parliament on July 25, 1997: "In recent talks with the Isac Muivah group of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN), it has been mutually agreed to cease fire with effect from 1 August, 1997 and initiate discussions at political levels."

The terms of talks were agreed as follows: (i) it shall be without conditions from both sides; (ii) it shall be at the highest level, that is, at the Prime Ministerial level; and (iii) the venue shall be anywhere outside India.

In all fairness, it must be recognised that this became possible because of the initiative taken earlier by former Prime Ministers beginning with a meeting between Mr. P. V. Narasimha Rao and the NSCN collective leadership in 1995. Again in February 1997, Mr. H. D. Deve Gowda had a meeting with Mr. Isac Swu, chairman and Mr. Muivah, general secretary, NSCN.

In 1998, the emissary of the Prime Minister, Mr. A. B. Vajpayee, met the NSCN collective leadership thrice at different places outside India. This was followed in September 1998 when Mr. Vajpayee held talks with the NSCN collective leadership in Paris. The Prime Minister's new emissary, Mr. K. Padmanabhaiah, also met the collective leadership in Amsterdam twice in 1999.

Despite some serious effort by both sides, the situation was becoming more critical, especially because the ceasefire was to expire by July 31, 2000, and no extension was being announced. This aspect was overwhelmingly impressed upon me when some of us participated in a consultation organised by the Asia

Forum, Bangkok, on July 24, 2000. The meeting appealed to both the NSCN and the Government of India to extend the ceasefire so that the peaceful, constructive dialogue may continue.

One hurdle to the continuation of talks was the arrest and detention of Mr. Muivah by the Thailand Government on the charge of travelling on a fake passport. We were informed by Thai lawyers

to officially extend the ceasefire to all Naga-inhabited areas, especially to the four Naga-inhabited districts (Ukhrul, Chandele, Senapati and Tamenglong) in Manipur.

A top political functionary of the Union Government says the Manipur Government fears this may be used as a device to take away these areas. This attitude appears illogical and unhelpful.

Since the ceasefire, casualties have come down to one-third the pre-1997 levels. This is justification and compulsion enough for the Centre and the NSCN to continue peace talks.

At present the most pressing need is to maintain peace — in as large an area as possible. The question of reorganisation of States is totally irrelevant in the context of a ceasefire.

The whole rationale of a ceasefire is to create an atmosphere of goodwill to facilitate talks. When a ceasefire was agreed to in 1997, the NSCN was operating in all Naga areas, even those outside Nagaland. It makes little sense to say that while both parties will hold their fire within Nagaland, they will continue to fight in areas outside the State. Of course, the Centre can legitimately expect the NSCN to ensure a ceasefire in all these areas by other groups also.

Another cause for disturbance of the peace process was the attempt on the life of the Nagaland Chief Minister, Mr. S. C. Jamir, in an ambush in November 1999. Immediately after this, Mr. Jamir issued a memo to all police stations that all NSCN cadres be arrested, which the NSCN considers a breach of the ceasefire. Nagaland Government representatives also refused to attend some meetings of the ceasefire Monitoring Group.

Subsequently, Mr. Jamir was persuaded to relent and his representatives attended the last meeting of monitoring group in May, 2000. For some administrative reasons, meetings have not been held in June and July, adding to the further distrust of the NSCN. The next meeting is scheduled for the middle of this month. There should, however, be an independent enquiry into the attack on Mr. Jamir since the NSCN has denied a hand in it.

Another unfortunate incident is the killing of 12 NSCN activists by the 17 Para regiment on July 11 in the North Cachar Hills. This has naturally caused a wave of anger amongst Nagas, and is held up as a breach of the ceasefire. The Centre has a different version of the incident, but a high-powered judicial inquiry should be ordered to defuse the situation.

Notwithstanding this disturbing event, it was a relief when we were told by Mr. Rh. Raising, member, NSCN Steering Committee, that "Nagas are totally committed to solve the problem through peaceful means. They want to solve any problem through mutual discussion, understanding, respect and consent". It is not only the NSCN but many other groups and human right activists in Naga areas who believe that continuing violence is ruinous for everyone and that a solution has to be found through talks.

I believe Naga civil society is prepared to play an active, meaningful role towards this end. It is accepted even in the highest Government circles that since the ceasefire, casualties have come down to one-third the pre-1997 period. This alone is justification and compulsion enough for both the Centre and the NSCN to continue their peace talks, notwithstanding the provocations from some quarters on political considerations or on wrong analyses. The gun can never solve a problem in the modern world.

In fact, the issue of influx has actually aggravated with more people coming in hordes from Bangladesh

15 years later, influx issue just a closed chapter: AASU

SAMUDRA GUPTA KASHYAP
GUWAHATI, AUG 13

FIFTEEN years ago, when the Assam accord was signed, the people of the state heaved a sigh of relief, thinking that the issue of illegal migration from Bangladesh would be solved finally.

However, while a number of other issues included in the accord have been successfully implemented, the main issue remains to be addressed.

"It is a matter of grave concern that neither the Assam Government nor the Centre is willing to sincerely put an end to infiltration and solve the issue once and for all. What we have seen over the years is that both Asom Gana Parishad and the BJP are only willing to continue politick-

ing with the issue," says All Assam Students' Union (AASU) president Prabin Boro.

One week ahead of the fifteenth anniversary of the accord, the AASU was taking stock of the accord's implementation, and found that the issue of influx had actually aggravated, with more people coming in from Bangladesh, in addition to the number of those already living here going up manifold.

"The worst is the issue of scrapping the Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunals) Act of 1983, which is the main hurdle in identifying and throwing out the Bangladeshi migrants who have swamped the state, and are on the verge of reducing the indigenous population into a minority," Boro adds. AASU adviser Samujjal

Kumar Bhattacharyya is even more enraged.

He charges Chief Minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta with having double standards. "Mahanta, one of the principal signatories to the accord, talks in different voices on the IMDT Act," he says.

ASSAM ACCORD

He points out that while a recommendation by the Assam government was in favour of the Act being scrapped, Mahanta had recently told a party convention here that the Act should be amended. "This is ridiculous," the AASU adviser added.

In fact, the AASU delegation walked

out of a meeting convened by the state government regarding a review of the accord, complaining that the government and its Chief Minister had contradicted its stands on the Act.

The AASU is equally sore with the Centre for not scrapping the Act. "Even the President of India had, during his address to Parliament, favoured repealing the Act, but till date the Government at the Centre has not taken any concrete step," Bhattacharyya says.

The AASU has also complained that work on construction of a barbed wire fence along the India-Bangladesh border is progressing at a snail's pace. "While work on the fence has been slow, infiltration is still continuing unabated," the AASU leader says.

In the 152-km Indo-Bangla border portion in Dhubri, Karimganj and Cachar sectors, for instance, May 1999, was taken as the target for completion, but more than 20 kilometres are yet to be fenced.

A road along the border to facilitate better patrolling is also incomplete with about 50 km yet to be constructed, official statistics say.

Interestingly most of the other clauses of the accord, like a refinery at Numaligarh, a cultural complex at Guwahati, extension of broad gauge railways up to Dibrugarh, an ITI at Guwahati, have been all completed, though much behind schedule.

Several other projects have also come up in the state as offshoots of the Assam Accord.

INDIAN EXPRESS

14 AUG 2000

NSCN(I-M) warns Manipur CM on ceasefire statement

Imphal, August 13

NSCN(I-M) HAS asked Manipur Chief Minister Wahengbam Nipamacha Singh to withdraw his statement that the ceasefire between the Centre and the underground outfit did not extend to Manipur.

A copy of the NSCN(I-M)'s open letter to the Chief Minister, circulated to the press, said: "Nipamacha Singh would live to regret it if he does not withdraw his statement and support the peace progress."

The letter, dated August 12 and signed by the outfit's "home minister" Q Tuccu, said Singh's statement was designed to create a mis-

understanding between Naga and Meitei people.

The letter said the NSCN(I-M) would never allow the age-old friendship between Naga and Meitei people to be betrayed by what it termed 'narrow minded politics and politicians'.

Singh had recently said that the ceasefire between the Government of India and NSCN(I-M) did not extend to Manipur.

"There is no informal or formal ceasefire in Manipur," he said, commenting on press reports attributed to security sources that an "informal ceasefire" was in existence in Manipur.

The three-year-old ceasefire which had expired on July 31, was

extended for another year from August 1 in Nagaland to enable the Centre and NSCN(I-M) continue with peace talks for bringing peace in Nagaland, official sources said.

The NSCN(I-M)'s letter claimed that "everyone in Manipur knows that four hill districts, Tamenglong, Chandel, Ukhrul and Senapati, were a 'part of Naga territory from ancient times'." It said the Naga People's Movement for the integration of all Naga-inhabited areas in the region began long before Manipur attained statehood.

The letter also claimed that the State Government had neglected the "Naga-settled" areas in Manipur stating that the areas still remained backward. (PTI)

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

1 8 200

Ethnic violence claims three in West Tripura

Syed Sajjad Ali
Agartala, August 13

THREE PERSONS, including a policeman, were killed in West Tripura on Saturday night. Suspected Bengali assailants killed an old couple and tribal rebels shot dead a policeman, reportedly, to avenge the killings.

Police said Sudhir Debbarma (55) and his wife Bindarani (42) were chopped off with sharp weapons near their house at Palpara. They died instantly.

The ruling CPI(M) has condemned the killing of Debbarma, a former gaon panchayat chairman.

Police have neither identified the

killers nor have they ascertained the motive behind the killings. They, however, suspect that Bengali militants were responsible for the attack.

Police havilder Harendra Debnath was shot dead at his

**Police suspect Bengali
militants were
behind the killings**

home in Chandranagar, about six km from Palpara.

Suspected NLFT rebels raided Chandranagar to "avenge" the killing of the couple.

The rebels first took away one Manik Sarkar from his house and

then stormed the house of Harendra Debnath. They fired at Debnath from point-blank range killing him immediately.

His family members were busy watching TV and were taken by surprise by the sudden raid. Harendra's son-in-law Gopal and a neighbour Manik Sarkar were abducted after the killing.

Fearing a full-scale ethnic tension, senior police officers rushed to the spot and maintained a round-the-clock vigil throughout Saturday night. Police said the situation has been peaceful since Sunday morning.

In another incident, Titon Sarkar was abducted from Bhanggamura at Manu in North district on Saturday night.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

1 4 AUG 2000

Withdraw statement on ceasefire, NSCN tells CM

Imphal, August 13

1418
NSCN (I-M) has asked Manipur Chief Minister Wahengbam Nipamacha Singho to withdraw his statement that the ceasefire between the Centre and the underground outfit did not extend to Manipur.

A copy of the NSCN (I-M)'s open letter to the Chief Minister circulated to the Press said "Nipamacha Singh would live to regret it if he does not withdraw his statement and support the peace process."

The letter dated August 12 and signed by the outfit's 'home Minister' Q Tuccu, said Singh's statement was designed to create a misunderstanding between Naga and Meitei people.

The letter said the NSCN (I-M) would never allow the age-old

friendship between Naga and Meitei people to be betrayed by what it termed 'narrow minded politics and politicians'.

Nipamacha Singh had recently said that the ceasefire between the Government of India and NSCN (I-M) did not extend to the State of Manipur.

"There is no informal or formal ceasefire in Manipur," Nipamacha Singh said commenting on Press reports attributed to security sources that an "informal ceasefire" was in existence in the State.

The three-year-old ceasefire, which had expired on July 31 last, was extended for another year from August 1 in Nagaland to enable the Central Government and NSCN (I-M) continue peace talks.

The NSCN (I-M)'s letter claimed

that "everyone in Manipur knows that four hill districts -- Tamenglong, Chandel, Ukhru and Senapati -- were a 'part of Naga territory from ancient times'."

It said the Naga people's movement for the integration of all Naga-inhabited areas in the region began long before Manipur attained statehood.

The letter also claimed that the State Government had neglected the "Naga-settled" areas in Manipur stating that the areas still remained backward.

(PTI)

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

14 AUG 2000

Bhutan police gear up to counter N-E rebels

FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT

Guwahati, Aug. 13: Worried over the prospect of militants from the Northeast creating trouble in its territory, the Bhutan government is trying to improve the efficiency of the country's police force.

The move is in addition to a proposed military crackdown on Ulfa and Bodo militants taking shelter in the Himalayan kingdom.

A four-day meeting held last week reviewed the "capability and general preparedness" of the police force, the Thimphu-based newspaper, *Kuensel*, reported in its latest issue.

The newspaper quoted Col. Wangdi Teshering, the country's police chief, as saying that the brainstorming session was aimed at evaluating the ability of the police force to "deal with any situation arising out of the continued presence of militants near the southern borders".

The meeting stressed the need for better coordination with the Royal Bhutan Army and the forest department, Teshering said. It also reviewed security arrangements at key installations and towns, he added.

Though the Bhutan government "favours" military action against Ulfa and Bodo militants who have set up camps in the jungles bordering Assam, it is yet to take any steps in this regard.

However, the National Assembly did adopt a resolution on July 4, expressing its commitment to expelling all militants from the Himalayan kingdom.

Assam chief minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta, who wants Bhutan to launch a crackdown as soon as possible, was prompt in welcoming the resolution and a statement by Bhutan home minister Thinlay Gyamtsho in the National Assembly. He also urged the Bhutan government to seek military help from India, if required.

"We are happy with the commitment made by the Bhutanese home minister that steps will be taken to cut off supplies to militants and also punish those responsible for assisting them," Mahanta said.

However, according to reports emanating from Thimphu, the Bhutanese Army is "ill-equipped" to take on militant outfits of the Northeast, especially the Ulfa.

Though there has often been talk of joint operations, a decision

is yet to be taken in this regard.

The *Kuensel* report, however, indicates that the long-awaited military operation against Ulfa and Bodo militants will be launched soon.

Police sources here said the report could be true as the Ulfa had asked its activists in Bhutan to shift to "safer places". A notice issued by the Ulfa recently hinted that operations would be launched just prior to or after Independence Day, they said.

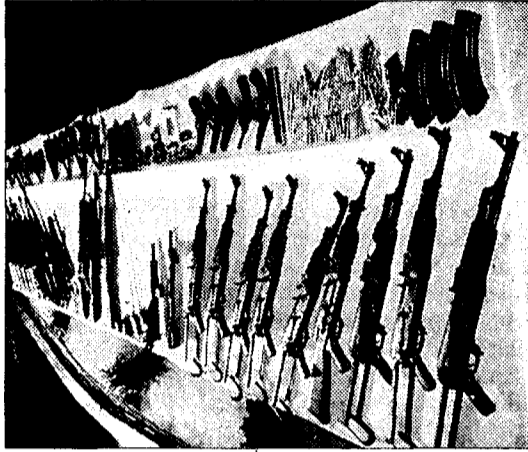
The police have stepped up vigil along the international border and also alerted their counterparts in other northeastern states about the possibility of militants trying to sneak into the region from Bhutan.

Minister flays UN: Revenue minister Zoi Nath Sharma today criticised the Unicef for not coming to the aid of children, who were affected by floods in the state. Sharma flayed the organisation a day after Britain announced a financial aid of Rs 3.72 crore (£2,50,000 pounds) for flood relief in Assam in response to an appeal by the International Red Cross Society. The Geneva-based agency has sought \$35 million to help flood victims in the Northeast.

THE TELEGRAPH

14 AUG 2000

Top Ulfa leader Deori defects, reveals the China connection



A GENESIS: Ulfa leader Lohit Deori formally surrenders before Assam chief minister P.K. Mahanta in a public ceremony in Guwahati on Monday and (right) the cache of ammunition

P.P. Singh

Caroline Singh

GUWAHATI 14 AUGUST

FORMER TOP Ulfa leader and the brain behind its camps in Bhutan, self styled captain Lohit Deori on Monday said some of the Chinese intelligence agencies using the Pakistan ISI channel were arming the militant organisations including Ulfa and that he had himself been in China for two years on this mission.

Deori, who came overground on Monday, ceremoniously after handing over his personal weapon to Assam chief minister P.K. Mahanta at a function on Monday morning, along with 287 other militants, while talking to reporters after the function said Ulfa's ISI connection was not new since they had been receiving all kinds of support from the organisation.

He said he had been in China during 1986-88 for procurement of arms and training and since then it has been a continuous process as the arms manufactured in China are passed to them through ISI and all these arms do not carry the markings giving their country of origin which is also against all international norms. Deori informed that he was in Pakistan for six months during which he went to Islamabad, Peshawar and in Afghanistan.

Talking about the present situation in the Ulfa he said it had become a "one man show" where only Paresh Barua mattered. Even the chairman Arvinda Rajkhowa did not have enough cadres to carry out his decisions.

He said he had met the chairman two months ago in Bhutan and was of the view that the chair-

man was not against holding talks with the state and the Centre could not come out openly due to the fear of "one man."

Deori was highly critical of his one-time leader Paresh Baruah and said: "he does not like criticism or being questioned as we had once asked in the 7th Meeting of the general council in 1995 about the authenticity of his claim that Assam was not part of India. He did not like it and since then no meeting of the general council has been held."

Though by bringing him overground the administration has been able to give a major blow to the outfit but he was a bigger threat to the outfit when he had not come out in the open as they did not know his exact location and perceived him as a major threat to their lives.

It was his presence in Bhutan till recently which had been a major deterrent for the Ulfa leaders to come to Bhutan.

Assam chief minister P.K. Mahanta, addressing the function, said since April 1, 1998 so far 1994 militants had come overground of which 1004 had laid down their arms before the army and 919 before the police and civil administration while more than 400 militants who had come overground were now in the rehabilitation camps where they were given training in various vocational fields.

He said the state was burdened with a massive unemployment problem which could not be solved overnight but any attempt to generate employment opportunities is negated by violence thus it was in these militant groups who were coming in the way of welfare of the people of the state.

THE ECONOMIC TIME

The Economic Time

15 AUG 2000

ULFA strengthens base in Bengal

Rahul Karmakar
Guwahati, August 12

THE OUTLAWED United Liberation Front of Assam has strengthened its base in Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar districts of West Bengal with active assistance from the Kamtapur Liberation Organisation (KLO), which is fighting for a separate State for the Koch-Rajbongshi people.

These two districts, while serving as a relatively safe corridor for ULFA cadres to move to and from training camps in Bhutan, are strategic for their proximity to Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and arms-supply centres in Bihar.

According to Intelligence reports, the ULFA has been training KLO men at their Kalikhola camp for the past two years under a long-term agreement of joint operations and base expansion in West Bengal. A top ULFA leader from the Kalikhola camp, who was caught by the Dhubri

police recently, confessed that some 40 KLO cadres were trained in guerilla warfare by the ULFA last year and 22 more were undergoing training till July.

Cross-examination revealed that the ULFA had aided the KLO in killing political leaders Paresh Paul

and Nitai Das in these districts since April this year. Paul was gunned down a few months back while Das was murdered at Jalpaiguri on August 7. Both belonged to the CPI(M).

A top police official here, quoting the Intelligence reports, said the ULFA had found an ally in the nascent KLO, eager to emulate the North-East militants. Besides targeting local Bengali leaders, the KLO and the ULFA have also begun serving extortion notices to businessmen and professionals in places like Cooch Behar, Alipurduar, Moynaguri, Falakata

and Jalpaiguri, the official said. "The recipients of the threats, however, don't report them to the police out of fear," he added.

Officials monitoring militants feel that while the ULFA may be propping up the KLO to kill, extort and strike terror, it is more interested in using Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar as a meeting point for arms suppliers and ISI agents from Bangladesh and Nepal.

"Bihar is a stone's throw away from Siliguri, a strategic ULFA destination. There is information that the ultras are receiving weapon parts smuggled out of a Government factory in the Munger district," an official said.

Safe Corridor

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

13 AUG 2000

Muivah key to peace talks, says NSCN(I-M) chief

Sandham Oken Jeet
Kohima, August 16

HR-7
17/8

THE NSCN (I-M) chief, Isak Chishi Swu, hoped that the Thai Government would consider appeals made by human rights organisations and release NSCN (I-M) "prime minister" Th Muivah.

The arrest and subsequent imprisonment of Muivah had stalled talks with the Indian Government and jeopardised the peace process, he said.

The Nagas have chosen Muivah as the chief negotiator and thus he was indispensable to the peace talks, the NSCN (I-M) chief said.

Swu gave full credit to the Indian Government for initiating the peace process, adding that, several

rounds of talks had already been held between the Indian Government and the NSCN(I-M) on the basis of mutually agreed terms. "We believe that there is no problem in the world that cannot be solved through mutual trust and understanding," the NSCN (I-M) chief said.

He conveyed his regard to the Indian people, Indian human rights organisations and three former Prime Ministers; H D Deve Gowda, V P Singh and Chandra Shekhar.

Q Tuccu, Kilo Kilonser (Home Minister), read out Swu's speech at the council headquarters as part of the 53rd Naga Independence Day celebrations.

Swu apologised for the "excesses

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committed by the NSCN cadres", adding that: "If it wasn't for the NSCN (I-M), the Naga nation would have been destroyed by now."

The NSCN (I-M) supreme said the ceasefire covered all Naga areas and was not confined to the so-called "Nagaland State". "The main objective of the ceasefire agreement was to facilitate political talks aimed at bringing a lasting solution to the long-drawn Indo-Naga problem," Swu said.

"The main aim of the Nagas was to unite under the banner of the Sovereign Independent Christian Socialist Democratic Republic of Nagalim," he said. "The NSCN stand, however, should not be misconstrued," he said.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

17 AUG 2000

Ulfa 'China link' under scrutiny

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

GUWAHATI, Aug. 18. — The Centre is investigating claims that a surrendered Ulfa militant that the outfit was getting arms from China.

A Union home ministry official told The Statesman over telephone from Delhi today that the government was aware that several militant outfits in the northeast were in possession of Chinese weapons but were not sure whether these were supplied by any official agency in China.

Lohit Deuri, who surrendered along with 241 other Ulfa militants here on 14 August, had said that he had visited China and had made contact with the

Black House, which is said to be a front for the Chinese intelligence agency, for procurement of arms.

The official said it was possible that these arms were being supplied by some arms smugglers. Such weapons could be obtained from Chittagong and Cox Bazar in Bangladesh. But if the investigations reveal that any Chinese official agency is involved then, the government will take up the matter with China, he said. He also wondered whether the Black House was really a front for the Chinese intelligence agency or just a building by the name, where arms smugglers could perhaps be contacted.

Deuri had also said that the

MILITANTS SURRENDER

GUWAHATI, Aug. 18. — Four Ulfa activists and two of the Rabha National Security Force surrendered to the Army here today. The Ulfa men, led by Lital Dharo surrendered to the local sub area commander Brigadier K P Nanjapa. The surrender comes close to the heels of 278 ultras laying down arms before chief minister Mr P K Mahanta here on the eve of Independence day. — PTI

arms received through the Black House route did not have the "made in China" legend embossed, to keep the Chinese connection under wraps. According to an Army official here, however, the country of origin of a weapon, can be ascertained by various means even if it does not say where it had been manufactured.

Deuri is reported to have said that the Ulfa had received a consignment of 143 AK series rifles and 235 pistols in Bhutan. The cargo had come to Bhutan from China via Tibet. While it is known that the Ulfa was getting help from ISI and also from a section of politicians and bureaucrats in Bangladesh, Deuri was the first to claim that the organisation also had the Chinese con-

nection.

But observers say the Centre would think twice before confronting China with allegations of the kind made by Deuri. It is one thing to talk hard with Bangladesh and Bhutan, bulk of the Ulfa militants are taking shelter in the latter, but quite another, when it comes to China, they said.

Reports suggest that India has achieved some success in persuading Bangladesh not to allow the militants from the northeast to set up camps in their country.

While quite a few Ulfa militants, including its general secretary, are cooling their heels in Bangladesh prisons, there are also reports that many of

them, particularly the top leaders, frequently visit that country with ease. This is because of the help they receive from a section of the people in Bangladesh, who are opposed to the ruling party.

Bhutan, on the other hand, has started flexing its muscles of late and its assembly recently gave the go ahead for army operations against the militants camping in the jungles, in southern parts of the country bordering Assam, if the latter don't leave peacefully.

However, the operations, if they are ever to be launched, can only be carried out after the monsoon, when the weather is much more conducive to such an exercise.

THE STATESMAN

THE STATESMAN

19 AUG 2000

Karbi council passes separate State resolution

Guwahati, August 19

THE NEW executive committee of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) has passed a resolution for the creation of an autonomous State comprising the Karbi Anglong district in Assam along the lines of Jharkhand, Uttaranchal and Chattisgarh, its chief executive member Mojari Hanse said on Saturday.

The resolution was passed on August 7 and the Executive Committee (EC) presented a memorandum to the State Government and the Governor, Lt Gen (Retd) S K Sinha, urging him to use his office to facilitate the creation of the autonomous State, he told reporters here.

He said the newly elected EC was committed to a clean, transparent, corruption-free and pro-people administration. He added that a public complaint booth would be set up to record allegations of bribery, favouritism and corruption in giving appointments to over 500 persons in different departments of the KAAC.

According to Hanse, inquiries would be made into the tea estate scam and irregularities in the pur-

chase of land for Karbi Bhavans in Shillong, Guwahati and Calcutta. Alleged underhand transactions of crores of rupees in projects such as ropeway construction, para gliding and golf course construction would also be looked into.

Steps would also be initiated to enquire into the transactions of various construction committees, which spent over Rs 10 crore without adhering to established departmental procedures like inviting tenders, he added.

According to Hanse, top priority would be given to rural infrastructural development and the EC would ensure proper fund release to rural sectors through the Constituency Development Committee.

To establish collective leadership, the EC would meet every week so that major decisions could be taken jointly, while the Parliamentary body would meet on the 5th and 20th of every month to ensure proper coordination with the members of the autonomous council, he said.

A special economic package would also be declared soon for the families of those who laid down their lives for the autonomous State movement. (PTI)

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

20 AUG 2003

Centre hopeful on talks with NSCN

21/8
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By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, AUG. 20. The resumption of the Ceasefire Monitoring Group (CFMG) by the Centre and the NSCN(I-M) is expected to put an end to violence and extortion plaguing the northeastern State. The Centre expects the talks to lead to a conducive atmosphere.

Talks had broken off after the Government expressed its "deep concern" at the continuing violation of the ceasefire by the NSCN(I-M) which led to 536 deaths even after the ceasefire was announced in August 1997. Of these, 165 persons lost their lives in inter-factional killings and 211 civilians were caught in cross-fire.

The current ceasefire between the Government and the NSCN (I-M) has been extended for one year with effect from August. It was also agreed at the Dimapur meeting and subsequent interactions that the "agreed ground rules" for the ceasefire will be implemented in letter and spirit. Talks are currently going on with NSCN (I-M) to make changes in the agreed ceasefire ground rules.

The request for modifications was made by the Centre as well as the Nagaland Government.

The Dimapur meeting was the first instance of intermediary-level talks between the two sides after seven months. The NSCN (I-M) leaders were led Mr. V.S. Atem and the Union Home Ministry delegation was led by the Special Secretary, Mr. R.D. Kapoor.

PTI reports:

Meanwhile, in Manipur, the Chief Minister, Mr. Wahengbam Nipamacha Singh, is expected to seek a clarification from the Centre whether the ceasefire between it and the NSCN(I-M) extended to Manipur, official sources said.

Although Mr. Singh, who left for Delhi today, was to attend a financial meeting he would discuss the issue with the Union Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani, sources said. The Manipur Cabinet, decided to oppose any move to extend the ceasefire between the NSCN(I-M) and the Union Government to "any part of Manipur including the Naga-inhabited hill districts.

THE HINDU

21 AUG 2000

THE PLOT THICKENS

Delhi must come clean on deal with NSCN-IM

IT is time the Centre cleared the doubts about the ceasefire to defuse mounting tension between Nagaland and Manipur. The contents of the truce brokered by former Prime Minister IK Gujral were never made public. He asked MPs not to press for details, raising suspicions of a secret deal with the Isak-Muivah faction of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland. When the ceasefire came into effect on 1 August 1997 the Army was confined to Nagaland. Within two weeks, however, the NSCN-IM claimed the Centre had agreed "in principle" to cover the Naga-inhabited contiguous areas of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur. Delhi neither denied nor confirmed this. Former chief negotiator Swaraj Kaushal is on record as having said that he quit because Atal Behari Vajpayee did not keep his word on extending the truce. Muivah also claims to have secured an assurance to this effect from the Prime Minister during their meeting in Paris in 1998. Again no clarification. Last week, an agency report quoted Isak Swu (after a meeting in Bangkok) as saying the truce also covered other areas and it was for the Centre to implement it. The rationale clearly is that Delhi's nod implies acceptance of the NSCN-IM's claim over these areas, paving the way for fulfilment of its "Greater Nagaland" concept.

What is intriguing is why Delhi's silence did not try the NSCN-IM's patience, allowing the controversy to rage for so long. It could have easily broken off negotiations by citing the Centre's insincerity as it had often threatened to resume an armed struggle "if Delhi tries to force its will" on it. Even as the efficacy, or otherwise, of the ceasefire is hotly debated, the focus is on the NSCN-IM threat to Manipur chief minister W Nipamacha Singh for his remark that the truce does not cover Manipur. It would have been unfair on his part not to accept the challenge as he has the people's mandate and must also maintain the state's territorial integrity. 2,000 years of Manipuri history cannot so easily be dissipated. The NSCN-IM would have embarked on a dangerous course were it to seek to achieve "sovereignty" by silencing organisations and eliminating political leaders that stand in its way.

THE STATESMAN

23 AUG 2000

Centre mulls ban on Khasi militant outfit

FROM ANIRBAN ROY

Shillong, Aug. 22: The Union home ministry is "seriously considering" banning the Hynniewtrep National Liberation Council, which has been carrying out hit-and-run operations in this capital city since the past week.

The administration imposed a curfew after a series of encounters between the HNLC and the security forces. A Central Reserve Police Force havildar was killed and a constable injured in one of these incidents.

HNLC militants had also ambushed superintendent of police (city) S.S. Kynjing's convoy on Independence Day.

G.K. Pillai, joint secretary (Northeast affairs) in the Union home ministry, told The Telegraph over phone from New Delhi today that the Meghalaya government had sought a ban on the HNLC. "The proposal is under consideration," he said.

On the involvement of the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (Isak-Muivah) in the incidents here, the home ministry official said the security forces had been given a free hand to deal with the outfit.

"Since Shillong is not in Nagaland, the security forces can take necessary steps against the NSCN(I-M) without being accused of violating the ground rules of the Naga ceasefire," he said.

Meghalaya chief secretary J.P. Singh, when contacted, refused to comment on the proposal to ban HNLC. "I cannot tell you anything on this," he said.

According to intelligence re-

ports and confessions made by some arrested militants, over a dozen NSCN(I-M) rebels sneaked into the city between August 17 and 18 to "assist" the HNLC in subversive operations.

The NSCN(I-M) was instrumental in the formation of the Hynniewtrep A'chik Liberation Council in 1992. The outfit was rechristened the HNLC when the Garo youth in its ranks launched a separate movement.

In return for training and providing weapons to HNLC activists, the NSCN(I-M) takes the lion's share of the money extorted in Meghalaya.

Naga militant leaders have been using Shillong as a "safe sanctuary" since the Fifties.

Red Cross survey

A Red Cross team today completed its survey of devastation caused by floods in the state but said the quantum of relief will be decided later, our Guwahati correspondent reports.

The information in-charge of the five-member team, Solveig Olatsdottir, told **The Telegraph** that the team will leave for damage assessment in Bihar and West Bengal tomorrow and the relief amount will be decided only after it finishes its survey in the other two states. The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies has appealed for \$3.5 million from its international donors for relief and rehabilitation work in the three states, most parts of which were badly affected by floods. Nearly 35 lakh people were affected in Assam alone in the third wave of floods.

THE TELEGRAPH

23 AUG 2001

Congress wants Jamir govt to be included in NSCN talks

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 25 AUGUST

TAKING UP cudgels on behalf of its government in Nagaland, the Congress leadership, on Friday, led a delegation to Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, demanding that the S.C. Jamir government be taken into confidence on the peace negotiations with the NSCN (I-M) group.

The representation before the Prime Minister indicated the party leadership's endorsement of the Jamir ministry's views on the issue. Mr Jamir has been unhappy over the manner in which the Vajpayee establishment has been proceeding with the peace efforts in Nagaland — without including the state government in the process.

Mr Jamir, who has survived several attacks on his life by NSCN ultras, has held the view that any peace initiative cannot

begin without a full cease-fire being agreed to by all the parties concerned. The state government has held the NSCN groups responsible for the killings, extortions and kidnappings in the state.

The delegation, on Friday, led by leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, Manmohan Singh, placed three demands before the Prime Minister on the subject. First, it said normal rules of cease-fire should be imposed before peace negotiations are worked out. It called for involvement of all factions of the NSCN as well as other outfits in the peace negotiations. It also demanded that the state government should be consulted and kept informed on the talks.

The delegation also indicated that it was not inclined to the government taking up the issue of NSCN (I-M) leader T. Muiavah's release, where he is currently

jailed in a Bangkok prison, at the diplomatic level. The Naga leader was arrested a year ago for attempting to leave Thailand on a fake passport. Recently, three former Prime Ministers have sought Mr Muiavah's unconditional release to enable continuation of peace talks in Nagaland. The Congress, however, said those asking for his unconditional release were not aware of the ground realities in the state.

Meanwhile, another delegation of MPs from the North East also called on the Prime Minister, demanding a re-examination of the special economic package for the region. The delegation, led by the North East MP's forum, also demanded that the government take up infrastructure development as recommended by the Shukla Commission and initiate projects for increasing accessibility to the region.

The Economic Times

25 AUG 2000

Concern over Naga talks at Thai meet

Sandham Oken Jeet
Kohima, August 27

THE PEOPLE of Nagaland, India and Thailand have expressed concern over the fragile peace process between the Indian Government and the NSCN(I-M), at a symposium organised by the Thai Friends of Nagas in Bangkok on August 22.

Those present at the symposium said they feared that the on-going peace process between the Government of India and the NSCN(I-M) would break down because of the continued detention of the outfit's general secretary Thuigaleng Muivah in a Thai jail.

The participants expressed concern that there was a lack of transparency in the peace process, even after several rounds of deliberations. They also said the Indian Government's apathy towards securing the release of Muivah, reflected a lack of commitment towards the peace process.

Appreciating the NSCN for maintaining restraint, the participants asked it not to get provoked.

It also asked the Indian Government to bring greater transparency into the peace talks by issuing a joint communiqué, signed by both parties, publish the

record of the talks and appoint an impartial chairman of the Ceasefire Monitoring Group.

Those at the symposium resolved to encourage wider discussions on the meaning of peace and democracy, in order to make the peace talks meaningful for the Indians and the Naga people. It was also resolved that the release of Muivah was essential for the progress of the peace talks.

NSCN(I-M) block NH-39, extort money: The Imphal-Moreh National Highway 39, an important trade route, was cut off from the region for over seven hours on Friday during a road-block put up by NSCN (I-M) activists who were extorting money from travellers, official sources said on Saturday.

Gun-toting Naga militants stopped 70 vehicles, mostly buses, at the Thamnapokpi area, along the National Highway and demanded, what they termed 'road and goods taxes', the sources said.

Over 500 passengers, travelling to the border town of Moreh from Imphal, were stranded on the highway. It took more than 10 hours to disperse the 300-armed activists who forced the drivers to remove the tyres of several vehicles.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

28 AUG 2000

People key to lasting peace in Nagaland, says former CM

Sandham Oken Jeet
Kohima, June 30

VIZOL, FORMER Nagaland Chief Minister and senior leader of the Nagaland Peoples' Council, said the 16-Point Agreement failed to bring lasting peace to the State.

According to him, the Naga Peoples' Convention (NPC) that made the agreement in 1960 with the Government of India, creating the present State of Nagaland, was a "mediating party" and not a "negotiating party".

Vizol, also NPC's former vice-president, said this was why he had refused to participate in the signing ceremony. "I was shocked when I learnt that NPC, the mediating party, was going to negotiate with the Government of India for a separate State of Nagaland without consulting our people."

He believes that "any attempt, resolution or proposal made without taking the Naga underground people into confidence cannot bring lasting peace to Nagaland".

"If we tried to negotiate with India without consulting our people struggling in Indian jails and jungles, it would be a betrayal," the former Chief Minister said. "Peace can be achieved only through polit-

ical dialogue between the Naga underground outfits and the Government of India and by consulting our people."

Vizol explained what had transpired in July 1960 when NPC delegates were asked to come prepared to Dimapur. There, the then NPC president, late Dr Imkongliba, made a brief introductory speech and said "they had an appointment with the Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal

16-Point Pact

Nehru".

Vizol claimed he was shocked when he learnt that "no sincere efforts had been made to talk to people at home". "How could they (NPC) do that while the Naga underground people and the Indian armed forces were battling each other in jungles? Many were in Indian jails, some in foreign countries and the entire Naga population was suffering. Nobody was spared," he said.

Vizol had warned the NPC delegates that their move would be a betrayal of the Naga people before he walked out of the meet with late Tajen and Mogoroto Legeisie.

"The other delegates were flown to Delhi the same day. There, they signed the infamous 16-Point Agreement," the former Regional Party Chief Minister said.

India, Vizol believed, was happy with the agreement because it thought the "pact" would bring peace to Nagaland. But it made no difference to the situation. "Even the Shillong Accord of 1975 and the ceasefire agreements of 1964 and 1997 failed to bring peace," he said.

Vizol pleaded helplessness when asked if he as Chief Minister had ever tried to bring the Naga underground outfits to a negotiating table with the Government of India. "All my life I have been in the Regional Party. Even if I tried, how much could I have done?"

He accused Indian intelligence agencies for helping topple his ministry in 1975. His party, Vizol believed, was always under suspicion because it was a regional party.

According to the former Chief Minister, the Government of India tried to split the Naga people with the help of intelligence agencies. "We are divided by our friends who are our opponents," he said.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

1 JUL 2000

India's position on CTBT since 1948

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, July 2

HT-14
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WILL A 'political consensus' for signing the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) lead to India discarding its more than five-decade old 'ethical' stand on nuclear disarmament? A brief rundown on India's stand on this controversial issue:

● **1948:** India tables a resolution in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) stating its support for the Atomic Energy Commission's proposal for controlling atomic energy for peaceful purposes and the elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons".

● **1954:** India among nations leading the call for a CTBT and co-sponsors in subsequent years many of the resolutions that help build the international momentum behind its adoption.

● **1963:** India joins the Partial Test Ban Treaty.

● **1968:** Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) signed by leading nuclear weapons states. India calls it 'discriminatory' as it maintains the status quo.

● **1971:** War with Pakistan over Bangladesh. The United States Navy deploys its Seventh Fleet led by USS Enterprise with nuclear capabilities to threaten India.

● **1974:** India officially "goes nuclear" by carrying out tests in Pokhran.

● **1978:** Noting that in the 30-year period beginning 1946, nuclear weapon states had threatened deployment of warheads on non-nuclear states as many as 37 times, India proposes at the UNGA a four-point programme of nuclear disarmament which includes the CTBT.

It calls for formulation of a time-bound programme not exceeding a decade for achieving total elimination of nuclear stockpiles.

● **1982:** India proposes a convention on No First Use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, a freeze on manufacture combined with a cut-off in the production of fissionable material for weapons purposes.

● **1988:** Rajiv Gandhi presents the Action Plan with a time

bound framework of 22 years aimed at total elimination of all nuclear weapons.

● **1993:** India enters negotiations on CTBT, which was to be spread over the next three years.

● **1995:** NPT Review and Extension Conference held. India does not participate but points out that recent nuclear tests carried out by some nuclear weapons states constituted a serious setback to the ongoing negotiations for a CTBT. By year-end, India makes its position clear that the CTBT was an unequal treaty, which did not promise much by way of global nuclear security.

● **1996:** India says the CTBT should be "securely anchored in the disarmament context" and proposes several amendments in the treaty. China and the US say 'peaceful nuclear explosions should be excluded from the ambit'. India counters that a CTBT would be useless if development, refinement and production of nuclear weapons continue.

Chairman of UN Conference on Disarmament proposes a 'clean text' which India finds unacceptable, as the nuclear weapons states made no commitment to eliminate their nuclear weapons in a specific timeframe.

Also debated by India was the formula adopted to put the CTBT into force. India says it is 'illegal' and aimed at pressurising India to "sign a text which it considered to be against its national interest".

Indian proposal counters that the CTBT should enter into force 180 days after the date of the deposit of the Instruments of Ratification by 65 states and no less than two years after its opening for signature". This is rejected.

● **1998:** India carries out underground tests again. Declares moratorium against future tests. Sanctions clamped by EU most other countries and US. India declares it would seek internal political consensus whether to sign CTBT.

● **2000:** Prime Minister Vajpayee declares 'political consensus' possible by the end of year 2000.

Assam needs autonomy to fight insurgency

Rahul Karmakar
Guwahati, July 4

ference.
It differs from the Jammu and Kashmir package on a separate national flag and Constitution.

THE AUTONOMY resolution by the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly has sparked off an intense debate in the Northeast, particularly in Assam where the ruling Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) had advocated autonomy for the State in its 1996 election manifesto.

"Demanding autonomy is certainly not anti-national or secessionist as some political parties including a section of BJP maintain," Chief Minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta told *The Hindustan Times* here. "But yes, autonomy must be within the purview of the Constitution."

In its 1996 election manifesto, the Asom Gana Parishad said it would strive for Assam's autonomy in all matters.

However, defence, foreign affairs, currency and communication were the exceptions, besides state regulation in all administrative and financial affairs without Central inter-

needs autonomy: to tackle insurgency and to control our own natural resources towards development," the Chief Minister said.

"Insurgency in Northeast has gone international, and the States of this region need certain powers to take up the issue directly with neighbouring nations where leaders of banned outfits have taken shelter."

Mr Prafulla Kumar Mahanta regretted that the Centre was not willing to let the North-eastern States to deal directly with the neighbouring countries on the insurgency issue.

"On the other hand, New Delhi insists insurgency is a regional problem that should be solved regionally."

"How can we do so if we are not given more powers?"

The Chief Minister also felt that a mineral-rich State like Assam should enjoy complete hold on its natural resources.

"The Centre has forced the States to survive on the oxygen it supplies, but if we have the powers to manage our natural resources, half our economic problems would be solved."

"All the States are becoming more dependent on the Centre that keeps blaming the states for everything."

"This is not true federalism," the Chief Minister of Assam said.

Mr Mahanta was of the view that autonomy for the States would be a major issue in the days to come.

"If a State like Assam can provide autonomy to Bodoland, Karbi Anglong, and the Mising, Rabha and Tiwa people, there's absolutely no reason why the Centre cannot do the same with the States," the Assam CM maintained.



Prafulla Kumar Mahanta

on the negotiation.

"There are two strong reasons why Assam be solved regionally."

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

5 JUL 2000

Curfew clamped in riot-hit North Tripura for 36 hours

HT Correspondent
Agartala, July 4

THE NORTH District Authority on Tuesday clamped curfew for 36 hours following ethnic violence at Fatikroy areas in Tripura. Ethnic tension escalated at Fatikroy, North Tripura, on Tuesday with tribal rebels attacking two Bengali villages. Several houses were burnt and one person sustained bullet injury in the attack.

Police said that an irate mob attacked several houses of different communities and injured one person in the area on Tuesday. The violence started following kidnaping of a farmer by militants from a paddy field yesterday. To retaliate the abduction a mob burnt many houses belonging to tribals and hacked to death an aged woman.

Tension ran high in the mixed populated areas.

Additional para military forces were deployed in the area and about 15 people were detained in connection with the violence.

Governor K M Seth on Tuesday visited strife-torn Kalyanpur in

West Tripura and met refugees sheltering in makeshift camps. This was the first visit by any Governor to a riot-hit area in the State. Lt Gen. Seth enquired after relief measures offered to the evacuees and on the present situation.

In his maiden press conference on June 22—the day he assumed office—Seth had said he would pay a visit to the riot-hit areas to assess the situation first hand. Yesterday, he visited CRPF headquarters here and addressed a meeting of

Governor Visit

top officials. He advised security officials to be firm in dealing with the situation.

Lt Gen. Seth asked the Bengalis to return to their villages and lead a normal life. Before returning to the State capital, the Governor visited Khumlung, the TTAADC headquarters.

Tribal evacuees in North Maharanipue demanded the Governor to withdraw the Tripura State Rifles (TSR) camps from their locality and to deploy CRPF

personnel instead. Bengali residents of Kalyanpur Bazar and Maiganga Sukanta High School camp, however, backed the TSR presence. Local Bengali families support them and requested the Governor to direct the State Government to withdraw CRPF presence from tense areas.

Fatikroy area witnessed more violence as a 90-year-old tribal was killed, several tribal houses were torched and a Bengali youth was kidnapped.

Tribals on Tuesday retaliated by attacking the Bengali-populated Madhavpur village. They set fire to many houses but no casualties were reported in the incident.

Few hours later, militants raided Ratachara and burnt seven houses. Parindra Rudra Paul, 35, sustained bullet injuries as militants opened fire on fleeing Bengalis.

Hundreds of tribals, meanwhile, have been organising a sit-in demonstration on the premises at Killa, South Tripura.

It was the fourth day of agitation on Tuesday for the release of a 70-year-old tribal and a schoolteacher arrested on charges of abetting rebel activities.

Jamir urges Centre to extend Naga ceasefire

FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT

Dimapur, July 4: The Nagaland government has urged the Centre to extend the duration of its ceasefire with the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (Isak-Muivah) by at least another six months.

The ceasefire is due to expire on July 31.

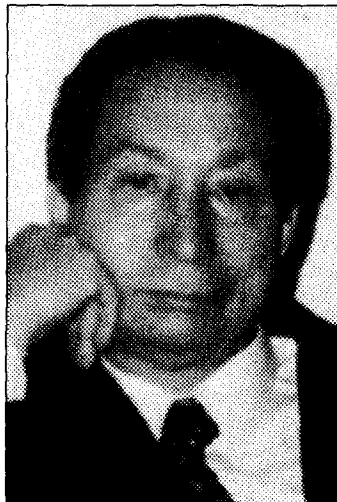
The political affairs committee of the state Cabinet held a meeting in this regard today. It was presided over by chief minister S.C. Jamir.

The Cabinet's plea for extension of the ceasefire comes close on the heels of the NSCN(I-M) laying down certain conditions for further extension of the truce.

Terming the ceasefire as "a meaningless one", the outfit said the state government was not keen to create an atmosphere conducive to talks.

It also accused the Jamir government of not allowing the ceasefire monitoring group to hold a meeting in the state last month.

The NSCN(I-M)'s conditions for a fresh extension of the ceasefire include withdrawal of non-bailable arrest warrants issued by the Dimapur administration against the chief of its armed wing.



Jamir: Taking the initiative

The state government had withdrawn its representatives from the ceasefire monitoring group following an abortive attempt on Jamir's life on November 29 last year. The government accused the NSCN(I-M) of trying to kill the chief minister, but the outfit denied the allegation.

The political affairs committee today asked the Centre to ensure a "real ceasefire" in the state. It said the ground rules of the ceasefire

should be explicit and unambiguous. "These ground rules should be binding on all underground outfits, including the Isak-Muivah and Khaplang factions," the committee said.

"Any ceasefire with only one section of society is neither desirable nor feasible. A piecemeal accord can never ensure peace in the state," it added.

The committee said that apart from cessation of hostilities with the security forces, the underground outfits should bring all activities against the interests of the people to a halt. It said talks could not be held between the Centre and the militants if the latter continued to indulge in fratricidal clashes.

"Extortion, robberies, abductions and intimidation of civilians continue unabated despite the ongoing ceasefire," the committee said.

"All sections of the Naga people, irrespective of whether they are underground or overground, should be involved in the peace process," it added.

The committee also discussed ways to fully implement the 16-point agreement of 1960. The ruling Congress recently published a booklet on the accord.

THE TELEGRAPH

5 JUL 2000

'Central funds policy hampers N-E growth'

HT Correspondent
Itanagar, July 6

ARUNACHAL PRADESH Chief Minister Mukut Mithi on Thursday urged all North-Eastern States to demand restoration of the earlier criteria for allocation of central funds under the rural development scheme. The Centre's decision to change the criteria for allocation of funds to the region has hampered development in the North-East, he added.

Inaugurating the second conference of the North-East Rural Development Ministers, Mithi said in the absence of social and physical infrastructure, the North-Eastern hill States had been fighting various odds such as hostile

terrain, heavy rainfall and communication bottlenecks to develop the region. But the Centre's decision to allocate funds according to the proportion of a State's total rural population has put the breaks on our efforts to develop the rural areas, he said.

The North-East, because of its strategic location, is important from the point of view of national security and deserves special attention from the Centre, he said. Speedy economic development of rural areas and assured employment to rural youths will provide a lasting solution to insurgency in the region, Mithi added.

In the absence of adequate funds under the rural development scheme employment for the rural

population, particularly the uneducated youths, is becoming scarce. Thus, in absence of employment, they become vulnerable to anti-national forces, he said.

Mithi stressed on the need to make available micro-credit and organised rural market and related infrastructure, reduction of States share to 10 per cent for all centrally-sponsored schemes and enhancing credit deposit ration in the region by financial institutions to accelerate sustainable development. The committee of Rural Development Ministers should ensure proper utilisation of resources and evolve means to insulate the system from any leakage, he added.

He said emphasis should be laid

on cultural values to ensure enhancement of material well being along with individual self esteem, while raising the living condition. Arunachal Rural Development Minister Talomugli hoped that some consensus would emerge with regard to problems like communication, marketing, infrastructural facilities, adequate banking system and modalities for implementation of self employment programmes in the region.

Chairman of the Rural Development Ministers Committee and Mizoram Rural Development Minister Lalthangliana said the meeting would review resolutions adopted in the first conference of the ministers at Aizawal in November last year.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

27 JUL

NE rebels worry Bhutan authorities

P P Singh

GUWAHATI 9 JULY

THE SECURITY of the King of Bhutan, its people, requirement for more funds to strengthen its army to tackle militants, are the key problems facing the Himalayan kingdom, according to sources in Bhutan.

After the near unanimous decision (out of 150 members there were only 4 or 5 notes of dissent) taken by Bhutan's National Assembly on last Monday on use of force against Ulfa/Bodo militants taking shelter in the southern Bhutan jungles since 1992, there is a great fear that the militants hiding there may hit back by targeting the King personally and put the lives of the people of Bhutan in danger.

Sources informed that the chief operations officer of the RBA, Goongleong Gongma Lam Dorji had told informed the National Assembly during the long debate on the issue of militants that the security forces were equally concerned about the security of the King and "Bhutan faced a serious threat to its national security with the emergence of the Ulfa/Bodo problem.

Therefore, the full responsibility for national security had been reposed on His Majesty, the King, during the 75th session of the National Assembly."

According to reports published in Kuensel, Bhutan home minister Lyonpo Thinley Gyamtsho informed the National Assembly during the debate that since November 20, 1998 they have been holding meeting with Ulfa and Bodo militants and telling them to leave their country.

He said that they also had a meeting with Ulfa commander-in-chief Paresh Barua on May 7s, 1999 where alongwith him the three members of the Royal Advisory Council besides the Kalyon were also present.

They told the Ulfa leaders very clearly how their presence in Bhutan was affecting security, "causing great concern to the public and could harm Bhutan's close relations with India and with Assam in particular."

With a decision by the Royal Government to hold talks only with the top leaders of the outfit it was mutually agreed upon that in the next meeting their chairman Arvinda Rajkhowa along with Paresh Barua will also be present for the third round of

officials talks but there was no response from them till this April when they got a call from Paresh Barua expressing inability to attend the meeting on security grounds.

He said similarly his talks with the NDFB chief Ranjan Daimary over the phone also did not prove to be successful because he expressed his inability to come and hold talks before June 15 so that he could present his report about the meeting to the National Assembly.

The home minister strongly reacted by saying "they have not only violated the territorial integrity of a sovereign independent country but he did not seem concerned over the countless difficulties they were causing to Bhutan and its people, they have now added insult to injury by not coming for talks, especially after having agreed to it last year."

The Assembly feared that the moment the supplies to the camps were cut off and people

TERROR STRIKES punished for dealing with militants in accordance with the National Security Act, there may be clashes between the militants and security forces thus endangering the lives of people.

The RBA chief operations officer also informed that the King had issued a "kasho" highlighting the security concern and specific measures to be implemented by the RBA to deal with the situation related to Ulfa/Bodo problem.

Further instructions were issued on November 1, 1999 demanding immediate measures to be taken to strengthen the security of the areas affected by the presence of militants.

The RBA is raising additional troops to meet any eventuality and highly trained and motivated 8 wings (4000 personnel) of the RBA have been deployed from Kalikhola to Daifam on the southern borders of the kingdom.

They have been located in educational institutes, which had to be vacated for fear of being made targets. For this purpose Wing XI has been deployed at Sarpang while Wing XII and XIII at Gelephu in April 2000.

The RBA chief said all this needed funds as till June 2000 they had spent Nu 660.70 million and now they were forced to use money from the Army Welfare Fund's Reserve Fund established by the King in 1976 for welfare of army troops.

The Economic Times

N-E wants more fiscal freedom

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

AGARTALA, July 15. — Chief ministers of the seven North-eastern states have urged the Centre to allow more fiscal autonomy to the North-Eastern Council.

The NEC, a regional body for development, which enjoyed powers to sanction projects worth Rs five crore, should now be allowed to approve development expenditure up to Rs 50 crore, they said at the council meeting in New Delhi yesterday.

Some of them said the Council should be reconstituted so that it could play a more effective role to ensure development in the region. The chief ministers wanted the Centre to help the insurgency-prone states to combat the problem more effectively. It must also ensure easy flow of funds to the backward states to facilitate development and ensure basic services to the people, they said.

The Tripura chief minister, Mr Manik Sarkar, told the meeting that an atmosphere of insecurity was prevailing in

NEC BERTH FOR SIKKIM

NEW DELHI, July 15. — Sikkim would be included as the eighth member of the North Eastern Council, the Union home minister, Mr LK Advani, said here yesterday, opening the 43rd NEC meeting. He said the Centre was considering reorganisation of the council so it could work as an institution for change in the region. Development, peace and security were inter-linked, but problems of terrorism should be tackled primarily by the states, he added.

The finance minister, Mr Yashwant Sinha, said funds for development of the region would not be a problem, but asked the council to pay more attention to utilisation of funds and timely completion of projects. — SNS

the region due to stepped-up rebel activities backed by external forces. He said the deepening desire for cessation among a section of misguided youths was the outcome of long

neglect and deprivation.

"With investors reluctant to set up industrial and other projects which can generate employment, peace now is the foremost condition for development," Mr Sarkar said. The process of socio-economic development would be seriously hit unless insurgency was checked immediately. The Centre must provide all possible help to the North-Eastern governments to combat armed rebel groups, he added.

The chief minister wondered why the issue of internal security in the region had been left out of yesterday's NEC agenda. "The question of the region's security should have been the main theme of discussion," he said.

The last NEC meeting was held on 2 November 1998 and passed a unanimous resolution urging the Centre to provide all possible help against armed rebel groups, he pointed out. "Interestingly, the Centre has withdrawn all army battalions engaged in counter-insurgency operations in Tripura after passing of the NEC resolution," he said.

THE STATESMAN

15 JUL 2000

NSCN(K) declares peace zones

Sandham Oken Jeet
Kohima, July 15

AT A recent public meeting in Zunheboto, the NSCN(K) declared the district dominated by the Sumis a "peace zone".

Kohima Sumi Ho Ho chairman P Inaho Sumi said other districts, too, should do the same. He, however, believes, that declaring peace zones in Sumi regions alone will not alleviate the State's problems.

NGOs, public leaders and individuals should try to persuade the outfits to work out a common strategy to declare "peace zones" in their respective regions as a first step to lasting peace.

Inaho said the meet discussed the routine "killings, extortions and kidnappings" in the State and resolved

to shun violence in Sumi areas.

The GPRN/NSCN(K)'s Ato Kilonser (Prime Minister), Kitovi Zhimomi, emphasised the need for unity among underground factions. "Without unity, any solution to the complex Naga political problem is impossible," he said.

Sumi Regions

Zhimomi expressed NSCN(K)'s dislike of the "extortion and killing spree", but said that low-ranking cadres of the outfit were involved.

According to Inaho, the Ato Kilonser wants two conditions fulfilled to enter a formal ceasefire pact with the Indian Government: India should revoke the ban on the

NSCN and the proposed ceasefire should cover all Naga-inhabited areas. He also demanded repeal of draconian laws. Inaho evaded a direct answer when asked if greater autonomy will ease the problem. The Centre should do "what is feasible and desirable for the people of Nagland", he said. But whatever the steps taken, these should be acceptable to the Naga people and the underground outfits. Zhimomi endorsed Inaho's view that the "opinion and political mandate of NGOs, veteran politicians, tribal Ho Hos, bureaucrats and civilians should be taken into account" for any political dialogue with the Indian Government.

Inaho said people are afraid of talking peace because of the conditions prevailing in the State

THE HINDUSTAN T

Call for extension of Naga ceasefire

HT Correspondent
Kohima, July 15

PROMINENT ORGANISATIONS in Nagaland have urged the Centre and the NSCN(I-M) to extend the ongoing ceasefire, which will expire on July 31.

The Nagaland Baptist Church Council (NBCC) and the Naga Councrhas (GB) Union, Dimapur, have urged immediate discussion for a swift solution to the vexed political problem.

The Chakhesang Public Organisation, an apex body of the Chakhesang tribe, expressed concern over the situation prevailing in the State. According to CPO, "unless a ceasefire is declared among the various underground Naga outfits, there is not much hope even if the ongoing ceasefire between the Indian Government and the NSCN(I-M) is extended.

The NBCC, though, referred to NSCN(K)'s announcement that expressed its desire for a formal ceasefire with the Centre. The organisations appealed to all outfits to stop factional fights immediately in the larger interest of the State.

Luruo blamed the Centre for the split among the Nagas. The Government has always preferred to talk separately with various

underground outfits, which could complicate the problem, he said.

The CPO, at its recent general meeting, resolved to revive the 1964 ceasefire pact between the Indian Government and the Naga Nationalist Council (NNC). "This doesn't mean I'm going against the NSCN(I-M) or the NSCN(K)'s agreements. But we should go back to the original group (NNC) to which people gave the mandate." According to Luruo, many Naga leaders never bought the idea of the 16-Point Agreement of 1960. Some Naga leaders, under the

"banner of the Naga People's Convention", signed the controversial pact with the Indian Government, without the "mandate of the Naga people".

"The mandate was given to the 1951 plebiscite, under the banner of the NNC, for Naga sovereignty," Luruo said. Nagas are not Indians, he said, because they have separate political, historical, social and cultural backgrounds. Luruo said "Nagas are not demanding independence from India". The Government, though, should recognise the Nagas' historical rights.

The call for extension is significant because it comes after the resolution of the State Cabinet's political affairs committee that endorsed a six-month extension.

Deadline Expires July 31

Has the Naga truce gone up in smoke?

Harish Chandola
New Delhi, July 16

HAS THE cease-fire with the Nagas, which if not extended, will end at this month-end, already gone up in smoke? Twelve men of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) were shot and killed by the 17 Para Field Regiment in the early hours of July 13, near Jiribam area of Manipur, bordering Assam, according to NSCN sources.

On July 4, an NSCN lieutenant was shot dead in Dimapur, Nagaland's largest town. Over 50 NSCN cadres have been arrested on suspicion of being involved in an attack on Nagaland Chief Minister S.C. Jamir, on November 28.

NSCN sources say continuance of the three-year-old cease-fire to seek a peaceful solution to the Naga problem is desire of their people. "But this cannot be done by arresting and massacring NSCN men".

Talking of the killing of their men on July 13, the sources said, when the Para regiment attacked their camp, its inmates shouted that they belonged to the NSCN and were camping in the cease-fire area. But their plea was

ignored and they were killed in cold blood. Later, the army said, they died in an encounter. But if it had been an encounter, surely some Armymen would have been injured also, which was not the case.

The NSCN sources claim that during the three-year cease-fire they have not fired a single bullet at the Indian Army, various para-military forces and state police in all Naga areas, including Manipur.

Though there is the possibility of the cease-fire getting extended (the Centre can extend it unilaterally), there appears little possibility of resuming political talks between the Government and the NSCN.

NSCN general secretary Th. Muiva, who was leading the talks on behalf of his organisation, for trying to enter Thailand on a false passport, remains in a prison there.

The Government's hope that the NSCN would replace him with another leader to carry on the talks has been dashed. The NSCN stand is that Mr. Muiva was given that task and he will be responsible for it. There is general belief that if the Government wants, it can succeed in getting Mr. Muiva out of prison, to continue talks.

Killing of NSCN Activists

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

17 JUL 2000

Bhutan concerned over GREF aid to Ulfa

P. P. Singh

GUWAHATI 16 JULY

IN A major development, the 78th Bhutan National Assembly, for the first time, expressed concern over the use of some GREF and other army drivers for carrying rations and supplies to Bodo and Ulfa militants, illegally camped in Bhutan.

The National Assembly resolved that all vehicles should be inspected at checkpoints along the highways.

According to the latest reports published in Bhutan's national weekly Kuensel, the chimis from Mongar and Trashiyangtse introduced the proposal to start a system of checking GREF and army vehicles, especially near the areas where the militants were camped.

"It is noted that GREF trucks

and many military trucks pass through checkpoints without being checked," said the Mongar chimis. "It is possible that some of the drivers of GREF and army vehicles are carrying supplies for the militants."

The Chukha dzongda said, Bhutan deeply appreciated the high quality infrastructure and numerous other works done by **MILITANT MENACE** Project Dantak.

But checkpoints in Phuentsholing had reported that their greatest problems came from not being allowed to check GREF and army vehicles because foreigners were known to travel to and from Phuentsholing in these vehicles. The problem was compounded by the tendency of illegal work-

ers to flock to Dantak camps whenever immigration officials set out to check work sites in the Dzongkhag.

The chief operations officer of the RBA, Goongloen Gongma Lam Dorji, submitted to the Assembly that, Dantak/GREF officials had already requested the king of Bhutan, and the government to have their vehicles inspected at checkpoints. Acting on the orders from the king, their vehicles were regularly checked in Samdrup Jongkhar and Alubari, near Nganglam.

"The higher GREF officials have already asked His Majesty and the government to have their vehicles checked while vehicles belonging to the armed forces

should be checked by the army itself," he said. "These clarifications by the Goongloen Gongma are more than adequate."

The Assembly noted that Dantak vehicles were being checked and decided that the vehicles belonging to the armed forces should be checked according to military procedures.

A decision has already been taken to use military force against the Ulfa/Bodo militants hiding in the jungles of Bhutan, if all other means to expel them from the Bhutanese soil fail.

But there has been no time frame fixed by the National Assembly though they have started moving military enforcements to their southern borders to meet any eventuality.

The Economic Times.

17 JUL 2000

Central team reviews Manipur situation

IMPHAL, JULY 19. A high-powered Central team led by the former Union Home Secretary, Mr. N. N. Vohra, today reviewed the situation in Manipur in the wake of recent escalation in insurgent activities.

Official sources said the Central 'task force on internal security' discussed the situation with the Chief Minister, Mr. W. Nipamacha Singh, after arriving from Agartala.

As the Chief Minister had to attend the Assembly session, the team continued to hold discus-

sions with the State Chief Secretary, Director General of Police and senior security officials of the Central forces posted here.

The killing of nine civilians by underground activists on June 25, ambush on a CRPF patrol yesterday, extortions and related issues figured during the discussions. Snatching of arms from security personnel by ultras and the issue of arrested underground members securing bail were also discussed.

The team was apprised of various steps taken up by the State

Government to deal with armed extremists.

Expressing concern over the prevailing situation, the members urged the Government to avail of certain schemes under the Prime Minister's package for the north-east, which included modernisation of police force, doubling of technical training institutes and setting up of better communication network in all districts and blocks.

The team also called on the Manipur Governor, Mr. Ved Prakash Marwah. — PTI

THE HINDU

20 JUL 2000

NAGALAND FARCE

5/16 Call it anything but ceasefire

THE Naga peace talks lack clear direction. Chief negotiator P Padmanabiah presented a discouraging picture when he said the Centre was "not talking to an individual but an organisation (the National Socialist Council of Nagalim) where Muivah is not the only leader". The outfit also speaks in many voices. Even as preliminary rounds are yet to run to full potential, the NSCN "home secretary" suggested in April that the dialogue be at prime ministerial level. Mere delaying tactics. Last year after a month in Nagaland, chairman Isak Swu and general secretary Th Muivah demanded that the May 1951 plebiscite, in which the majority of Nagas opted for independence, should be the basis for talks. The pretension of collective leadership in the NSCN-IM turned out to be untrue with Isak refusing to resume talks without Muivah. Since 1997 the guns are muted, but it is anything but a ceasefire. Over 320 people have reportedly died either in clashes between rival factions led by Isak-Muivah and SS Khaplang or in militant activities.

Chief minister SC Jamir escaped unhurt when his convoy was ambushed. NSCN-K general secretary Dally Mungro, considered Khaplang's successor, was murdered. The argument being that the truce is only between the NSCN-IM and the security forces. It is time the NSCN-IM stopped accusing the Centre of violating the truce to cover for their mistakes. Delhi has acted with circumspection. It restrained itself from formalising the more than two-year-old unilateral ceasefire observed by the security forces and the Khaplang group as the NSCN-IM does not recognise any other faction. The terms of the three-year-old ceasefire ends on 31 July. There must be stringent ground rules and strong teams to oversee enforcement. Forcible collections must stop. Tough measures on extortion can calm public anxiety. The NSCN-IM's demand for coverage of Naga-inhabited areas in Assam, Arunachal and Manipur is mischievous. A separate ceasefire in Manipur would be ideal. A timeframe for peace is needed to avoid more distrust. It is talking to an organisation which it outlawed.

THE STATESMAN

20 JUL 2000

SIKKIM IN THE NORTHEAST COUNCIL

IF ANYTHING, THE move to induct Sikkim as the eighth member of the Northeast Council (NEC) may have come a little late in the day. The integration with the region should have been accomplished long ago to make them the 'Eight sister States of the Northeast'. Now that the Union Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, has announced the decision at the 43rd meeting of the NEC, it should take some time for the legislative and administrative formalities to be completed. It makes sense to make Sikkim part of the NEC so that it can form part of any regional plan for development. As Mr. Advani noted, development, peace and security hold the key to the future of the Northeast and in a way are interlinked issues. They have to be viewed and achieved in tandem and that remains the major challenge facing the NEC.

Many suggestions were thrown up at the recent NEC meeting. The Finance Minister, Mr. Yashwant Sinha, made the point that resources were not a constraint, but utilisation of allotted funds remained the main hurdle to development. The State Governments should revamp their administration to monitor the implementation of projects and programmes to ensure that the resources were fully utilised. The Chairman of the NEC and the Assam Governor, Lt. Gen. (retd.) S. K. Sinha, has come up with the backup solution to deal with this problem — to allot the non-lapsable pool of funds to the Council on a 100 per cent grant basis. But there is also the need for an equitable formula for the distribution of resources to the sister-States, who only keep clamouring for the reimbursement of all expenditure related to security in the region. Lt. Gen. Sinha should bring his experience and administrative skills to play in revitalising the NEC and making it a dynamic and vibrant instrument of development and monitoring for the whole region. On its success and institutional support will depend the successful implementation of all

development projects.

A major package for the Northeast will be the ambitious Rs. 220-crore information technology network for the region. This would cover all the eight States. But in the first phase, it will link 25 blocks, with a dozen of them in Assam. Given the security environment and the difficulty in funnelling investments into the region, it makes sense to focus on sectors such as IT. Communications and connectivity form the backbone of any IT network. Keeping in mind the high literacy rate in the region, it should not take long to impart computer education in schools and through private enterprise to develop IT skills. But not many people would be able to afford a computer on their own, which makes it imperative to go in for internet booths or cyber-cafes on the lines of the STD booths. The more efficient States could go in for IT parks to tap the talents of the people and open up avenues for investment.

Since the individual State Governments have not been very successful in implementing Centrally-funded industrial projects in the past, there is a case for the NEC to take on a more pivotal role in choosing the right locations for new ventures and then monitoring the implementation on a time-bound basis. The Council must ensure that the Prime Minister's special package for the Northeast is translated into projects and programmes that can be taken up within the next five years. Development of highways, transport and communications must get the top priority so that the natural resources and the tourism potential of the region can be fully harnessed. Above all, the Council must bring about a regional identity, coordination and 'co-competition' among the sister States to spark a healthy rivalry in development and removal of regional imbalances. Empowerment and economic development of the people alone can bring peace and prosperity.

THE HIND

21 JUL 2011

Centre sets up two panels to monitor use of funds in N-E

Kohima, July 20

THE CENTRE has set up two monitoring committees to keep vigil on how the Central funds are being utilised in the north-eastern region, according to Additional Secretary, Union Home Ministry, Dr P D Shenoy.

The Home Ministry constituted two panels to monitor various projects being implemented by North-Eastern Council (NEC), a regional advisory body under the Ministry, Dr Shenoy told newsmen here last evening after his two-day visit to Nagaland.

One committee headed by a senior Home Ministry official R D Kapoor would monitor all power projects under the council, while the second panel headed by Shenoy would keep vigil on all other projects and schemes under the NEC, he said.

Stating that the Centre insisted on transparency and proper utilisation of Central funds by the N-E States, the Additional Secretary said besides such monitoring, his Ministry made available a helicopter at Guwahati so that any official from any Central Ministry can visit project implementation site at free of cost to have on-spot verification of the sanctioned schemes.

When asked about monitoring of Centrally-sponsored schemes, implemented by different State Government departments, Shenoy said, "it is not physically possible for the Centre to monitor each and every scheme or project so we have been repeatedly telling the respective State Governments to maintain transparency and properly monitor project implementation".

Shenoy yesterday held a meeting with departmental heads of State Government and reviewed various development projects under the Centre's new initiative in the region.

Shenoy said yesterday's review meeting was actually a part of the Centre's fresh initiative of review and monitoring of Centrally funded projects in the North-East in view of mounting demands from various quarters for proper monitoring on utilisation of funds by the N-E States.

During the review meeting it was found that proper motoring in case of certain departments was lacking in Nagaland, Shenoy said and exhorted the government officials to regularly visit the project sites. Shenoy was accompanied by the deputy secretary (N-E), Home Ministry.

PTI

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

21 JUL 2000

Tackling population influx into the Northeast

The northeast India consisting of seven states is a distinct region. Apart from its geographical isolation, there are several other features which stand in sharp contrast to the rest of the country. For example, the northeastern states, which are, by and large, hilly ones, are characterised by the preponderance of ST and less significantly SC population. As compared to the all-India share of 22.80 per cent, the SC and ST population in the northeast ranged from 93.1 per cent in Mizoram to 28.7 per cent in Manipur.

More important, all states in the region as compared to the rest of the country recorded a high decadal population growth even during 1981-91. The population of the present northeast (exclusive of Arunachal Pradesh) which was 42.72 lakh in 1901 rose to 306.80 lakh in 1991. This meant an increase of 618.9 per cent as against all-India average of 255.0 per cent. As a result, the population of the present northeastern states, which constituted 1.79 per cent of India's population in 1901, jumped to 3.63 per cent in 1991.

But even with rapid growth, the tribal population as percentage of the region's total population (even in the tribal states with Inner Line Permit System) declined significantly over the nine decades. These facts clearly suggest that migration and not the natural growth is a major source of population growth and demographic change in the northeast. This has, in fact, become a perennial source of social conflicts and tensions in the region. The northeastern states had been

The long-term strategy to contain trans-border migration should aim at altering the objective conditions, says Atul Sarma

the destination of various streams of migrants from different parts of the sub-continent. There was a huge migration of tea garden labourers in the 1870s. The next stream of migrants was that of Muslim peasants from the then East Bengal from the beginning of the twentieth century to settle in wastelands. This stream of migrants continued up until 1940s. Then came the Pakistani nationals in huge numbers in the wake of partition. Again, during the Bangladesh Liberation, a large number of persons from erstwhile East Pakistan fled to the northeastern states. Another stream consisted of Nepali graziers who started settling in the uncultivated and unowned hill slopes.

There is no precise estimate of the exact size of migrants to the northeast. But it is conceivable that the size is large, and has evoked a deep concern in the region. The issue is how to resolve this problem. The population influx from across borders has huge implications both on the polity and economy of the northeastern states. As such, this is a highly emotive issue as has been demonstrated by student uprisings in Assam and other northeastern states. But the inability to effectively deal with this problem by the student leaders when they came to



power after a protracted movement against this issue only highlights the extent of complexity that it is associated with.

This problem should be clearly understood, and its realistic solution should be sought. Without going into great details of the migrant population from across borders, the following points can be flagged.

First, the flow of immigrants has presumably been induced by economic considerations. This means that most of these immigrants have moved out of their hearth and home in search of better means of living, which sparsely populated northeastern states, seemed to offer. Second, these immigrants who are uneducated and unskilled, sought to be absorbed in agriculture and related sectors. These sectors being of the informal nature, they were

not very visible until the growing mass started having an impact on the polity of the states. The extreme example of this presence was felt in Tripura where migrant population marginalised the local inhabitants in power sharing. Third, complete uprooting of the vast immigrant population is not feasible as the student leaders of Assam realised while being saddled in

power for almost two terms of five years each. Having noted the above points, one should seek a solution to the problem of population influx in the following perspective. The problem of immigrants should first be bifurcated between the existing stock and the future flow. The existing stock reckoning from a cutoff date should be given the status of economic migrants. This status would entitle them to earn their living but not to land acquisition and political rights. This practice seems to be prevalent in Germany.

In order to arrest the future flow, a strategy with a longer time perspective needs to be adopted. This strategy should clearly recognise that fencing the vast border is neither easy nor is foolproof vigilance practicable. Even developed countries found it difficult to stop illegal

migrants. It should also recognise that there exists an element of schizophrenic attitude among local inhabitants in the northeastern states: in private they prefer cheap and pliant immigrants as farm labour while in public they discard them. This makes the problem more complex.

Therefore, a longer-term strategy should aim at altering the objective conditions. There should be a well-designed attractive scheme of settling landless local inhabitants along the borders. They would greatly reinforce the existing vigilant force. Such a scheme at the same time would provide a viable means of sustenance to the landless poor. The other part of the strategy should be to upgrade the technology in the farm and other sectors. Such technology upgradation would necessitate higher skill, which immigrants do not have. Simultaneous effort to impart the required skill at the local level at the same time minimising the opportunities for immigrant labour. With the expansion of the modern organised sector, the scope for absorption of immigrant labour will be shrunk.

Thus a strategy of introducing new technology simultaneous with generating the required skill at the local level would provide the longer-term solution to the much-vexed problem of population influx. The success of the Bangladeshi mass literacy and other development programmes with rising employment opportunities at home would further enhance the efficacy of the above strategy. **(The author is with Indian Statistical Institute, Delhi Centre)**

Bru rebels kill 12 of rival camp

FROM SEKHAR DATTA

Agartala, July 23: Seeking to avenge the massacre of over 100 of its activists recently, the Bru National Liberation Front yesterday mowed down 12 National Liberation Front of Tripura rebels at Saikarbari in Tripura's Dhalai district.

Sources said a group of NLFT rebels had just sat down for breakfast when heavily-armed Bru militants raided their hideout in the thickly-wooded Saikarbari area. Twelve of the NLFT men were killed on the spot, while eight escaped by jumping into a gorge behind the camp.

Caught unawares by the sud-

den raid, the NLFT rebels could not put up a semblance of a fight, the sources said. The Bru rebels took away some sophisticated weapons and a sizeable quantity of ammunition from the hideout, they added.

A clash between the two outfits was on the cards after NLFT militants massacred over 100 Bru rebels at Thangnan in the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh.

BNLF chief Suryamoni Reang, who was taken hostage by the NLFT on July 12, is still being held captive at a camp in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

Sources said yesterday's retaliatory attack could be the beginning of a major conflagration be-

tween the BNLF and the NLFT. The two outfits were "friends" till the massacre in Bangladesh.

The Reangs, for whom the BNLF is ostensibly waging war against the state, are likely to be the biggest losers if fratricidal clashes continue.

A group of NLFT militants has reportedly already sneaked into the Taichhama area of North Tripura district to target the Reang population, including refugees staying in six relief camps. Apart from the NLFT, the Reangs could be targeted by tribal outfits which want them to return to Mizoram.

Security has been beefed up in the area, particularly in the relief

camps. The BNLF, fighting against "oppression of the Reangs", severed ties with the NLFT following differences over language and religion. The NLFT had insisted that the Reangs accept the Kokborok language and convert to Christianity.

However, the Bru outfit said the Reangs would stick to the Kokbrua dialect and their original religion, a mishmash of Hinduism and animism.

Sources said the massacre in the Chittagong Hill Tracts was the NLFT's way of making it clear that all other militant outfits in Tripura were subservient to it and would have to comply with its diktats.

THE TELEGRAPH

Assam tense as ethnic rift surfaces

SAMUDRA GUPTA KASHYAP
GUWAHATI, JULY 24

THE scene in Assam's Karbi Anglong autonomous district is getting complex with the law and order situation deteriorating day by day, and a major rift building up alongside within the ruling Autonomous Council Demand Committee (ASDC). Karbi Anglong, one of Assam's two hill districts (both of which are not directly governed by Dispur, but run by elected autonomous councils controlled by the ASDC party), has been witness to large-scale violence since April, with over 60 people getting killed in the process. Most of the victims have been Bi-

hari and Nepali migrants, who had arrived there three to four decades ago as agricultural labourers, employed by a section of the affluent tribal people. Being situated adjacent to Nagaland and Manipur, the hill district has also been a haven for militant elements, adding to the complications. Politically, the ASDC has recently been affiliated to the Binod Mishra group of the CPI(M). So strong has been the ASDC's hold in the two districts that ASDC supremo Dr Jayanta Rongpi has been elected to Lok Sabha from the Autonomous constituency three times in a row.

But things have not remained the same in the Karbi Anglong

hills. Dissension is brewing among the non-Karbi population, who are in a minority, and have been complaining of discrimination by the dominant Karbi tribe. Last week, there was an open revolt against the ASDC chief, with senior party leader and legislator Holiram Terang accusing Rongpi of being corrupt.

The rift between tribals and non-tribals on the other hand has polarised the people. The hills were a bastion of the Congress party since independence, but the ASDC's stirring up of Karbi pride through a well-organised cultural movement has, since 1985, kept the Congress out, both in the autonomous council as well as in the

Lok Sabha seat. *VS*
Given this situation, the Congress and ASDC have indulged in a game of mudslinging over the past few weeks, with both accusing each other of fomenting ethnic clashes in the hill district.

The state unit of the BJP on its part has also blamed the ASDC and the Congress for the violence. So has the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP). The Congress, BJP and AGP have been saying that the ASDC is trying to scare away the non-tribals keeping in view next year's Assembly elections. But going by the pattern of incidents, intelligence agencies are also wondering why most of the violence is taking place in those areas that

INDIAN EXPRESS

25 JUL 2000

ISI role in N-E raises concern

Sandham Oken Jeet
Kohima, July 24

THE CENTRE as well as the North-East States has expressed concern over the increasing activity of the 40 or so militant outfits in the region.

They are also troubled with the participation of Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) in North-East militancy. ISI is suspected of whipping up sectarian passions and creating social chaos through militant outfits.

Even Union Home Minister L K Advani had said during the North-East Chief Ministers' conference in Shillong early this year that Assam's ULFA has contacts with ISI.

Assam Chief Minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta confirmed this in the State Assembly in March when he said that ULFA has had links with ISI since 1990. Over 250 of its men were trained in Pakistan. According to Mahanta, the Pakistan High Commissioner in Dhaka facilitates militants' travel to Pakistan from Bangladesh.

He told the Assembly that the ISI's agenda is to train and arm the militant outfits in the State, spread

Islamic fundamentalism and sabotage vital installations such as oil refineries. Assam has set up a five-member action group, led by P V Sumat, State DGP, to examine the ISI's actions in the State.

Tripura is no stranger to militancy either. Chief Minister Manik Sarkar said he has urged Advani to immediately talk to his Bangladesh counterpart because the ISI-backed outfits are easily infiltrating the long and porous border with that country.

Most North-East Chief Ministers have already alerted the Centre with about the ISI's alleged nexus with various militant groups in the region. They also submitted a memorandum to Prime Minister A B Vajpayee to urge the Centre to treat militancy in the region as a national prob-

lem.

According to intelligence sources, ULFA was the first militant group in the region to establish contact with the ISI. In the early 1990s, ULFA leaders Arvindo Rajkhowa and Paresh

Barua went to Pakistan and with ISI's help set up the 'United Liberation Front of Seven Sisters'.

The Washington Times had quoted a high-ranking American Government officer who said that ISI is fomenting extremist violence in the North-East, possibly working through dissident

groups with bases in neighbouring countries.

Intelligence sources confirmed the officer's claim and said that the ISI had indeed set up a large base in the remote jungles of Bangladesh's Chittagong and in

Myanmar, with direct wireless contact with Pakistan. The sources said that over the last three years the Indian authorities had seized four big consignments of arms, which were being smuggled in through the Thailand-Bangladesh-Manipur route.

They said the porous border with Bangladesh had become an easy passage for the militants. ISI, too, used it to send trained fundamentalist militants and mercenaries to Kashmir. The ISI has reportedly set up a "permanent office-cum-transit centre in Dhaka" for the purpose. Another five centres, too, provide all help to militants.

The ULFA, NSCN(I-M), PLA (Manipur), ATTF and NLFT are the big beneficiaries. Sources also revealed the number of militant camps located in Bangladesh: 21 of ULFA, 14 of J&K militants, 5 of Bodos, 22 of ATTF and 30 each of NLFT and PLA.

Several Government officers of the region regretted the Centre's careless attitude towards militancy and the ISI's actions. A Nagaland officer said: "We are confused. We don't know if the Centre takes the issue seriously at all."

'ULFA was the first militant outfit in the region to establish contact with the ISI.'
N-E Chief Ministers have alerted the Centre about the ISI's alleged nexus with various militant groups in the region

Friction mounts between Tripura militant outfits

Syed Sajjad Ali
Agartala, July 24

THE ALL Tripura Tiger Force (ATTF), which has been losing ground in the State with the growing influence of archrival National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT), is now concentrating on diplomacy rather than violence.

The ATTF's statement on the recent killings of Reang militants by the NLFT is being seen as an initiative by the outfit to woo tribal clans. The statement directly sided with the Reang outfit and condemned the NLFT.

In a statement, the Tripura Peoples Democratic Front (TPDF) charged the NLFT of fuelling sectarian violence and ignoring the interest of smaller tribal groups.

The NLFT reportedly killed 70 cadres of the Bru National Liberation Front (BNLF) in a swift, but planned attack on the outfit's headquarters in Sajek hills range in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) of Bangladesh on July 12.

The NLFT also snatched arms and ammunition from the Bru militants.

The incident has given a new twist to the insurgency situation in the region. The BNLF is the armed outfit of the Reangs and has been fighting for the rights of the community in Mizoram.

The killings have angered the Reangs which happens to be the

second largest indigenous clan in Tripura.

The killing of several youths has also cast a shadow in the Reang refugee camps in Kanchanpur subdivision of north Tripura. Many of the BNLF cadres belonged to the six refugee camps.

Taking strong exception to the attitude of the NLFT, the refugee leaders have requested people of their community in the State to distance themselves from the outfit. The BNLF has vowed to avenge the killings of their comrades.

In the first retaliatory move, BNLF rebels stormed a NLFT transit camp at Saikorbari on Friday. The incident, however, could not be confirmed.

The discord between the NLFT and the BNLF has pleased the CPI(M). The party has been the main target of the NLFT.

Ethnic flare-up: Tribal rebels killed a Bengali while several tribal houses were torched in West Tripura on Monday while security men arrested two hardcore rebels of the NLFT faction in North Tripura in a raid.

Rebels raided Barjala, in Bishalgarh, and killed one Samir Dev (40) and were suspected to have kidnapped Tapan Debnath, who was there at the spot.

The flare-up in ethnic tension took a worse turn as a Bengali mob attacked Jayanta Para and set fire to 21 houses. Police reported no casualty in the incident.

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25 JUL 2000

A time for peace

EXPRESS FOCUS POLITICS

The clock is ticking away for those involved in restoring peace in Nagaland. **SAMUDRA GUPTA KASHYAP** reports on the latest twists and turns in the 52-year-old imbroglio

SITUATION one: Thuingaleng Muivah, the all-powerful general secretary of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN-IM) is in jail in Thailand since January.

Situation two: The terms of the on-going ceasefire between the NSCN(IM) and the Indian government, first agreed upon in July 1997, come to an end on July 31.

And K. Padmanabhaiah, the Prime Minister's official negotiator in the Naga peace process, has said that it was time the NSCN(IM) deputed or delegated another person instead of Muivah

so that the process could continue. Talks between the government and the NSCN(IM), in fact, have not taken place since November last year, though the two sides had agreed to meet, and were indeed meeting, at least once in three months.

"The entire process has suffered a major setback due to Muivah's absence," remarked Padmanabhaiah, who was in Guwahati recently. "Given this situation, the NSCN(IM) should either nominate a new person to carry on the talks, or let the government know what it wants to be done," he added. Muivah was ar-

rested in Thailand last January on charges of travelling with false travel documents. Though he was initially let out on bail, he was re-arrested while allegedly trying to flee Thailand. The next date of hearing for the case comes up on July 24, and there is little indication that he would be allowed to go free.

In the meetings held between the two sides in New Delhi on May 25 and 26, the government expressed its "deep concern" at the continuing violation of the ceasefire by the NSCN(IM). Official documents relating to that meeting recorded that this had resulted in as many as 536 deaths. Of these, 165 persons lost their lives in inter-factional clashes, while 211 innocent civilians died in the crossfire. Also reported were 365 abductions and 456 extortion cases.

This meeting, in which the government was represented by R.D. Kapur, special secretary (North-east) in the union home ministry and the NSCN(IM) by V. Atem, also resolved to reactive the Cease



A file photo of Thuingaleng Muivah (left) with chairperson Isak Chishi Swu. Photo courtesy The Week

Fire Monitoring Group (CFMG), which has remained inactive since the government ordered the NSCN(IM) to vacate the Monitoring Cell office at Dimapur on the night of November 29, 1999.

The NSCN(IM) representative on his part also requested that a full-time chairperson be appointed for the CFMG. There were also suggestions from both sides regarding amendments to some ground rules for ceasefire, but these suggestions have been kept under wraps.

But even as these discussions were on, the NSCN(IM) came out with what it termed as an "open letter to the Indian public", in which it recalled the proclamation of independence by the Nagas on August 14, 1947, as also the plebiscite of 1951, in which "99.9 per cent of the Nagas voted to be a sovereign state."

"We are absolute strangers to each other even though we live next door to each other. There is also a wide chasm between us—a chasm, which has been made by

the Indian ruling classes and their agents. The only Indians we Nagas ever meet are the occupational forces, whether they be the Indian armed forces or the Indian bureaucrats. Indian media comes to our land under military escort. You only read biased reports about our people and us," says the three-page letter.

It was through this letter that the NSCN(IM) also accused "your government" of not being sincere in its efforts to solve the Naga tangle. "There is a long history of betrayal of trust and promises made to the Nagas by the Indian government, which the people of India do not know," it added.

The NSCN(IM) also outlined certain "obstacles" which have stood in the way of a political solution to the Indo-Naga conflict. These are: total insincerity on the part of Indian officials involved in the negotiation (Even the PM's emissary has no 'real powers' to negotiate); intelligence agencies "which act beyond the rule of any law, got the Thai authorities to arrest our leader T Muivah by spreading false information... which has seriously jeopardised our faith in the sincerity of the Indian government"; the government's refusal to extend ceasefire

to all Naga-inhabited areas of Nagaland, Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh; the role of S.C. Jamir, who issued an order stating that all NSCN members were liable to be arrested and the closing down of the Ceasefire Monitoring Cell office at Dimapur.

The letter concludes: "Despite this, we have come forward for peace talks... However, our patience is running out." This is followed by a list of alleged incidents of ceasefire violation by Indian armed forces, which add up to 149 since January 1998.

Meanwhile, leaders of the Church, by far the most influential organisation in Nagaland, have blamed both the government as well as the NSCN(IM) for the stalemate. "Both the Indian government and the NSCN(IM) are to be blamed for their insincerity and unrealistic postures," Rev VK Nuh and Rev L. Suohie Mhasi, two senior Church leaders who had played a pivotal role in bringing the two sides closer, recently remarked.

Rev Nuh and Rev Mhasi, who recently went to Thailand to meet Muivah in jail, have even gone to the extent of saying that the NSCN(IM) alone cannot bring about a solution to the Naga impasse. "If they (the NSCN-IM)

leaders) can bring about a solution, nobody will oppose them. But till now, they refuse to make themselves amenable to the interests of the general public," they said. The roots of their frustration can be traced back to the fact that while the other NSCN faction headed by S.S. Khaplang has agreed to work together with Naga groups like the Naga National Council (NNC) towards peace, "the NSCN(IM) leaders have remained adamant". No doubt the NSCN(IM) is the most powerful Naga group, but "they will have to declare a cessation of hostilities with other factions," Rev Nuh and Rev Mhasi pointed out.

Chief Minister S.C. Jamir has been also pressing the Centre to include all Naga groups in the peace process, more particularly the NSCN(K). But that looks like a distant dream. Because, while the government cannot afford to lose contact with the NSCN(IM) leadership, the latter's "open letter" has put it on record that "We pledge to honour our leaders' commitments to leave no stone unturned to save the hard-won peace process." And time is running out.

Readers can send feedback to focus@expressindia.com.

Muivah's release crucial for talks

Bharat Bhushan
Bangkok, July 25

IF INDIA tries to extend the ceasefire in Nagaland unilaterally, it will be only "to deceive the world," Mr Thuingaleng Muivah, general secretary of the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (Isak-Muivah) -- NSCN (I-M), tells me. "This is treacherous hypocrisy. India first violates the ceasefire agreement, kills our cadre and then there is talk of unilateral extension of the ceasefire. This is ridiculous," he says.

We are talking to each other across two iron grills, separated by a one-foot corridor, in Visitors' Room Number Two of the Bangkok Remand Prison. There are nine such rooms in the Remand Prison where undertrials are kept and visitors can talk over an intercom to the prisoners they are visiting.

The prison for undertrials is situated next to the forbidding-looking

Ongprem Central Prison for convicts but is not necessarily a nicer place. Mr Muivah has already had his clothes and shoes stolen by fellow prisoners once. Not having been able to talk to the Naga leader when he was being escorted from the courtroom yesterday, I had sought an appointment to interview him in prison.

One of Mr Muivah's relations

Naga Dialogue

escorts me to the prison. He is carrying food, bottled water, a few cans of Pepsi and fruit for the Naga leader. The food in the prison is apparently very bad and the restaurant inside the prison, where the undertrials can pay and eat better food than the regulation supply, is far too expensive. The 66-year-old Naga leader is lucky to have home-cooked food delivered to him every day, except on Saturdays and Sundays when visi-

tors are not allowed. He is forced to eat in the prison restaurant on weekends.

Mr Muivah, who looks calmer than he did outside the Bangkok Criminal Court yesterday, is dressed today in a yellow T-shirt. "What does the T-shirt say?" I ask his relative, unable to make out the words printed on the fading T-shirt. "Manchester United," he jokes. It actually just says "Polo."

There are five prisoners talking to their visitors at the same time and Mr Muivah is forced to shout into the intercom, "No unilateral extension of ceasefire can be accepted by us. That was not in the agreement. We reject any extra interpretation of the agreement. We have never said that the ceasefire was only in the so-called Nagaland state, which is what India is claiming now. It applied to all the areas where our Naga people have been residing traditionally. How can we go back on what we

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Muivah's release crucial for talks

Continued from page 1

agreed on in the first place? This is ridiculous."

The cease-fire agreement between the Government of India and NSCN (I-M), that was put in place in August 1997, is coming to an end on July 31. With Mr Muivah in jail, there are grave doubts whether the Naga peace talks, which the cease-fire agreement was meant to facilitate, would be resumed in the near future.

It is likely that the representatives of the Nagas and the Government of India would meet on July 28 and 29 to discuss the extension of the cease-fire agreement. But a cease-fire agreement that has been in place for three years and has not led to any political movement forward is unlikely to go down well with the NSCN (I-M) cadre and the Naga people.

Since he was the chief negotiator in the peace talks with India, had the Government of India done anything, even informally, to appeal to the Thai authorities to release him so that the ongoing Indo-Naga peace talks are not jeopardised? What would he like India to do to end his present predicament? "Well, it is up to India. I have nothing to say on this," he replied curtly.

Now that he is in prison, why does he not nominate someone else to negotiate with India on his behalf so that the peace talks can continue? Is there no second-rung leadership in his organisation, I ask him. "That is not the point at all. It had

been decided with several Prime Ministers of India that the talks would be at the highest level -- at the level of the Prime Ministers. This can not be changed now," Mr Muivah replies, pointing to his own designation as the "Prime Minister" of what the NSCN (I-M) calls the National Socialist Republic of Nagaland.

However, the Naga leader also seemed to hold out an olive branch by saying, "If the Government of India honours the cease-fire agreement and its area of coverage, then we will keep talking."

What had he done to make the Naga peace process more transparent and accountable -- not only to his own organisation but to the Naga people? "When Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee told us in Paris in September 1998 that violence is ruled out and that the use of arms is ruled out in solving the Naga problem, we were very happy. We are committed to the peace process. The Naga people have been informed of this. But, to our surprise, we find that there is more violence now. Our people are being killed. So the Naga people are becoming sceptical of Indian promises," he replies.

The Naga leader was arrested in Bangkok while coming from Karachi. What was he doing in Pakistan? Is he not aware of Indian sensitivities on this issue, I ask him? "Don't make a big thing out of it. We have not received even a penny's worth of help from Pakistan. I can go anywhere I like but India should look at our sincerity about the peace process.

When there was fighting in Kargil with Pakistan, did we take any advantage of the situation? We did not. India should understand this. We are sorry that India does not understand our sincerity," the Naga leader laments.

Tell the people of India, he says, "We do not hate them. We have great respect for Mahatma Gandhi who had assured the Nagas that they had every right to be independent. We still admire his integrity and commitment. We honour P. V. Narasimha Rao who initiated the peace process. I would urge the Indian people to understand the true nature of the Naga issue. If they do so, then a solution can be found. Please remember that no innocent Indian has been killed by us."

When I ask him whether he thought that the Naga problem would be solved in his lifetime, Mr Muivah pauses a bit and then says, "Well, we are prepared to solve it. However, if there is no sincerity then the problem cannot be solved even in the next one hundred years. Today the Indian Prime Minister is in the grip of Hindu fundamentalists and is not prepared to solve the Naga problem. The aim seems to be to divide the Nagas and then crush them."

A loud bell announces that our time is up. I bid good-bye to the ageing Naga leader. "Come back again and meet me," he shouts. "I will but I hope you will be free by then and participating in the peace talks. It is no good meeting in prison," I tell him.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

26 JUL 2000

9/11/88 Time for talks

IT IS becoming increasingly clear that at the core of the commitment made by the Indian Government to hold talks with the Nagas lies deception. While a cease-fire between New Delhi and the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isak-Muivah) — first agreed upon in July 1997 — is to come to an end on July 31, it seems the former has made up its mind to extend the cease-fire without moving the political dialogue further. The Government sees it as the most natural thing in the world to blame the Nagas for wasting an opportunity the cease-fire had presented. The Prime Minister's negotiator in the Naga peace process, K. Padmanabhaiah, has been presumptuous enough to state that it is time the Nagas deputed someone other than NSCN(I-M) general secretary Thuingaleng Muivah to participate in the peace talks. It is not for New Delhi to push the Nagas into choosing another leader or negotiator.

Mr Muivah continues to languish in a Bangkok jail for carrying a 'forged' Thai passport. If New Delhi was really sincere about engaging the Nagas in peace talks, it could surely have requested the Thai authorities — even if informally — to release Mr Muivah. Both sides had claimed in the cease-fire agreement that it would stick to three commitments — one, that the peace talks would be unconditional; two, that they would be held at the highest level; and three, that the venue of the talks would be outside India. New Delhi has flouted all three conditions ever since. The NSCN(I-M), on its part, has clearly stated that while Nagas consider themselves a sovereign 'nationality', they see no choice but be friendly with India.

In September 1998, Prime Minister Vajpayee had met Mr Muivah in Paris and ruled out the use of arms to solve the Naga problem. It is, however, no secret that the Government continues to carry out 'encounter killings' against the usual suspects. If there are indeed alternatives to Mr Muivah, they will hardly be as patient. If Delhi can rouse itself and consider holding talks with the Hizbul Mujahideen, why is it dragging its feet when it comes to talking with the NSCN(I-M)? The Government must stop looking for leaky alibis. The presence of Mr Muivah across the table is imperative. Delhi needs to stop wasting time and use its good offices with the Thai authorities to get the Naga leader released from prison.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

27 JUL 2000

Army wants truce deadline extended

Sandham Oken Jeet
Kohima, July 26

SECURITY FORCES came out in support of extension of the ongoing ceasefire, which expires on July 31, between the Centre and the NSCN (I-M).

"The people of Nagaland want peace and so do we," said Lieutenant-General T S Shergill commanding the 3rd Corps at a function in Raj Bhavan to commemorate the first anniversary of Kargil Vijay Diwas.

Shergill refused to react to the NSCN (I-M)'s stand that a cease-

fire beyond July 31 was meaningless in the circumstances. He said the security forces and NSCN (I-M) have often traded charges of violating ground rules of the ceasefire.

The accusations have been discussed at the

Ceasefire Monitoring Group Meetings (CFMG). "We will discuss how both of us can address this problem at the next CFMG meeting on August 19".

Shergill allayed fears that NSCN (I-M) may break the ceasefire

deal. He said the Centre had agreed to the NSCN (I-M) representatives' demand for a ceasefire-monitoring cell office at Diphupur.

"The location of the office was their own choice and we readily agreed to it.

Once the monthly CFMG meetings are held regularly, all allegations of violations of ceasefire ground rules can be sorted out," he said.

The ceasefire-monitoring cell office at Diphupur was shut down after an assassination attempt on

Nagaland Chief Minister S C Jamir, allegedly by the NSCN (I-M) on November 29, 1999. The Centre permitted the militant outfit to reopen the office recently.

Even regular monthly meetings were suspended and the State Government had declared that it stop participating in the CFMG meetings unless the ground rules of the ceasefire were reviewed.

Shergill said security forces were already observing unilateral ceasefire and hoped the Centre would respond positively to the NSCN (I-M)'s offer of ceasefire during the ongoing negotiations.

Naga Peace Talks

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Three ex-PMs demand Muivahs' release

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, July 27

WFID 2877

THREE FORMER Prime Ministers have asked the Government to intervene for securing release of the NSCN (I-M) general secretary Th. Muviah from a Thai jail as it would facilitate the ongoing Naga peace talks. The talks have come to a halt following his arrest in Bangkok on January 19 for possessing a fake passport.

In a joint statement, Mr Chandrashekhar, Mr V.P. Singh and Mr H.D. Gowda said that they were aware about the reasons behind his

travelling on a fake passport and also about the developments back home and in Bangkok, which were not helping to create a conducive atmosphere for continuation of peace talks. They also appealed to the Thai Government to release Muviah so that the peace talks could be revived.

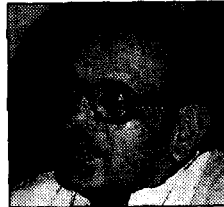
The three former Premiers further asked the Government to renew the cease-fire agreement with the NSCN (I-M) as was done in 1997.

Meanwhile, a group of eminent persons belonging to different walks of life have appealed to both the Centre and NSCN (I-M) to renew

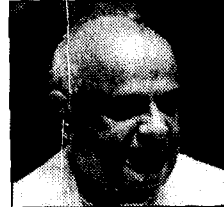
the ceasefire agreement and resume constructive dialogue to find a peaceful solution to the Naga problem. They include Praful Bidwai, Indira Jaisingh, K. Manmohan, Tapan Bose, Gautam Navlakha, Imtiaz Ahmed, Prof. Manoranjan Mohanty, Dunu Roy, I.O. Qadeer, Ravindra Bhatt, Sumit Chakravarty and Jaya Srivastava.



Chandrashekhar



V.P. Singh



H.D. Deve Gowda

Nipamacha govt forms panel to monitor border disputes

FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT

Imphal, July 28: The Manipur government has constituted a seven-member Cabinet sub-committee today to look into the border disputes with neighbouring Myanmar. Deputy chief minister L. Chandramani Singh will head committee.

The state currently has border disputes with Myanmar in the Chandel, Churachandpur and Ukhrul districts. The ministerial committee was formed after Manipur People's Party leader O. Joy Singh raised the issue of Kabaw valley which was gifted to Myanmar by the Centre without the state's consent in Fifties. Besides

the Kabaw valley problem, Joy Singh said Manipur has lost 29 square km of land to Myanmar after the 1971 land survey. He said the Centre remained silent over the issue despite reminders to both the home and the external affairs ministry.

The deputy chief minister today said the ministerial com-

mittee will look into all the border problems and apprise the Centre about them. He said the committee was constituted in January this year, but it had to be reconstituted after four of its members lost the Assembly elections. Chandramani Singh said Namphalong, which was a part of the state till 1972, has now been taken over by

Myanmar. He said this was done despite repeated complaints to the Centre.

He said the present United Front of Manipur coalition government will not allow anyone to "take an inch of the state". The deputy chief minister said the new committee will meet next month and study all the border

problems. He said an all-party meet would be organised to seek the opinions of all leaders. He said there were border problems in Molcham of Chandel district and Behang of Churachandpur.

Joy Singh said the Centre should treat the Manipur-Myanmar border problem at par with Kargil. Many Assembly commit-

tees had been constituted earlier, but their recommendations have not been properly looked into by the Centre, he added.

Chandramani Singh admitted there were problems in the demarcation of borders between India and Myanmar. He said the government took the matter very seriously.

THE TELEGRAPH

Ambush blow to Naga truce

FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT

Imphal, July 30: Militants of the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (Isak-Muivah) killed four Assam Rifles personnel, including a deputy commandant, and seriously injured six in Manipur's Senapati district early today.

The ambush, which took place on the National Highway 39 near Tadubi village, comes a day before the expiry of the ceasefire agreement between the NSCN(I-M) and the Centre.

Maj-Gen. Arvind Sharma, general-officer-commanding of the Army's 57 Mountain Division, told **The Telegraph** that the involvement of NSCN(I-M) rebels in the ambush had been confirmed.

He said there were indications that some of the militants who car-

NSCN-IM rebels mow down four soldiers on eve of ceasefire close

ried out the attack sustained injuries when the Assam Rifles personnel retaliated.

The ambush took place at 7.30 am, when an Assam Rifles convoy was on its way to the 3rd Battalion headquarters at Maram from Mao village on the Manipur-Nagaland border. Sources said nearly 60 rebels, armed to the teeth, attacked the convoy from both sides of the road.

The casualties include deputy commandant P.N.T. Nair, who was the second in-charge of the battalion. The three other Assam Rifles men killed in the ambush

are N.K. Sinha and Hira Lal, both havildars, and rifleman T.S. Mathew. While Nair and Mathew were from Kerala, Hira Lal hailed from Bihar.

Of the six injured, three sustained bullet injuries, while the others were wounded when the vehicle they were travelling in turned turtle.

The injured have been shifted to the Assam Rifles hospital in Zakhama in Nagaland. The condition of three of them is stated to be critical.

Asked whether the ambush was in retaliation for the killing of

12 NSCN (I-M) rebels in Assam's North Cachar Hills district, Maj. Gen. Sharma said it could be so.

The 57 Mountain Division controls operations of both the Army and Assam Rifles in Manipur and south Assam. Though Manipur has been excluded from the area where the truce between the Centre and the NSCN(I-M) is in force, both sides have been adhering to an "informal" ceasefire in the state. The militant outfit has long been demanding that the ceasefire be extended to Manipur, but the Centre is yet to accede to it.

The ceasefire, being monitored by the ceasefire monitoring group constituted by the Union home ministry, took effect on August, 1 1997. Since then, the duration of the truce has been extended every year.

THE TELEGRAPH

31 JUL 2001

Ethnic storm over a suffix

Assam's proposal to teach Bishnupriya Manipuri in its schools has stirred a 500 year old dispute, writes Sujit Choudhury

The chief minister of Manipur, W. Nipamacha Singh, recently attacked the Assam government for planning to introduce the Bishnupriya Manipuri language at the primary level. When the Assam government first took the decision a year back, it immediately gave rise to controversy. Manipuris in Manipur, Assam and Tripura opposed the move. Tension was somewhat reduced when the Manipur government moved the Supreme Court for the annulment of Guwahati's decision. Singh's outburst looks especially improper because the matter is *sub judice*.

Who are the Bishnupriya Manipuris and how do they differ from other Manipuris? Even most people of the Northeast are ignorant of the issues involved.

The heart of the matter is not that Manipuris are opposed to the recognition of the Bishnupriya language as such. What they resent is the suffix "Manipuri" succeeding the word "Bishnupriya". However, Bishnupriya Manipuris would rather forego the recognition than acquiesce to the dropping of the suffix.

Assam has witnessed similar reactions before. In June 1972, Sarat Chandra Sinha, the then Assam chief minister, announced the government would recognize the Bishnupriya Manipuri language. There was an instant reaction throughout Manipur. L. Chandramoni Singha, speaker of the Manipur legislative assembly, wrote to Sinha: "There can be a language spoken by the Bishnupriyas, but there can never be a Bishnupriya Manipuri language on the same footing as there can be no Bodo Assamese language in Assam."

Sinha backtracked. In October 1976, the Assam cabinet decided in favour of the language's introduction, but this time the governor of Assam suggested the language be recognized without the suffix "Manipuri". The Bishnupriyas rejected the government decision.

In 1983, Hiteshwar Saikia, the then Assam chief minister, granted recognition to the language. However, following a furore in Parliament, Indira Gandhi intervened and instructed Saikia to hold back the decision. In 1989, another effort was stalled by stiff opposition from the Manipur government. The Bishnupriyas have been fighting this battle for 10 years and had greeted the Assamese decision with pleasure.

There is a rationale for this opposition to a suffix. The people known as Manipuris today are also known as Meiteis. *The Linguistic Survey of India* and Sumitri Kumar Chatterjee in *Kirata-Jana-Kriti* use Manipuri and Meitei as synonyms. Meiteis are of Mongoloid origin, belonging to the Kuki-Chin subgroup.

The early history of this people is un-



Manipuri dancers: a question of cultural copyright

known. However, it is certain these people occupied the valley of Manipur around the 15th century. A famous king, Kiyamba, established his rule over Manipur during this period and the process of Hinduization of the tribe was accelerated under his patronage. In the early 18th century, Gopal Sinha embraced Vaishnavism and promoted it as state religion. The Manipuri dance developed out of the blending of the tribal and Vaisnavite culture.

The princely state of Manipur merged with India in 1849. Meiteis, the largest segment of the population, had hegemony over the state even before independence. However, after 1947 the dual nomenclature of Meiteis and Manipuris created confusion. In 1968, the Manipur assembly formally recognized Meiteis as Manipuris and declared Manipuri the official language of the state.

The Bishnupriyas are not as well placed as the Meiteis. In 1891, a noted historian found only about 1,000 Bishnupriya speaking people in a total Manipuri population of 23,000. The remaining were inhabitants of Sylhet, Cachar and Tripura. Bishnupriyas claim the num-

based solely on myths and legends, making it impossible to construct an authentic history. However, there is some truth in the Bishnupriya claim that the process of Aryanization of Manipur started earlier than the occupation of the region by the Meiteis. There is some archaeological evidence to that effect. Bishnupur and the ruins also testify to the early association of the Bishnupriyas to the region.

Meiteis reject these claims. They believe they are the indigenous population of the region and the true Manipuris. They do not completely write off Bishnupriya association with Manipur but claim the latter were immigrants who were brought into the state as prisoners of war or slaves.

There is another reason Bishnupriyas are so firm about retaining the suffix of Manipuri. They fear they will otherwise be stripped of their cultural heritage, represented particularly by Manipuri dance. This dance received recognition through Rabindranath Tagore who introduced it in Santiniketan. Masimpur, where Tagore first witnessed the dance performance in 1919, was a Bishnupriya village and all Manipuri dance teachers in Santiniketan were Bishnupriyas. With some justice Bishnupriyas claim the dance has earned international recognition because of their efforts. They further say this is their traditional dance and that the Meiteis adopted it from them.

Bishnupriyas hope to get some tactical advantage in Manipur by holding on to their Manipuri identity. Once the nomenclature is officially accepted, they feel they will be able to assert their identity. For the Meiteis, the recognition carries some obvious disadvantages. One, there will be confusion at the existence of two varieties of Manipuri — one speaking an Indo-Aryan tongue, the other a Tibeto-Burmese language; one living within Manipur, the other mostly outside the state. Two, the Meitei refusal to give Bishnupriyas credit for Manipuri dance would be weakened. Third, Meiteis suspect that once their identity is accepted, Bishnupriyas will clamour for a separate homeland around Bishenpur.

This issue is complex and calls for cautious handling. By moving the Supreme Court, the Manipur government wants to buy time. As it is, the apex court will find the going difficult as the existing constitutional provisions provide no clues as to a possible solution to the problem. The verdict of the court may create further tension. It is only the social leaders of the contending groups who can thrash out an acceptable solution at the moment. This, however, appears unlikely at present.

ber should have been larger. But since the 17th century, Meiteis backed by state power, have sought to forcibly assimilate the Bishnupriyas. The latter are now a beleaguered culture, trying to preserve their ethnic mores in their private lives.

The Bishnupriya claim is based on an older version of Manipuri history. Bishnupriyas claim they are the earliest settlers of Manipur, who migrated from northern India after Kurukshetra. They colonized the region, introduced cultivation and established a state. They apparently were the earliest Vishnu worshippers of eastern India. Their capital came to be known as "Bishnupur", currently Bishenpur in Manipur.

The Meiteis, a Kuki-Chin tribe, invaded Manipur in the 14th or 15th century and displaced the Bishnupriya kingdom. The Meiteis, apprehensive of Bishnupriya resurgence, persecuted the population, which resulted in a largescale exodus of Bishnupriyas to neighbouring regions. Those who could not leave Manipur were forced to give up their language and culture.

The story of the Bishnupriya migration is

Manipuris oppose tagging the suffix "Manipuri" with the term Bishnupriya. Bishnupriyas, for their part, insist the two must go together

Unrest in the Northeast

By Walter Fernandes

THE Northeastern Zonal Council meeting in January, the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, said that Pakistan's ISI was behind the insurgency in the region. Others accuse groups such as the drug mafia, the intelligence agencies and Christian missionaries of fermenting unrest in the region. But they do not explain why people join the underground. They would not unless they were alienated. Hence the need to look at the causes.

One has to understand first the failure of many "mainland" Indians to recognise cultural and ethnic differences. For example, reacting to Mr. P. A. Sangma's views on the foreign origin issue, a prestigious weekly commented that he would have problems proving his Indian origin because of his Chinese looks and because he is not intelligible either in English or Hindi. On Sanskrit New Year's day in July 1999 the Northeastern news of Doordarshan stated that Sanskrit was the mother of all Indian languages. Out of India's 1,652 mother-tongues, 420 are spoken in the Northeast, only a handful of them of Sanskrit origin. Many in the Northeast revolt against this lack of respect for their identity or as D. N. Datta says, the tendency "to take the degree of Aryanisation as the measure of Indianisation".

Diversity causes tensions within the region too. Out of India's 67.76 million tribals, 8.14 million live in its seven States. Some such as the Bodos are plains tribals while most are hill tribes. A few such as the Aka of Arunachal Pradesh are small in number while others such as Bodos, Dimasas, Garos, Kasis and Mizos are numerous. In three States they are more than 80 per cent and in one, two-thirds. But they are very few in the populous States of Assam, Manipur and Tripura. The Bodo-Kachari, a third of the tribals in the Northeast, are only 3.7 per cent of Assam's 20 million population. In Tripura the tribals have declined from 56 per cent in the Fifties to 30 per cent today. The 45 lakh Adivasis, whose forefathers were brought by the British in the 19th century from Jharkand to work in the tea gardens, are considered foreigners. Most tribes oppose their inclusion in the Schedule for fear that they will compete for the few

jobs available. Literacy is high. Arunachal Pradesh was 71.08 per cent literate in 1991 and Mizoram 94.22 per cent. Four States have tribals as their political leaders. But the towns where economic decisions are made are dominated by non-tribals, mostly from outside the region. Hence the unequal tribal-non-tribal and inter-tribal power relations and conflicts that are not exclusively religious or cultural or economic.

The tribals resent non-tribal domination. The latter consider themselves indigenous. Both resent the economic control of outsiders and their "one nation one culture" stand. This opposition ex-

presses itself in terms of nationality, identity and ethnicity. Ethnic consciousness grows, many small tribes merge their identity into one and develop a belief in a common origin as the Nagas and the Mizos have done. But the expression of their demands for an autonomous economy, culture and identity changes according to the type of leaders. The chiefs want to protect their resources as well as the traditional ways of using them. Secessionist demands usually come from them. The educated elite demand control over resources and a share in the benefits of the modern system. Normally they want autonomy. Both want to safeguard their identity.

The conflict has its origin in history. The colonialists needed Assam mainly for its tea and later petroleum, and treated much of the region as a buffer zone against Burma and China. They modified the control mechanisms such as the Ahom *posa* system, i.e. compensation to the hill tribes in lieu of the dues they were entitled to in the conquered territories. The difference with what the Ahoms had done earlier is that to popularise the finished products of the industrial revolution, the British de-industrialised India

that had developed a manufacturing base. In the Northeast it involved destroying the tribal craft that competed with Manchester textiles. The Bodo-Kacharis are an example of trade expansion causing tension. After their conquest, the Udalguri mart, till then their main barter point, became an important trading centre. Since they were not very familiar with monetary transactions, Ahom merchants took control of trade and of cultivation since much of the trade was in agricultural produce. It increased land alienation that began with the Permanent Settlement, 1793, and the Assam Land Act, 1834. Then came the move to settle Ben-

gali peasants, 90 per cent of them Muslims, on "wasteland" that was their livelihood. These developments laid the foundation of Bodo-Ahom enmity on the one hand and with the Muslims on the other. Similarly, the colonialists' dependence on the traditional leaders to control the masses in Manipur resulted in tribal-Meitei as well as Naga-Kuki enmity. The British opposed the process of the tribals coming together. Many Naga tribes had joined against the British. Missionary intervention facilitated this identity expansion. Their conversion itself was an offshoot of their efforts to protect their identity. They had seen how the Meitei and Ahom had been Sanskritised and were afraid of being subjected to the same homogenising process. That is when conversions to Christianity increased among them. The missionaries did little to protect their culture but provided the organisational structure they required to come together. In Mizoram, the creation of Burma divided the Chins. The Partition divided them again. So those who remained in India had to find a new identity. That is a reason why conversions began around 1907.

That conversions were a response to the changes is confirmed also by the fact that when an alternative was available that combined social reform with protection of identity, they opted for it. The Bodos, sandwiched between the British planters, Ahom traders and Bengali peasants, moved to the north where they faced competition from Nepali migrants. The lower bureaucracy in Assam was dominated by the Ahoms and the higher level by the Bengalis. They saw themselves falling behind both in education and administrative and political power with none to protect their interests. Some converted to Christianity near Kokrajhar in the 1920s. But when their leader Kalicharan Brahma was converted to a Hindu sect that combined religion with social reforms, conversions to Christianity all but stopped.

To understand it one should debunk the myth of the missionary's alliance with the colonialist. Most missionaries in the Northeast were American Baptists and Methodists while most British administrators were Presbyterians and Anglicans. Relations between the two were cool. Leadership added to the tension. Colonial economic control depended on the traditional chiefs and on divide and rule while conversion provided the organisational structure required to bring the warring tribes together. The missionary concentrated on education from which new leaders emerged. His new morality and the modern leaders were a threat to the chiefs. Though eventually they too converted, the difference in their approach persisted.

By and large the traditional chiefs supported the British while the new leaders joined the freedom movement because they viewed the state as a modern institution. But the two were united in their effort to protect their identity. So even while joining the freedom fighters the latter were suspicious of their homogenising tendency. The decisive moment was the Japanese invasion. A. Z. Phizo, a traditional chief, succeeded in bringing 27 tribes together under one umbrella. That increased the power of the chiefs.

(The writer is Director, Northeastern Social Research Centre, Guwahati.)

Unrest in the Northeast — II

By Walter Fernandes

FROM THE 1930s, the effort to cope with the changes expressed itself in the form of new organisations. The Bodos formed associations such as the Bodo Chhatra Sammilan for their education, welfare and to standardise their language. The Notified Areas Act was amended in 1947 to prevent land alienation and indebtedness, but the situation did not improve. The Constitution did not provide to the hill tribes the safeguards available to the plain tribes mainly because of the Congress leader, Gopinath Bordoloi's contention that they were being assimilated with the rest of the population. Slowly the Bodos came to view the Ahoms as the main enemy.

In Nagaland in 1918, the new leaders formed the Naga Club, later renamed the Naga Hills District Council. The traditional chiefs changed it to the Naga National Council. The names are significant. The former wanted autonomy and the latter, independence. Negotiations at that time would have strengthened the new elite. But with their homogenising ideology the national leaders failed to understand their aspirations. In 1987, Phizo wrote to Rajiv Gandhi that the Mahatma whom he had met in 1946 had been ready to negotiate their status but other leaders were non-committal. The chiefs declared independence on August 14, 1947.

In 1946, the new leaders had formed the Mizo Union that wanted the Lushai Hills to become an autonomous district. The chiefs who formed the United Mizo Freedom Organisation demanded its merger with Burma. In 1948 the Mizo Union launched a campaign against the chiefs and captured all three Assembly seats in 1952. They lost one in 1957 and 1962. Thus the people too seemed to be behind them. But during the major famine of 1959 Chief Laldenga who formed the Mizo National Front got a large following. Later it became the Mizo National Front. The 1960 Assam Language Act protected tribal languages only in the districts where they were spoken. Otherwise Assamese was to be the official State language. These and other issues resulted in the two Mizo Union MLAs resigning their seats in 1962. The MNF that demanded independence won both in 1963.

Till 1947, mostly Muslim peasants migrated to Tripura, though in 1946 many

Hindus flocked there because of communal riots in Mymensingh. Most migrants since 1947 are Hindus from Bangladesh. The tribals formed 70 per cent of the population in 1901, this figure came down to 56.37 per cent in 1951 and is around 30 per cent today. They have lost their land and access to education and other institutions as their low literacy figures show. That is the basis of the conflict.

The 29 Manipur tribes are divided into Naga and Chin with a few buffer groups. The developmental process is controlled by the Meitei, a Sanskritised Mongoloid group. The main competition in recent decades between the tribals and the Meitei and between the Naga and Kuki has been

ified in Nagaland to suit some economic forces. The leaders led by Phizo rose in revolt.

One is also left with the impression that after the Sino-Indian conflict, the concept of a buffer zone re-emerged. Its consequence is the law and order approach. Much of the Northeast is under the Special Armed Forces Act since 1958. The Centre is also alleged to have facilitated the formation of the Naga People's Convention, with groups not much represented in the underground. The militants were not represented in the negotiations leading to the formation of Nagaland in 1963. The large amounts of funds pumped into the State after it has resulted in corruption and divi-

The first step in finding a solution to the unrest is to understand the aspirations and respect cultural, economic and social autonomy.

sion among the Nagas. But the problem remains. One can ask whether in the absence of a solution, even the new leaders have accepted the framework of the chiefs.

In Mizoram too, the agitation brought various Chin tribes under a single Mizo umbrella. Because of what they considered Assam's lack of respect for their culture, language and identity, the modern leaders demanded autonomy while the chiefs wanted independence. On March 1, 1966, Laldenga formed the underground government. Amid the rebellion that ensued, the Centre introduced the village regrouping scheme. The people were forced out of their ancestral villages, their houses destroyed and 464 villages regrouped into 109 centres between 1967 and 1970. The Guwahati High Court issued a stay order on the centres. So regrouping was withdrawn in 1970 and many rebels accepted the amnesty offer. In 1972 Mizoram became a Union Territory but the struggle continued. An accord was signed during the Emergency but rebellion erupted again in the mid-1980s. Finally an accord was signed on June 30, 1986. Mizoram became a State in 1987 and the MNF won the elections. The growth in literacy and other developments indicate that homogeneity combined with their history of missionary involvement, insurrection and the conse-

quent political awareness have made it possible for a modern leadership to emerge.

The struggle against Assam has been weaker than that against the Centre. Tripura and the Bodos joined the anti-foreigner movement in the 1970s and added their own demands. The movement for Udyanchal (Bodo and Mishing State) began in the 1970s but division among its leaders brought in some radical ideas. The differences were submerged in the anti-foreigner movement. However, the 1985 accord, Clause 6, spoke of protecting the cultural and social heritage of the Assamese but made no mention of the others. Some other clauses too caused apprehension in their minds. With that the demand for Bodo land grew. An alliance too seems to have grown with NSCN. The Bodoland Accord was signed in 1992 but the agitation continues partly because its implementation has been partial and partly because of division among the Bodos. At present the conflict around the borders of the Bodo Autonomous Council affects both with the Ahoms and the Adivasis. The Bodo Liberation Tigers, allegedly formed by the Centre, have signed a ceasefire recently.

Thus the modern as well as traditional leaders, want to protect their identity but in substantially different ways. In this context, many in the Northeast wonder whether the rest of India considers them a part of the country. The Brahmaputra which gives an identity to the region is bigger than the Ganga but is not a sacred river of the Hindus. Nowhere is the Northeast mentioned in the national anthem. During the recent millennium hype tourists were taken to the Andamans to see the first sunrise in India. Hardly anyone mentioned that it was actually in Arunachal Pradesh.

But with their homogenising ideology, the national leaders take an exclusively law and order and administrative view. The failure to recognise the real problems seems to have strengthened the traditional leaders. So the first step in finding a solution to the unrest is to understand the aspirations and respect cultural, economic and social autonomy. There is a move to abolish Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir. One wonders whether extending it to the Northeast can be the first step towards a solution.

(Concluded)

'Centre wants truce extended to all areas inhabited by Nagas'

Sandham Oken Jeet
Kohima, June 2

THE CEASE-FIRE between the NSCN (I-M) and the Centre, confined thus far to the State of Nagaland, will be extended to all Naga-inhabited areas, the Union Government has said, prominent church leaders told reporters on Friday.

The Centre has come to this decision because it feels that the solution to the Naga problem "should involve the entire Naga population," president of the Council of Naga Baptist Churches Rev. V K Nuh said.

Rev. Nuh, who recently met imprisoned NSCN (I-M) leader Thuingaleng Muivah in Bangkok, said he was in high spirits despite being jailed. He quoted Muivah as saying "I am prepared for any sacrifice for the cause of the Naga nation. I will continue to fight."

The reverend said Muivah wanted all fratricidal Naga killings to end. But, since he is confined to the prison cell, he regretted that he was in no position to help the peace initiative.

Muivah believes the only other person who could help the peace efforts in his absence was the chairman of the outfit, Isaac Chishi Swu. Rev Nuh said Muivah had asked him to meet Swu. But this

has not been possible, for Swu's whereabouts are not known.

The church leader said that now all the Naga underground outfits, including the NSCN (I-M), realise that "forgiveness and reconciliation are the only ways to survive." Nuh said before setting out for Bangkok, he and Rev L Suohie had met Home Ministry officials in Delhi and informed them of their plan to meet Muivah.

But he regretted that the Indian embassy in Bangkok refused to cooperate with them. "They did not even help us locate the prison Muivah is lodged in. We managed to reach there only with the help of the staff of the hotel we were staying in."

Rev Nuh said Muivah was extremely happy to meet them. He was under some stress, though, because of the pressures of life in a prison. "The thing uppermost in his mind is the peace initiative."

"We have conveyed to the Union Government that peace talks must be with all the Naga outfits. You just can't make peace with one group and fight the others," the Reverend said.

Any cease-fire between the Naga insurgents and the Government of India must be on the lines of the 1964 truce, which was arrived at after hectic negotiations that lasted close to three months, he said.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

BJP for debate over ethnic Assamese

P.P. Singh,

GUWAHATI 4 JUNE

NEWLY ELECTED Assam state unit president of the BJP, Rajendra Nath Gohain called upon holding a debate on the issue of identifying the indigenous people of the state. This issue, he felt, can only be resolved by inviting all the ethnic groups of the state to a seminar.

While addressing the media, Mr Gohain informed that though he was in favour of reservation of seats for the indigenous people, the issue of who is indigenous needs to be decided, for which the party will not mind taking an active lead.

Quoting a Union Home Ministry report, he said there are 36 assembly constituencies in Assam where the illegal migrants constitute the majority. Hence there is need to go for a delimitation of the constituencies to give proper representation to indige-

nous people. However he failed to enumerate how many illegal migrants are there in the state.

But Mr Gohain was all ready to help the genuine people belonging to minority community. He felt



Gohain: Building bridges

that while most are engaged in growing jute, they do not get their due price of their crop. He said that if the BJP came to power the party will make some arrangements for the proper procurement of the crop. When told that the Jute Corporation of India has almost abandoned the process of purchasing jute from the state

he said that the party will be taking up the matter with the former to start the process in full swing.

On having any alliance with any party specially the ruling AGP, Mr Gohain said that so far they have not received any proposal from any of the parties including the AGP and that their first attempt will be to strengthen their party.

The Economic Times

- 5 -

Muivah crucial to peace talks, says Naga leader

HT Correspondent
Kohima, June 6

A prominent Naga leader and the Manipur Minister for Forest and Environment and Law, Prof. Gangmumei Kamei, said he was sad to note that NSCN(I-M) general secretary Thuingaleng Muivah had been arrested in Thailand for possessing fake South Korean passport on January 29 last.

The minister felt it would be better if the jailed NSCN(I-M) leader is released because he is the most influential figure in the Naga movement. "A freed Muivah is more helpful than the detained Muivah," he said.

Asked whether the Indian Government should take up the matter with its counterpart in Thailand to get Muivah released from jail for the sake of the peace talks, Kamei said: "I can't say anything on Muivah's arrest because it is under the jurisdiction of Thailand." However, Muivah's arrest is not in the country's interest, the minister said.

Kamei also said the ceasefire, if any, with the Government of India

should be in line with the 1964 truce as it covered all Naga contiguous areas. "The present ceasefire between the Government of India and the NSCN(I-M) is confined only to Nagaland, though there were no hostilities between the security forces and the outfit in Manipur," he added.

When asked whether the Union Government's delay in responding to the ceasefire offer by the NSCN(K) would discourage other militant organisations in the region

Ceasefire Violation

in future, the Naga leader said the Indian Government should come forward to respond positively to the outfit's offer and "any type of ceasefire is good for the people".

On the question of ceasefire violation as accused by the Government and the NSCN(I-M), Kamei said stopping of ceasefire violation would be difficult and such violations normally takes place all over the world.

The minister also ridiculed remarks made by Nagaland Chief

Minister S C Jamir and some of his ministers that "outsiders (Nagas of Manipur) are interfering in the affairs of Nagaland politics. He claimed that it was the Nagas of Nagaland interfering in the affairs of Nagas of Manipur. "It was the other way round," he said, adding "if they (Nagas of Nagaland) stop interfering in our affairs in Manipur, it will be better".

When sought his views on the integration of all contiguous Naga areas, the minister said integration all Naga contiguous areas is difficult but claimed that "solidarity of pan Nagas has already been achieved". He also said undoing of the demarcated boundaries may not be easy. He, however, urged the Nagas to maintain peace and harmony.

The minister said one of the main clauses of the controversial 16-point agreement that says Nagas inhabiting outside the present Nagaland State can join can join them if they so desired, has already been rejected in 1960 soon after the infamous agreement (16 Point Agreement) was signed between the then Naga People's Convention and the Centre.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

7 JUN 2001

his'

gister of Citizens, or the voters' list for the 1952 first general elections, and their descendants.

he want only this category of people to be allowed to contest elections in Assam.

The CPI, on the other hand, wants that those who resided in Assam on the day the constitution was adopted, and whose names appear in the 51 voters' list, and their descendants should be designated "indigenous", and seats could be reserved for them. The party has, however, not decided yet on the quantum of reservation.

The CPI has gone a step ahead of Aasu, it has "out-heroded Herod", Mr Majumder said.

Mr HRA Choudhury said the CPI leader and flood control minister, Mr Promode Gogoi, could have been a spokesman for the RSS instead of the CPI.

Asked how Mr Majumder and Mr Gogoi managed to stay in the Cabinet together despite such diametrically opposite views on a crucial question, the PPA leader said in a coalition, partners could differ.

He cited the example of the MK vis a vis Sri Lanka. "But when it comes to sticking to power, we are together."

govt rsions'

on' had nothing to do with it but with property-related problems.

The Christian converts were denied their share of property in their joint families, said Mr George.

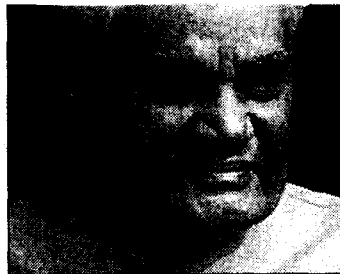
The Manoharpur village is no longer easily accessible to Christian leaders.

"While officials have no problems allowing Hindu leaders to the village, they appear uneasy when it comes to Christians," he said.

The Christian leader feels the ec

Khunti to put up black flags atop their houses and commercial establishments in protest against the Prime Minister's scheduled Bihar visit on 9 June.

The Jharkhand Vikas Party, the Jharkhand People's Party, the All Jharkhand Students Union, the Samajwadi Party and the Nationalist Congress Party, reiterated to reporters their call for a "Jharkhand bandh" on that day. They also demanded a special Parliament session for the passage of the Bihar State Reorganisation Bill.



Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee

These parties have told the Centre that they will oppose the visit unless the Bill is passed before 9 June.

To a query, they said they might consider welcoming Mr

demanding that the Prime Minister categorically announce when his government planned to create Jharkhand. Mr Vajpayee must announce this during his Bihar visit on 9 June or else face opposition from the RJD, senior partyman and former legislator Mr Namatullah said here. — UNI

Atal Behari Vajpayee if the special session is announced. The supporters also told the people, particularly the traders, to ensure the success of the bandh.

Central team meets Tripura

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

AGARTALA, June 7. — A Central team, led by the home secretary Mr Kamal Pandey, arrived here today to assess the law and order situation and review the state government's strategy to root out militancy.

Immediately after arriving here, the team went to the civil secretariat to meet top officials of the government and state and Central para military forces. The chief secretary, Mr V Thulasidas, and the DGP, Mr BL Vora, were present at the meeting.

The six-member team — comprising Mr Pandey, BSF DG Mr EN Rammohan, CRPF DG Mr MN Sabharwal, home ministry's joint secretary for North-east Mr GK Pillai and the director (P&C) of home ministry — will review the

deployment strategy and performance of para-military forces.

During their two-day stay here, the team members will also meet the Tripura chief minister Mr Manik Sarkar, Governor Prof Siddheswar Prasad, and leaders of political parties and NGOs.

They will review the action plan to curb militancy in Tripura. The action plan envisages:

■ Setting up of special operation group in every battalion of central para military forces and state security forces

FIVE HURT

AGARTALA, June 7. — Five people have been injured in a bomb attack by United Bengali Liberation Front militants in Dhalai district yesterday.

NLFT ultras kidnapped a person from Bangali colony in North Tripura district, while an NLFT collaborator was arrested from Habildar Para in West district yesterday. — PTI

■ Use of National Security Act against the militants and their collaborators.

■ Strengthening of intelligence network and setting up of development-cum-security zones in the state.

Mr Manik Sarkar, while welcoming the

team, said his government has an open mind in tackling militancy.

"We had accepted all the proposals and suggestions received so far from the Centre to curb militancy."

He said no Army unit has been posted in the state though

Youth held for posing as Tripura ex-CM's son

SIDDHARTHA KUMAR
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, June 7. — Amit Betal wanted a "publicity contract" from the heavy industries ministry. He got the publicity all right, when police caught him yesterday for passing himself off as son of a former Tripura chief minister.

Betal (22), who came to Delhi from Howrah in West Bengal not long ago, went about places claiming himself to be Amit Kumar Majoomdar, son of the former Tripura chief minister, Mr SR Majoomdar. He did well for himself initially by

Betal was reportedly granted an appointment with the minister a month ago, but had not turned up that day. He had come to the minister's office yet again on 5 June and was given an appointment for yesterday.

Meanwhile, ministry officials verified from Mr SR Majoomdar that he has no son by the name Amit Majoomdar. When Betal reached the office yesterday morning, the special officer on duty in the ministry informed police and Betal was arrested.

The DC (New Delhi), Mr RS Krishnaih, said a document looking like an identity card, containing the name of the former CM, was found

THE STATESMAN

8 JUN 2000

Muivah, Nagas and the future of talks

BY SANJOY HAZARIKA

In Nagaland, the public is worried about the lack of progress in the talks, especially the delay caused by Muivah's detention. But concern about the ceasefire should not be overplayed: the Government of India, one believes, is interested in its continuance when it runs its course in July. And why not, it has brought a semblance of peace to the situation in Nagaland even though it does not extend to those parts of Assam, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh where Nagas also live. This is a demand by the NSCN (I-M) which the Indian government has consistently refused

years. Outside observers also need to stop identifying the Naga people with one militant faction. There are other groups which, perhaps do not have the political influence, armed power, network or lobbying skills of the I-M, but which have a considerable following and support of other ethnic groups in Nagaland and the hills of Manipur, where Nagas dominate.

In Nagaland, the public is worried about the lack of progress in the talks, especially the delay caused by Muivah's detention. But concern about the ceasefire should not be overplayed: the Government of India, one believes, is interested in its continuance when it runs its

course in July. And why not, it has brought a semblance of peace to the situation in Nagaland even though it does not extend to those parts of Assam, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh where Nagas also live. This is a demand by the NSCN (I-M) which the Indian government has consistently refused.

The NSCN is also surely interested in the continuance of the ceasefire. But neither faction can rationalise the situation to the extent where they expect the government at the state and in Delhi to do nothing if they go after each other with weapons.

In addition, the pre-eminent leader of the I-M group can authorise a

stop-gap arrangement where two or three of his nominees can hold talks on his behalf and after getting a clear brief from him with Indian negotiators. It is important for the official process to continue otherwise it is letting, quite frankly, the Government of India off the hook and making things easy for it. The NSCN needs to stop giving the impression that it is seemingly directionless since Muivah's arrest.

This meandering has ended with discussions between the Government of India and the NSCN (I-M) in New Delhi in May to revive the ceasefire monitoring process by both sides, a system that virtually broke down last year.

Muivah is in jail and may stay there for some time, whether he is there on a technicality or not. He is 67 and not getting any younger and pleas from his nephew for release on grounds of health carry ring of sincerity.

One also cannot find anything objectionable to India informing the government of Thailand of his importance in the peace talks, if this facilitates his release. Yet, there are those within the Indian government who want clear answers about why Muivah went to Pakistan in January before returning to Thailand, where he was detained. Did the question of arms support come up in that visit,

they ask. They are perturbed that this visit took place just a few months after the Kargil conflict, when Indian sensitivities regarding Pakistan were very high.

Reading the Thai press, one gets the impression that either they did not talk to a single Indian diplomat or no Indian bothered to brief them about the background of the talks. The news reports reflected the I-M viewpoint, showing how skilful it is with regard to networking and briefings.

But there are other glitches — Nimrod and another NGO observer are both quoted as saying the same thing in the same paper on different days: "We are talking here about the lives of thousands of people and the stability of an entire region, which could be jeopardised as a result of an issue which is principally a minor offence, not intended to hurt Thailand in any way."

The Thai press too should check its facts for a change: it is giving the impression in its reports that Nagaland is an independent land. This is simply not true. As of now, it is a state of the Indian Union, a status that has been there for decades, whether people like it or not.

SANJOY HAZARIKA is associated with the Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi

To the Bangkok court where Thiungelang Muivah, general secretary of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (I-M) and one of South Asia's legendary insurgent figures, is being tried on charges of travelling on a false passport, a flow of supporters have travelled long distances to express their backing for the incarcerated leader and plead publicly for his early release.

Accounts from Bangkok say that not just prominent European NGOs but a former US senator were also present at the hearing which was postponed till July. The delays in the Thai system of justice show that most legal systems have such delays in-built, whether it is in India or even the United States. Muivah has also been accused of entering Thailand illegally and trying to leave it the same way, after jumping bail. He has already been sentenced to one year's imprisonment for the latter offence.

And after the May 25 hearing was adjourned, John Nimrod, the former senator from the American mid-western state of Illinois, and others held a news conference to announce their concern about the delay in the peace process and that it could "lead to a breakdown of the ceasefire in Nagaland, which would be tragic for the people of that region as well as for India."

The talks between the Government of India's representative and the NSCN (I-M) have been stalled by Muivah's detention over the past four months. These have been held since 1997, primarily in The Hague in the Netherlands. The ceasefire with the I-M faction (it takes the acronym from its two principal leaders, Issak Chisi Swu, the Chairman, and Muivah) has held despite complaints and resentments from either side about non-compliance.

But what should be of concern to others in the rest of the country, as it is to their brethren in Nagaland, is the fact that the ceasefire is between the I-M group and Indian security forces. There have been furious gunbattles between the I-M and other militant groups in Nagaland, each seeking to oust the other from various areas and increase their sphere of influence.

The statistics make grim reading: more than 150 have died in intra-faction feuds, especially between the I-M and its principal rival, the NSCN (Khaplang). Another 211 civilians have perished in the fighting. There are reports of kidnappings and extensive extortion as well.

What Nimrod and his associates need to ask is whether a delay in the talks benefits anyone. Surely it does not help the Naga people, who have faced conflict for more than 45

Naga panels rue truce violation

FROM R. VENKATARAMAN

New Delhi, June 8: Terming the ceasefire in Nagaland as one "existing only on paper", various citizens' committees and village development boards have pleaded with the Union home ministry to work towards "a real ceasefire" in the trouble-torn northeastern state.

Village development boards are official committees under the Union home ministry, constituted with the aim of involving people at the "grassroot-level" in the peace process.

The second state-level conference of village development boards at Kohima early this month expressed concern over the violation of the ceasefire and urged the Centre to do something about it.

"The conference expresses its concern over the spate of killings in Nagaland, which has created a fear psychosis," states a report to the Union home ministry.

There are three major militant factions in the state. These are the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (Isak-Muvah), the National

Citizens' committees urge Centre to work towards 'real ceasefire'

Socialist Council of Nagaland (Khaplang) and the Naga National Council.

The Centre signed a ceasefire agreement with the NSCN(I-M) group, hoping that the Khaplang faction would "fall in line" soon. Though the latter recently agreed to cessation of violence, a formal deal is yet to be signed.

Reports periodically received by the Union home ministry from Nagaland indicate that there have been frequent violations of the ground rules of the ceasefire between the NSCN(I-M) and the government.

The report sent to the Union home ministry by the village development boards was also signed by all village committees and women's groups in the state.

The report appeals to the Centre to "respond positively" to the ceasefire declared by the NSCN(K) and work out the modalities for a "real ceasefire" in Na-

galand. "The people of Nagaland are tired and fed up with violence. They have no patience to endure it any longer. The people have been subjected to this for far too long," the resolution says.

It also urges all militant factions to call a halt to violence immediately.

Planter abducted

The manager of Lakhipur tea estate was abducted by suspected National Socialist Council of Nagaland militants from south Assam's Cachar district today.

Manager Raj Kumar Pandey was taken at gunpoint to an unknown destination by six suspected insurgents from the tea garden located in a remote area along river Barak on the Assam-Manipur border, official reports reaching here said, reports PTI from Guwahati.

Extortion may be the motive behind the abduction, reports said.

The police has launched a massive manhunt to rescue the abducted executive.

Manipur operations: Following repeated warnings from the Union home ministry, Manipur government has started operations against insurgents in both the hill and plain districts, reports UNI. The age old Seditious Meeting Act, 1911, enacted by the British had been extended to the entire state "declaring all the districts as proclaimed areas empowering law enforcing authorities to act on meetings, supposed to have seditious motive."

The four valley districts of Imphal East and West, Bishnupur and Thoubal are already under the purview of the Act by a notification issued on April 26 last.

Mizoram hike: The Mizoram food and civil supplies department has clarified that the state government was not responsible for the hike in foodgrain prices in the state.

The department, in a Press release, clarified that the hike in price of rice supplied through ration was due to the cut in subsidy by the Centre, adds UNI.

THE TELEGRAPH

9 JUN 2000

Tripura militants not keen on talks: Centre

Agartala, June 8

g.n.b. 9/6
M.V. 9/6

THE CENTRE has asked the Tripura Government to play a more pro-active role and improve relations between Central and State security forces to curb militancy.

After talks with the State officials, Union Home Secretary Kamal Pandey said the Centre had advised the State to contain extremism.

The Central and State security forces should play a more positive role to flush out militants, he added. The Union and State Governments always wanted a dialogue with the militant outfits, but they were not responsive. He added that there would be no ceasefire against the rebel outfits.

The Union Home Secretary, who led a six-member Central team, to make an on-the-spot assessment of the law and order situation in the State and review the State Government's strategy to flush out militants, did not say if he would recommend Army deployment.

The State Government had demanded the deployment of the Army to intensify counter-insurgency operations in the State. The

Army should be used as the last resort to solve insurgency, he said.

The Bangladesh Government had assured India that it would destroy the militants' camps in their territory, Pandey said. When reminded that Bangladesh had given such assurances earlier, he said efforts were on to check militancy in the next two months.

He said there was no proposal to extend the Disturbed Areas Act to more areas. 27 of Tripura's total 45 police stations had been declared "disturbed" under the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958.

Both ruling and Opposition parties met the Union Home Secretary on Wednesday.

The Left Front demanded deployment of five battalions of Army and sealing of the State's 856-km long Indo-Bangla border. The Opposition demanded imposition of President's rule and resignation of the Left Front Government for its failure to curb insurgency.

UNI

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

25 JUN 2000

N-E people join hands to fight terrorism

HT Correspondent/Agencies
Guwahati, June 8

PEOPLE OF the North-East, cutting across party lines, renewed their pledge to fight terrorism at peace rallies on Thursday.

The decision to organise the rallies was taken at the North-Eastern Chief Ministers' meeting held at Shillong in May.

In Assam, Chief Minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta led a march from Judges Field through the main thoroughfares of Guwahati. The participants included school children and members of various non-governmental organisations. Mahanta said peace was of great importance and reiterated his Government's stand against terrorism. The Chief Minister hoped that the rally would help mobilise public opinion against terrorism.

In Manipur, Chief Minister Wahengbam Nipamacha Singh led an all-party rally at Khuman Lampak Main Stadium. The Chief Minister urged the Prime Minister to declare the insurgency problem a "national issue".

"Without peace and harmony there cannot be any development work in the region," the Chief Minister said. He exhorted the extremists to lay down arms and help bring peace in the region. Other ministers present at the rally



Assam Chief Minister P K Mahanta at a peace rally in Guwahati on Thursday. Photo: Eastern Projections

appealed to the militants to lay down their arms and join the national mainstream. BJP leader M Borot said the rally marked the beginning of peace in the region.

In Arunachal Pradesh, hundreds of people from all walks of life braved inclement weather to take part in the rally at the Indira Gandhi Park in Itanagar. Agriculture Minister Tako Dabi administered the 'anti-terrorism

day' pledge. People pledged to forsake all forms of terrorism and violence and uphold peace, social harmony and understanding among all fellow human beings and fight the forces of dis-

ruption threatening human lives and values.

In Nagaland, Minister for Information, Public Relations and Parliamentary Affairs Nillo Rengma said the State had been reduced to a land of extortion and

violence. Despite prayers and fasts to end violence, militants have not stopped killing people, he said. Rengma asked Nagas to fend for themselves and help restore peace.

In Mizoram, Chief Minister Zoramthanga urged the people to maintain and preserve the hard-earned peace in the State at all cost. He said peace, which had dawned in Mizoram, after a 20-year-long insurgency launched by the Mizo National Front (MNF), with the signing of the Mizo Accord in 1986, was "very valuable".

Peace Rallies

New steps to combat Tripura's insurgency

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

AGARTALA, June 8. — Special measures would now be taken under a revised security plan for fighting Tripura's outlawed groups more effectively, the Union home secretary, Mr Kamal Pande, said here today.

He was reluctant to give details about the "new strategy," keeping in view the security aspect. He, however, assured newsmen: "you would find positive results in next two months."

Earlier, Mr Pande, the leader of a team of senior officials of the Union home ministry who arrived here on Wednesday on a two-day tour of the state, reviewed the state's latest situation in a high-level meeting of officials yesterday. The state's chief secretary, Mr V Tulsidas, the director general of police, Mr BL Bhora, the regional core commander of the army, lieutenant general Nanabati, along with senior officials of the state police and the central forces

engaged in counter-insurgency operations in Tripura, were present.

Mr Pande said that both the Centre and the state government were sharing equal responsibility in combating militants in the state. The Centre was providing necessary assistance to the state authorities for the purpose.

He stressed the need of more effective coordination of action between the state police, Tripura state rifles and the central security forces.

He also said that it was the state government's prerogative to bring more of the state's areas under the Disturbed Area Regulation. No such proposal had been made so far. He was sent here to assess the performance of the central security forces engaged in anti-insurgency operations and also to be informed of the state's security needs, he added.

On the question of deployment of the army in the state, he said that there was "suffi-

cient strength" of the central paramilitary forces. What was mainly needed was to coordinate the action of the forces and utilise their full strength. "Tripura's situation is not so alarming as to warrant the army to go into action at this stage."

He said that the state had 15 battalions of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) in addition to nine battalions of the Border Security Force (BSF).

The Centre would soon rush two more BSF battalions to the state. Also, there was no plan to invite the Tripura insurgents for peace negotiation. It was the outlawed rebel groups which should first express their willingness to come for negotiation, he said.

He also made a point that the issue of demolishing northeast rebels camps in Bangladesh had already been taken up with the Dhaka authorities. It was now for Dhaka to take appropriate action.

"The leadership of the NSCN (I-M) has been categorically told by the Centre not to extend help to any of the region's rebel outfits," he said, when asked about the Centre's stance in regard to allegations that Tripura's NLFT insurgents were operating in collusion with the NSCN rebels.

Mr Pande said that the work on making barbed wire fences along Tripura's border would be started after monsoon to seal the routes which were now being used by armed rebel groups as their conduits.

Among members of the team of home ministry officials are Mr GK Pillai, joint secretary (home), the director general of the CRPF, Mr MN Sabherwal, the BSF director general, Mr EN Rammohon, and other senior officials.

Mr Pande met the state's governor, Prof Siddheswar Prasad, the chief minister, Mr Manik Sarkar, and leaders of both ruling and opposition parties. The team left for New Delhi today.

THE STATESMAN

39 JUN 2000

Centre 'secretly' wooing NLFT: CPM

SATYABRATA CHAKRABORTY
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

AGARTALA, June 10. — The Centre had initiated a "secret move" to woo the outlawed rebel group, the National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT), after keeping the ruling Left Front completely in the dark in the matter, CPI-M sources complained here.

Mr BK Panwar, an Army brigadier as well as chief of the Army's 21 Sector here, has now become the centre of a political controversy for "supporting the NLFT's stance".

The Daily Desher Katha, the CPI-M's mouthpiece here, complained that Mr Nayanbashi Jamatiya, a front-ranking leader of the banned NLFT and a prominent TNV leader Mr Kripasadhan Jamatiya, were brought in an Assam Rifles vehicle here on 4 June from the Hadrai area of West district's Khowai subdivision for talks with the Army officers.

Both of them were later sent back to Hadrai in a force's vehicle under strict security cover

on 7 June.

"Long live Brigadier Panwar" posters were displayed prominently by the Indigenous Peoples Front of Tripura (IPFT) activists, allegedly the political unit of the outlawed NLFT at Hadrai, Khamarbari, Trishabari and nearby areas of Khowai subdivision recently.

Earlier, Mr Panwar was at the centre of a controversy after making a statement that Tripura's insurgency was directly an outcome of the influx of non-tribals following the partition, and that the stream of refugees from erstwhile East Pakistan had reduced the state's hill people to a helpless minority in their homeland.

The former alliance's chief minister, Mr Samir Ranjan Burman, immediately condemned Mr Panwar's statement. In an urgent message, Mr Burman wanted the Union home ministry to stop the Army officer from making such "political statements".

The BJP's state leadership also lodged a strong protest

against Mr Panwar's stance. The party felt, "such irresponsible remarks" would only aggravate the state's deteriorating situation.

The Tripura hill regional units, including the IPFT, the TUJS and the TNV, on the other hand, congratulated Mr Panwar for "boldly revealing the facts".

After the LF's debacle in the last elections to the Tripura Hill Autonomous Council, the state committee of the ruling CPI-M levelled a series of charges against Mr Panwar. The party complained that the brigadier had held a series of "secret talks" with the IPFT leaders including its chief Mr Harinath Devbarma and another prominent leader Mr Debabrata Koloy.

Mr Panwar had also attended several IPFT poll meetings, it was alleged.

Mr Panwar told a local daily that he had nothing to do with these allegations. "I am here to restore peace in the area and am sincerely trying to do my best. Those who are against me

will see the outcome of my efforts", the brigadier was quoted as saying.

It was Mr Sher Amir Singh, another Army brigadier here who had negotiated the secret deal between Rajiv Gandhi's government and Mr Vijoykumar Hrangkhawl, supremo of the then underground TNV in July 1988. Mr Hrangkhawl was secretly picked by a defence helicopter from his hideout in South Tripura for talks with the Prime Minister.

The then Congress-TUJS alliance rulers of Tripura were completely in the dark before the negotiation was finalised and Mr Hrangkhawl was persuaded to sign on the dotted line in New Delhi on 12 August 1988.

The TPCC chief, Mr Birjit Sinha, earlier alleged that the Union home minister, Mr LK Advani, who had visited Khantalang during his Tripura tour last February, might have talked to the NLFT leaders. The police, however, did not support his complaint.

THE STATESMAN

11 JUN 2000

INTENSIVE VIGILANCE

5r/b Nothing less will do for North-east mb

ARUNACHAL Pradesh may lose its image as an "island of peace" if Delhi does not take serious note of the infiltration of NSCN-IM militants into the districts of Tirap and Changlang. The apparent objective is to engage the rival Khaplang faction which has been around for more than a decade and which has caused no serious law and order problem. But there are three important points. The militants might lure the educated unemployed with money. In December 1998, a revolt by seven MLAs of the two districts ended the nearly 17-year-old rule of former chief minister Gegong Apang, the result of years of neglect. And the newly-floated Union Territory Demand Committee is agitating for separate status. Besides, the All Arunachal Pradesh Students Union wants more than 60,000 Chakma and Hajong refugees evicted. The Supreme Court has ordered maintenance of *status quo*. A final decision has to be taken.

To some extent Dispur callousness is responsible for the growing insurgent activities in its North Cachar Hills district. When in 1993 the NSCN-IM made its first foray into the district, Dispur failed to take early precautions. Over the years, Naga rebels have trained frustrated Dimasa youth. This suits the militants because the *ghat* section of the Shillong-Silchar Road that passes through the district provides easy access to Bangladesh. A relatively peaceful Meghalaya has been affected since 1993, with local extremists indulging in looting banks and extortion. Delay in implementing the 1988 accord with the Tripura National Volunteers gave birth, in 1992, to the National Liberation Front of Tripura which has unleashed a reign of terror. Even Mizoram, where the 1986 Peace Accord ended insurgency, is now facing threats from Bru (Reang) militants demanding an autonomous body. By themselves, the states cannot tackle the problem. And since the Centre is unable to provide adequate paramilitary forces, the North-east states must revive the concept of collective security. There is need for intensive vigilance along inter-state borders.

THE STATESMAN

12 JUN 2000

Ethnic violence claims two lives in West Tripura

Syed Sajjad Ali
Agartala, June 13

TWO PEOPLE, including a para-military personnel, were killed in fresh ethnic outbreak in Teliamura, West Tripura, on Tuesday.

In Fatikroy, North Tripura, on Monday, an attack on Bengalis sparked tension forcing many families to flee the village. The situation, however, has been brought under control, police said. However, several hundreds of families have been displaced in the aftermath.

Meanwhile, curfew has been clamped in certain areas of North Tripura on Tuesday following the violence.

A Teliamura police officer said two persons, including a jawan from the 3rd Battalion of Tripura State Rifles (TSR), were killed in the violence. This was the second such incident in as many months in Teliamura. Last month, the

Kalyanpur area of the district was rocked by ethnic violence.

This time, trouble started after recovery of the body of a Sudhanya Deb from Jumbari on Tuesday morning. Deb had been kidnapped by suspected tribal militants from Baluchahra on Monday.

An angry Bengali mob marched into Teliamura with the corpse and demonstrated in front of the police station. The police had successfully persuaded them in turning back when the crowd intercepted a truck near Netajinagar carrying four tribal men.

They dragged down the four men, who were actually TSR personnel in civil dress, and beat them up — fatally in one case.

The deceased has been identified as Tapan Malakar. Police said condition of the other three was not serious.

The attack has fuelled the already-tense area. Police fear a retaliatory action and senior officers have rushed to the spot. Para-

military troops are patrolling sensitive areas of Teliamura.

In Fatikroy, the situation was taut with tension for the second consecutive day on Tuesday. The North Tripura superintendent of police, Punit Rastogi, said there has been no reports of a fresh outbreak barring a minor incident of arson.

Several houses of Bengalis have been torched, a bridge destroyed and the vehicle of a Christian missionary organisation had been set on fire in the chain of violent incidents rocking the area. Police arrested a tribal youth armed with a bow and arrow on Tuesday.

Police said an estimated 365 families have sought shelter in makeshift camps. About 70 tribal families are also among those displaced.

Chief Minister Manik Sarkar left for New Delhi on Tuesday to attend the party Politburo meeting to be held on June 15. Sources said he will meet Union Home Ministry officials during the trip.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

14 JUN 2000

TRIPURA MERGER

Threat to Marxist influence in tribal belt

THERE is little surprise in the merger of the Tripura National Volunteers with the Indigenous People's Front of Tripura. It was TNV leader Bijoy Kumar Hrangkhawl who in 1997 helped form the IPFT, the main demands of which include conversion of the existing Tribal Autonomous District Council into a separate state and introduction of the Innerline Regulations. The merger comes close on the heels of the IPFT's thumping victory in the ADC elections. The TNV, which terrorised non-tribals in the '70s, leading to the massacre of more than 200 at Mandai on 6 June 1980, abjured violence following the August 1988 MoU after the Congress came to power in the State. Hrangkhawl was chairman of the Tribal Jhumia Rehabilitation and Plantation Corporation before being elected to the Assembly in 1998. Significantly, when the All Tripura Tiger Force called a 10-day bandh in July 1996 for "foreigners" to leave, Hrangkhawl sided with the administration to fight the ATTF menace.

There is likely to be a tussle over leadership. Hrangkhawl has charisma and no leaders would like him to overshadow them. When Hrangkhawl expressed his desire to rejoin the Tripura Upajati Juba Samity after his surrender, its leader Shyamacharan Tripura is reported to have commented that "we do not mind... but let me confess that if the TNV joins the TUJS, especially if Bijoy joins, we may have problems". And the present IPFT chief, Harinath Devbarma, is reportedly no more receptive. Polarisation of anti-Leftist tribal groups poses a serious threat to the CPI-M whose influence in the hills is already on the wane. Marxists believed in democratic exercises in their dealing with both the tribals and non-tribals but the anti-Left forces are parochial. It is also said that the younger generation of TUJS is inclined to favour an alliance with the IPFT. Whatever be the intention of the tribals, both the Centre and the state must make sure that forces from outside and religious organisations are not allowed to add fuel to the fire.

THE STATESMAN

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'No report to show Bangla majority in Assam seats'

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

GUWAHATI, June 14. — The Union home ministry has denied existence of any report which says that 36 of the 126 Assembly constituencies in Assam have a majority of Bangladeshis.

The newly elected president of the state BJP unit and MP from Nagaon, Mr Rajendra Nath Gohain, had recently raked up a controversy by saying Bangladeshis have swamped 36 of the 126 Assembly constituencies in the state. The information, he claimed, was contained in a report of the Union home ministry and added that if the BJP was elected to power, it would reorganise the 36 constituencies.

"There is no such report and this was made clear in a reply in the last session of Parliament," said Mr GK Pillai, a joint secretary in the home ministry. It is a public document which can be verified by anybody, he told **The Statesman** from Delhi today. A needless controversy has been stirred up over a non-existent document. A senior official of the state home department here echoed Mr Pillai.

Leading minority organisations in the state were stung by Mr Gohain's statement and reacted strongly to it. The state irrigation minister and president of the United Peoples Party of Assam, Mr Abdul Muhib Majumder said the BJP's aim was to ensure that no Muslim was elected MLA.

They are not really concerned about driving out Bangladeshis, he added.

Mr Majumdar said it reflected very poorly on the Central government that despite being aware of the presence of so-called Bangladeshis in the 36 constituencies, it had done nothing to deport them.

With elections in the state due early next year, the controversy over Bangladeshis living illegally in Assam is likely to gather steam because there are some parties who have little else to offer to the people.

Another related issue which is likely to hog the limelight is the one regarding reservation of seats for the state's indigenous people in elected bodies, local, assembly or parliament. But more than the question of reservation, it is the definition of indigenous which is likely to be in focus. The All Assam Students Union, defines indigenous as those (and their descendants) whose names appear in the National Register of Citizens of 1951 or the electoral rolls for the 1952 general elections.

Minority and tribal organisations have, however, challenged the AASU definition. The latter, who claim to be the aboriginals of Assam, want the cut-off date for defining indigenous to be 24 February, 1826. On this date the Yandaboo Treaty between the East India Company and the King of Ava (Burma) was signed, marking Assam's annexation by the British.

Rebels ambush Tripura convoy

FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT

Agartala, June 17: Additional superintendent of police (South) Arindam Nath narrowly escaped an attempt on his life this morning as militants ambushed his vehicle. A constable was killed and four others seriously injured in the attack in remote Paharpur area under Amarpur subdivision of South Tripura.

Sources said at 7 am today, Nath left Amarpur for Jatanbari in a convoy of four vehicles. When the convoy reached Paharpur at 7.35 am, a group of suspected National Liberation Front of Tripura militants perched atop hills hurled a grenade at the convoy. Nath saw the grenade hurtling towards his vehicle and jumped out.

The grenade exploded on the rear of the Maruti Gypsy and seriously injured constables Surya Sarkar, Nayanjyoti Chakma, Sushil Das, Jibon Pal and Surya Debbarma. Constable Surya Debbarma succumbed to his injuries after he was brought to G.B. Hospital here in a critical condition. The condition of the four other injured policemen is serious.

Sources said after the grenade exploded, policemen from the other three vehicles put up a valiant fight and forced the militants to flee. Speaking over telephone from Amarpur, Nath said, "It was a providential escape for me." Nath was proceeding to-

wards Jatanbari and leading an advance party for the visit of CRPF inspector-general George C. Podypara and newly-appointed director-general of police B.L. Vora. The officials later visited the Paharpur outpost and Jatanbari police station.

More abductions: In separate incidents, three persons were abducted and 10 houses set ablaze during the past 24 hours. Police sources said a group of NLFT militants stormed Ghagracherra village in Dhalai district yesterday afternoon and shot at and injured a 43-year-old non-tribal trader, Harishchandra Bhowmik. They also set 10 houses on fire. Before escaping the militants abducted two non-tribal youth, Nishi Sarkar and Abhinayan Bhowmik.

Apart from this, Amulya Das, a bamboo trader, was abducted from the Taibandal area in Sonamura subdivision.

Four tribals were arrested from Hejamara village in Dhalai district yesterday in connection with the abduction of six bus passengers from the area on Thursday.

Truckers' strike off

The 20-day impasse over the Mariani Truck Drivers' Union strike has ended, with the truckers resuming service to the districts of Mokokchung, Tuensang and Zunheboto in Nagaland last night, reports our Jorhat correspondent.

THE TELEGRAPH

18 JUN 2000

India angry with US criticism of *Prithvi* test

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, June 17
Incensed over US criticism of the test of the *Prithvi* medium range surface to surface missile, Indian officials reacted sharply saying the USA should focus instead on the clandestine acquisition of missiles and missile technology by other countries in violation of international export control regimes.

The USA had regretted that the missile test carried out successfully yesterday, with the State Department saying the test had the "potential to increase tensions in the region".

The State Department spokesman, Mr Richard Boucher, had also expressed US apprehensions about the speculation regarding the relative nuclear capabilities of the two countries saying this in itself was also potentially destabilizing since it might lead the two countries to actions that enhanced destabilisation.

RECEIVED

JUN 20 1998

Khaplang threatens to call off ceasefire

INDIA ABROAD NEWS SERVICE

OKING, June 19. — The National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Khaplang) has threatened to call off the ongoing ceasefire if the Centre does not lift the ban imposed on the outfit.

The NSCN-K leader, Mr SS Khaplang, fighting for an independent tribal homeland, said informal contacts have been established between the rebel leadership and the Centre for preparing the modalities for peace talks to end 52 years of insurgency in the region.

"Lifting of the ban on the NSCN apart, we want the proposed ceasefire agreement to be extended to all tribal Naga-inhabited areas covering parts of Nagaland, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur so that our people can move freely without being harassed by Indian soldiers," Mr Kitovi Zhimomi, the self-styled "prime

minister" of the NSCN-K told reporters at Oking, the mobile headquarters of the outfit somewhere in Nagaland.

"Otherwise we shall be forced to review our decision for a ceasefire," he added.

The outfit had announced a ceasefire in April with a view to ending tribal insurgency in Nagaland, which has claimed an estimated 50,000 lives. The truce will become effective only after the signing of an agreement between the rebel leadership and the government.

"We want New Delhi to adopt a sincere approach in solving the Naga political problem. This is the first chance for the Indian government in this new millennium to hammer out a peaceful settlement to the 52-year-old insurgency movement in Nagaland," the rebel leader said.

"If the government fails to avail the peace offer, people will not hesitate to take their

own decision and things might take a turn for the worse."

Mr Zhimomi said, "We have started the process of seeking opinion from the Naga people so that it enables us to have a clear-cut guideline during the peace talks with the government. The opinion poll will be conducted by the tribal councils and we shall abide by the verdict."

He claimed, "In 1951 there was a plebiscite and more than 99 per cent of the Nagas opted for sovereignty. So the question of compromising on the issue of sovereignty does not arise."

The militant outfit has, for the first time, acknowledged that peace talks, rather than firepower, could help fulfil their demands.

"In this modern political world it would be foolish to think that freedom could be achieved through the barrel of the gun. Political dialogue is the need of the hour to resolve

our demands," the NSCN-K leader said.

"Even the Indian government should not think that they could wipe out revolutionary movements through military power. They had tried for the past 52 years, but failed," he added.

The rebel leader said if the government adopts a sincere approach with the NSCN-K, then a number of the region's separatist guerrilla groups would see reason to shun the path of violence and hold peace talks.

"If the talks between the Indian government and the NSCN-K succeed, other insurgent groups will have the courage to trust the authorities.

So this is a very important phase for the government to hold talks sincerely with us and pave the way for other groups to see reason," Mr Zhimomi said.

20 JUN 2000

BORDER REALITIES

518 North-east states must solve disputes

MEGHALAYA chief minister EK Mawlong has shown some pragmatism by trying to resolve the boundary dispute with Assam. Within hours of assuming office in March he contacted his counterpart in Dispur and the two have met twice in three months and agreed on a joint survey of disputed villages. The dispute is to be resolved on the basis of demographic composition. But the reported "arrest" by Assam police of some enumerators from Meghalaya is not the right response. Obviously, some elements are trying to foment trouble. There have also been allegations of census workers completing the first phase by "sitting at home". This deserves serious attention as mischief-mongers are ready to exploit resentment in sensitive border areas. Examples are not lacking. In January 1979 several Assamese villagers were killed along the border with Nagaland. In 1985 police personnel of both states fought "battles" in the Merapani area, resulting in 45 deaths. Although no major incidents have been reported since, the recovery in 1997 of four bodies from the river near Golaghat suggests simmering tension.

Nagaland has stalled all prospects of a settlement by refusing to recognise the demarcation as defined in the Nagaland Act, 1962 and rejection of the VK Sundaram commission recommendations. If normality is to be restored Kohima must show flexibility. Even if the recommendations were not accepted the report should have been made public so as to throw light on the suggestions made by the panel and accordingly prepare the ground for future negotiation. Arunachal Pradesh is also adopting a tough posture that settlement has to be on the basis of the "historical border". Since border disputes are standing indictment of Delhi's inability to settle them when Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya and Mizoram were demarcated, there must be a display of some urgency to end tensions.

THE STATESMAN

10 JUN 2000

'Peace not at cost of our existence'

Ashis Chakrabarti
Agartala, June 19

THE SCENERY is breathtaking - an undulating landscape gently rising up to the green hills in the not-too-distant horizon. But danger lurks in the jungle tracks and anger brews in the hearts and hearths here. This is Khumulwng, the headquarters of the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council, or the ADC, as the locals call it.

Sitting in his room in the ADC members' hostel, Harinath Debarma, president of the Indigenous People' Front of Tripura (IPFT), makes no attempt to conceal his anger.

"Tribals too want peace, but not at the cost of our existence. Which people would tolerate a situation in which their very existence is threatened in their own land by an unending influx from outsiders? I'm all for the ethnic Fijians' revolt against an Indian Prime Minister."

He pauses, but only to draw breath to tell his tale of how the original inhabitants have been exploited, deprived and pushed to the brink by the Bengalis and successive governments. "Who said we're tribals? It's the Bengalis, who came from erstwhile East Pakistan and then Bangladesh, who dubbed us so. We had been a nationality for centuries, ruled by our own kings."

He has history on his side. In 1951, Tripura had a population of 600,000 of which 350,000 were tribals. In 1961, the population soared to 11,500,000 due to a heavy influx of refugees from East Pakistan. In the 1991 census, the population stood at 31 lakh, with the tribals numbering about 900,000.

Curiously, it was the Communist Party which had always taken up the tribals' cause.

But in last month's elections, the IPFT, born less than two years ago, wrested the ADC from



the LF. "Tribals have seen through the CPI(M)'s game and were fed up with parties like TUJS (Tripura Upajati Juba Samiti)," Harinath Debarma says.

He himself had been with the TUJS for long before he joined the IPFT, which was born at the behest of the Tripura Students' Federation and the former militant outfit, the Tribal National Volunteers.

Both the ruling CPI(M) and the fiercely anti-Left TUJS have alleged that the IPFT won the ADC elections by virtue of its secret links with

the underground group, National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT).

It was the NLFT which changed the State's name to Tripura for the tribals, like the NSCN in Nagaland calling the State Nagalim. "It's an open secret that IPFT won the ADC polls with NLFT's help."

In the last LS polls, it got only two per cent vote. How does one justify the party getting 57 per cent voter six months later," argues TUJS leader Rabindra Debarma.

"It's all rubbish," Harinath Debarma of the IPFT shoots back. "On the other hand, everyone knows how the CPM patronises the ATTF (All Tripura Tiger Force, another underground outfit)."

Congress Legislature Party leader Jahar Saha also blames the CPI(M) for both the insurgency and ethnic tensions. "Nripen Chakrabarty (former Marxist Chief Minister) said in the Assembly he would have been an extremist if he were a tribal," Saha recalls.

The crux, however, is that insurgency and ethnic conflicts have complimented each other. The latest indication of this is the birth of a militant Bengali outfit called United Bengali Liberation Force.

And, clear as daylight is the fact that the Left government has failed completely to tackle the situation. (Concluded)

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

20 JUN 2000

N-E CMs want more aid to tackle insurgency

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, June 21: The seven states in the Northeast have asked the Centre to recognise insurgency as a "national problem" and take appropriate steps to tackle it. The demand was raised by the chief ministers from the region during their meeting with Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee on Wednesday. Mizoram and Meghalaya chief ministers were not present at the meeting.

The delegation led by Assam chief minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta, presented a memorandum to Mr Vajpayee, listing problems relating to financial and administrative matters besides insurgency and infiltration.

Later, a Prime Minister's Office spokesperson disclosed that Mr Vajpayee told the delegation that insurgency had to be fought jointly by the Centre and the states. The PMO spokesperson said that the states wanted to shift the burden on the Centre. Mr Vajpayee told the chief ministers that the state governments will have to strengthen

their police setup and make it more effective in tackling insurgency and both police training and equipment will have to be improved. Arunachal Pradesh chief minister Mukut Mithi said: "All insurgent groups ultimately aim to secede. Therefore, it is imperative that it is dealt with as a national problem. That doesn't mean the state governments will avoid their responsibility."

The delegation in its memorandum also sought implementation of an identity card scheme to check influx of foreign nationals and opening border trade and transit with neighbouring countries Bangladesh and Burma. It was suggested that a law be made for detection and deportation of illegal migrants.

The meeting came in the backdrop of a decision taken at a conference of all Northeastern chief ministers in Shillong that the issues of "common interest and concern" will be jointly raised with the Centre.

Mr Mahanta and his Arunachal Pradesh counterpart said that the Centre has decided

to grant Rs 285 crores over the next two years for modernisation of the police forces in the region. A home ministry spokesperson later disclosed that this assistance would be given in kind.

The chief ministers claimed that the Centre has also agreed to extend more help in terms of financial resources and in kind to tackle insurgency. They also asked the Vajpayee government to initiate "meaningful dialogue with insurgent groups in consultation with the respective state governments."

The other demands raised by the chief ministers included writing-off of all Central government loans, including arrears interest thereon, grant of special ways and means advance to liquidate their immediate overdraft and restoration of the practice of bridging the non-Plan revenue gap through additional Central assistance as per the pattern prevailing prior to 1988-89.

Mr Vajpayee was urged to make the home ministry effect the proposed reconstitution of the North-Eastern Council without further

delay. Another demand raised was rolling back of recently revised issue rate of rice through the PDS.

The PMO spokesperson said that the Centre has already taken a number of steps to assist the state governments in the Northeast.

These include schemes of modernisation of police forces, reimbursement of security-related expenditure, sanctioning of a scheme for fencing of remaining 2,400 km of Indo-Bangladesh border at a cost of Rs 1,334 crores along with sanctioning of 14 Indian Reserve Battalions and deployment of adequate paramilitary forces.

The home ministry spokesperson added that three more battalions are to be sent to the region soon.

It was disclosed that the Centre is committed to resolve the issues of Northeast and ceasefire with NSCN(IM) and Bodo Liberation Tigers is already in place. Efforts are also being made to bring the other militant groups to the negotiating table.

Tripura Governor urges peace talks

Gen. Krishna Mohan Seth's message to tribal ultras after being sworn in

Syed Sajjad Ali
Agartala, June 23

WITHIN HALF-AN-HOUR of assuming office on Friday, the new Governor of Tripura Gen. Krishna Mohan Seth urged tribal extremists to the negotiation table. He had earlier said that the State had adequate security strength to resolve the crisis by using force.

The 61-year-old former decorated Army officer, who had served as GOC of three Corps under the Eastern Command, took the oath of office at a ceremony held on the lawns of Raj Bhavan. Chief Minister Manik Sarkar and other senior leaders were present at the function.

Immediately after the swearing-in ceremony, Seth met the press where he appealed to the ultras for peace talks saying, "by force and by gun no problem can be solved".

"The State has a tradition of accommodating

all sections of people. But ethnic rift and militancy have affected the tradition," he said.

Seth seems to have done his homework well. He was well informed on the goings-on in the State.

The Governor correctly identified geographical barrier as the main irritant in the development of the State. "The State is yet to avail transit facility through

Bangladesh. But we have to work for the progress, attract foreign and domestic investors in gas, rubber and other mineral resources," he said.

It appeared that Seth would not restrict himself to the four walls of the Governor's house. He plans to visit refugee camps and all areas affected by the extremist activities.

The Governor avoided a straight answer when reminded of the presence of the erstwhile Tripura National Volunteers at the peace talks

during the tenure of Gen. K V Krishna Rao. "I was then in the region, I know the details of that peace process," he said.

Seth made it clear that he would not interfere with the functioning of the Left Front Government.

He said he was ready to share his counter insurgency experiences with the State Government.

Seth refuted views that his appointment had any significance of him being a retired Army general posted to an insurgency ravaged region.

"To be very frank I did not have any link with any political party, I got the job by the grace of God," he asserted.

It remains to be seen how the Left Front Government reacts to the new Governor's peace initiative. The CPI (M) had not spared Romesh Bhandari for his alleged overstepping of constitutional powers but had found outgoing Governor Sidheswar Prasad "very friendly and cooperative".

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

24 JUN 2000

WAIT FOR REANGS

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24/6
Mizoram must be consistent

MIZORAM'S prevarication over the repatriation of Reang refugees has complicated matters. Instead of trying to find a solution, the government insist that the Bru (Reang) United Liberation Front give up armed tactics before negotiation. This is likely to cause more confusion because it had earlier said that only "genuine residents" would be taken back, having claimed that only 16,000 of the 40,000 refugees now languishing in Tripura were its citizens. Aizawl is yet to disclose what forced Reangs to flee in October 1997. Reports suggested that the exodus followed the murder of a Mizo forest warden by suspected B(R)ULF activists and the alleged killing of 10 Reangs by Mizo Zirlai Pawi, a students' and youth organisation. At the Union home ministry's behest, Mizoram sent a team to Tripura and prepared a repatriation schedule, which was a non-starter as no commitment was made on security.

This is one part of the problem. The Mizo-Reang relationship has been strained over the latter's demand for an autonomous district council and reservation of three assembly seats. There is no proper census of the tribe as many of them have declared themselves as Mizos. They may or may not meet the criteria but there is no reason why they should not accept a development council offered by former chief minister Lalthanhawla. Hmars who fought for a separate state settled for this. Aizawl's rejection of the autonomy demand is understandable. Chakmas in the state enjoy that status but over the past few years they have been clamouring for its upgradation to Union territory. Mizoram, which recently received a peace bonus from the Centre, must try to live up to that expectation.

THE STATESMAN

~~the Economic Time~~

24 JUN 2000

Naga Govt not to participate in ceasefire meeting

HT Correspondent
Kohima, June 24

THE NAGALAND Government will not participate in the Ceasefire Monitoring Group (CFMG) meeting with the NSCN-IM and the Centre, unless the "ground rules" of the truce are "revised".

The decision comes in the wake of the Centre's move to resume the CFMG meeting with NSCN-IM representatives in New Delhi. The meeting was stalled after the arrest of NSCN-IM leader Th Muivah in Bangkok.

The State Power Minister K Therie

has questioned the credibility of the ceasefire between the Government of India and the NSCN-IM on the contention that NSCN-IM has been ignoring the rules of the ceasefire. "Since they can attack our Chief Minister S C Jamir, then how can we can participate in a ceasefire meeting", the minister asked.

"Ceasefire and political negotiations should continue but the ground rules should be in line with the 1964 agreement", Therie said.

Asked about what steps the State

Government will take if the Centre and the NSCN (IM) plan to hold the CFMG meeting as decided, the Power Minister said: "We will continue to maintain law and order in the State."

"We cannot allow anybody to be killed, raped, intimidated and extorted. How can the Government take part in the CFMG meeting when the outfit (NSCN-IM) does not follow ground rules."

Therie asserted that no one was stopping the underground organisations' struggle for political rights. "But we only ask them to stop terrorising the people".

The minister hoped that the ongoing ceasefire, which expires on July 31, would be extended with some "improved ground rules".

Asked about his views on NSCN-IM's refusal to continue political talks, Therie said, "There was some communication gap between the Muivah and other NSCN-IM leaders". Otherwise Muivah, reportedly, said they (NSCN-IM) would continue to hold political talks with the Government of India, he said.

Truce Terms

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

25 JUN 2000

Former Ulfa leader killed by gunmen in Assam

BY MANOJ ANAND

Guwahati, June 25: A top Ulfa leader Amit Phukan who led the surrender of more than 500 Ulfa and NDFB cadres on April 4 this year at Sibsagar was killed by unidentified gunman near Amguri in Upper Assam's Sibsagar district in a mysterious circumstance.

The incident that has surprised the security forces also took place

when Phukan was moving towards Amguri in a motorcycle alone. The slain Ulfa leader after deserting the outfit was doing contract work in the ONGC and other sectors.

The incident has created tension in the area as sources indicated that this might lead to further clashes among the surrendered militants in the district who are alleged to have been at the logger-head for establishing their domi-

nance.

Phukan who had the credit of leading the surrender of more than 500 cadres was also vocal against the Ulfa as police sources did not rule out the possibility of involvement of Ulfa cadres in his mysterious killing.

The militants who were armed with AK-47 rifles, pumped in numerous bullet in Phukan's body, official sources said while claiming that a massive manhunt

has been launched in the area to nab the culprits.

Meanwhile, in a major breakthrough the security forces gunned down four hard-core Ulfa militants in central Assam's Nagaon district on Saturday.

Four Ulfa cadres including the self-styled assistant foreign secretary Prashanta Bora who was leading the volcano unit of the outfit were killed in an encounter with Army at Rongjuli village of the

district.

The Ulfa cadres lobbed a grenade at the army personnel when they retaliated resulting in encounter.

Sukhdeva Singh, subedar of the 11 Sikh Regiment of the army was also injured in the grenade attack. He has been shifted to the army hospital.

Army also recovered one AK-47 rifle, one pistol, several rounds of ammunition and one wireless set

from the spot.

Police later identified the bodies and discovered that one of them was Prashanta Bora a self-styled assistant foreign secretary of the Ulfa.

Mr. Bora an engineering graduate was among the think-tank of the outfit. The security forces consider it to be a biggest achievement after Swadhinta Phookan who was killed by police in Jorhat district last month.

THE ASIEN AGE

26 JUN 2000

Have an earnest talk

9-11-88
2776

The Centre must realize an agreement reached through genuine dialogue with the insurgents could stop the ethnic violence in Tripura, writes **Suhask Chakma**

About 100 people have been killed in ethnic violence in Tripura since May 3, when the elections to the Tripura tribal areas autonomous district councils were completed. Violence is not new in elections in the state. However, as expected and quite unlike before, the violence did not cease once the polls were over.

The Tripura government appealed to the Centre to deploy the army in the state. On May 22, the cabinet committee on security under the chairmanship of the prime minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, reviewed the situation. The chief secretary of Tripura, V. Tulidas, also briefed the home secretary, Kamal Pandey, on the same day about the situation.

The Union home ministry later announced that it would send 10 companies of additional paramilitary forces, comprising six companies of the Central Reserve Police Force and four of the Assam Rifles, to be deployed in phases. This was apart from the 15 battalions of the CRPF and four battalions of the Assam Rifles already stationed. The announcement was not surprising since the Union home minister, L.K. Advani, is frequently seen to suggest the same prescription for all kinds of problems: a law and order solution.

The failure to air dash the army for deployment in the state was seen by the ruling Communist Party of India (Marxist) as a deliberate attempt of the Centre to discredit the state government. If governance is any yardstick, there is indeed nothing left for the Centre to discredit the state government.

According to official sources, in the last six years, more than 2,000 people have been killed and nearly 200 women raped. There has been about 4,000 cases of kidnapping of which 250 ended in deaths in captivity. Over 150,000 have been internally displaced. The ruling Left Front government has virtually nothing to write home about.

The shortsightedness of all political parties can be blamed for the continuous deterioration of the situation since the signing of the Tripura accord in August 1988. In early 1988, the Tripura National Volunteers led by Bijoy Hrangkhawl stepped up its violent campaign. The then prime minister, Rajiv Gandhi, used it as a pretext to declare the entire state as a "disturbed" one.

The Congress-Tripura Upajati Juba Samiti alliance in a rigged election defeated the Left Front in the state assembly elections. New Delhi subsequently signed an agreement with the TNV. But a small breakaway faction of the TNV formed the National Liberation Front of Tripura and continued low intensity insurgency activities.

The Left Front, in an attempt to avenge its defeat, supported the All Tripura Tribal Force, which embarked on a reign of terror. Consequently, the Congress-TUJS leaders could not cam-

but system and so on. The Centre or the state government hardly took any measures to stop such extensive and brutal alienation of the Tripuris.

The government often sought to find law and order solutions to the insurgency problems. The administrative measures were complemented by fake surrender ceremonies that benefitted only party members. In December 1986, the state government promulgated the Disturbed Areas Act in 27 out of 45 police station areas in the state. Hundreds of alleged insurgents surrendered and were rehabilitated. But it failed to improve the situation.

The state government has recently declared 20 police station areas as "disturbed" under the Armed Forces Special Powers Act. Parts of areas in another five have also been notified as disturbed. But the killing continues unabated.

The counter-insurgency operations of the snoop agencies often worsen the situation further. In the Eighties, Amra Bangali, a communal front of non-tribals reportedly received the blessings of the intelligence officials.

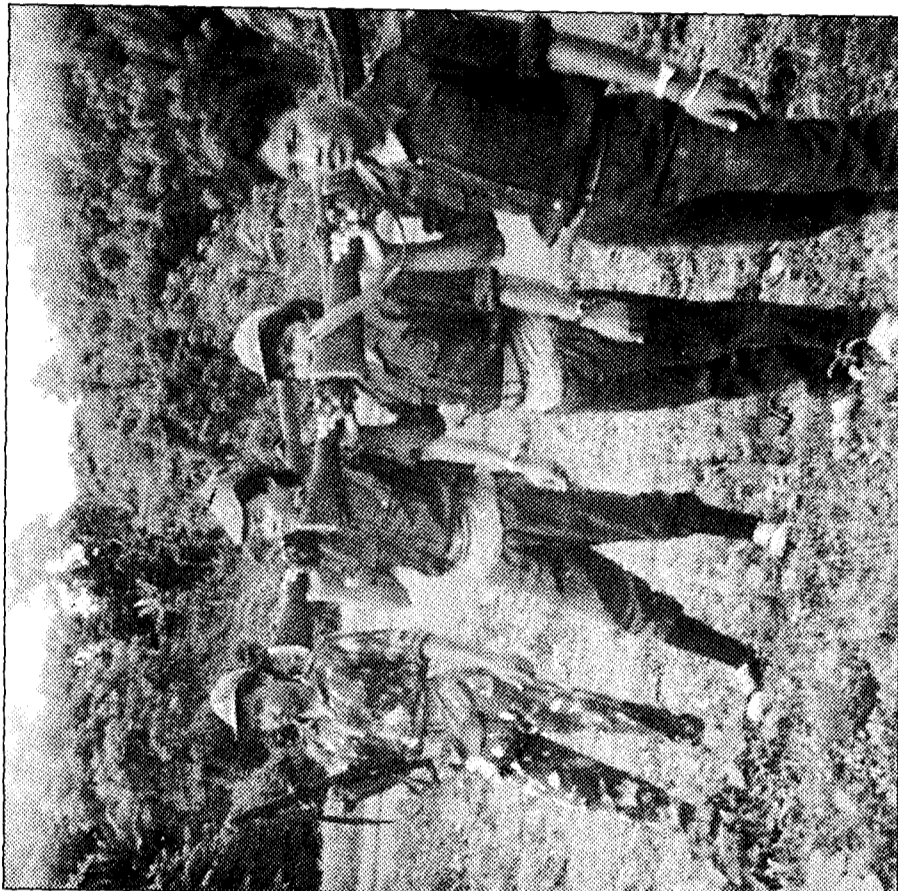
Recently, the United Bengali Liberation Front has been formed. State government officials have remained silent on its activities. Since the UBLF activists do not have safe sanctuaries in the jungles, it is not difficult for the law enforcement officials to curb their activities. But the government remains inactive, not realizing riots will continue to take place and the situation will deteriorate further unless it clamps down.

After the Tripura tribal areas autonomous district councils elections, the IPFT has called upon the Centre to hold dialogue with the insurgents, alleging that the ruling communists are not serious about such talks. It reasons that since the Centre is holding talks with the Nagas and Bodos in the neighbouring states, there is no reason such a dialogue cannot be held in Tripura. A ceasefire would also bring the much needed respite for civilians.

However, besides initiating dialogue and ceasefire, the Centre must also find a solution to assuage the wrong done to the minorities, whose existence and identity are currently under threat.

The inner line regulation, adopted originally by the British, is an option for the Tripura tribal areas autonomous district council areas. The British through the policies of fully and partially excluded areas sought to provide a sense of security to the indigenous people across India. For starters, the grievances of indigenous Tripuris could be addressed.

The Centre must realize that it is an agreement reached through genuine dialogue and not merely the organization of fake surrenders which can establish peace in Tripura.



Stand at ease

in the rural areas of the state. This resulted in the Left Front's win over the Congress-TUJS alliance. After the elections, the left also signed an accord with the ATTF in 1988. But the ATTF became a Frankenstein's monster, not a Tripura horse like the TNV.

In the meantime, the movement of the indigenous Tripuris has undergone tremendous change. The TUJS and TNV were assigned to oblivion. The indigenous People's Front of Tripura, comprising the Tripura Hill People's Party, Tripura Tribal National Conference, Tripura Tribal Students' Federation and the Tripura Upajati Karmachari Samiti emerged as the new political party representing the interest of the indigenous peoples.

The IPFT gained absolute majority in the last Tripura tribal areas autonomous district council elections in May 2000 winning 18 of

the 28 seats. The Left Front won 10 seats while the Congress and the TUJS were wiped out.

But the crisis of the Tripuris — analogous to the situation of the native Americans or Australian aborigines — goes beyond party politicking and law and order problems. From over 70 per cent of the population in 1947, indigenous Tripuris have presently been reduced to less than 25 per cent according to unofficial sources.

Between 1951 and 1961, Tripura witnessed a phenomenal 78.71 per cent growth in its population, the highest ever in any state of India. The Tripuris were displaced of their land and resources, trade and access to the government itself.

The indigenous Tripuris were driven further into interior areas. This meant denial of access to basic facilities like education, healthcare, public distri-

◀ The inner line regulation is one option that should be considered for the Tripura tribal areas autonomous district councils

Surrendered ultras plan offensive against ULFA

Utpal Parashar
Guwahati, June 28

IN A move which could trigger a fresh round of violence in Assam, a section of ex-ULFA militants popularly called SULFAs (surrendered ULFAs) has threatened to launch an offensive against the banned organisation.

The killing of a surrendered ULFA militant in Sibsagar on Sunday, allegedly by ULFA cadres, is said to have resulted in the SULFA move.

The deceased, Amrit Phukan, was returning home on a Tata Sumo when some unidentified gunmen shot him dead near Dhodar Ali. Phukan, an ex-sergeant in ULFA, had surrendered along with 531 other colleagues in Sibsagar on April 4 this year.

In a statement issued on Monday evening, five senior SULFA leaders stated that they would not rest till the banned ULFA was rooted out from Assam. The statement bears the signatures of Kalpajyoti Neog, Sunil Nath, Jugal Kishore Mahanta, Shailen Dutta Konwar and Gautam Das.

Meanwhile, the co-ordination committee of all SULFA members on Wednesday called a bandh in Sibsagar in protest against the killing of Amrit Phukan. The Sibsagar police have also rounded up over a dozen people for questioning in connection with the incident but have not arrested anyone till date.

On April 4, in a strongly worded speech during the much-publicised surrender ceremony of 531 ULFA militants held in Sibsagar, Amrit Phukan had termed the ULFA a

dictatorial outfit. Many believe that he was killed by the ULFA for uttering these words.

After the Government amnesty announced in 1992, more than 7,000 militants belonging to ULFA and other extremist outfits of the State have surrendered and joined the mainstream. Many of the surrendered militants were allowed to keep firearms and provided security cover to protect them from ULFA attacks.

Assam has witnessed several killings in the past few years because of differences of opinion between surrendered militants and their former colleagues. "With the SULFA issuing a fresh threat to obliterate ULFA from the State, more such killings and counter-killings can be expected in the near future," said a senior police official on conditions of anonymity.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

27 JUN 2000

GAMES IN MANIPUR

BJP source of trouble for Nipamacha ^{5/10}

THE ruling Manipur State Congress Party and the BJP share a love-hate relationship. The former is an NDA ally. Last year the BJP made an unsuccessful attempt to find a berth for its lone member in the last MSCP ministry. Talk of an electoral alliance before the February assembly elections failed. The BJP contested on its own and got six seats in the 60-member house but was unable to join the ministry because of intense rivalry between BJP stalwarts RK Dorendro and Bhubon Singh. Now the BJP has become a constant source of trouble for the ruling party. The Speaker, Sapam Dhananjoy, reportedly "secretly" met Dorendro, fuelling speculation of a coup. Dhananjoy will decide the future of nine MLAs belonging to the Manipur People's Party, NCP, JD and RJD, who joined the Nipamacha ministry before formally merging with the MSCP. Their defection, however, was recognised by the previous Speaker, the argument being that since he had lost the election his order was not binding.

Speakers in Manipur have often hit the headlines. Haobam Borobabu Singh made history by defying a Supreme Court order to reinstate seven Congress legislators he had disqualified. The Union government took no notice for fear of disturbing the fragile Congress-MPP coalition government — Borobabu belonged to the MPP. As a Speaker, Nipamacha masterminded the downfall of the Rishang Keishing ministry, broke away from the Congress, formed the MSCP and took over. With a shrewd tactician like Dorendro active again — he is a master at toppling governments — it is by no means certain that Nipamacha can keep his flock together for long.

THE STATESMAN

1 JUN 2001

FRACTIONS IN ASSAM

5/10/92 20/10/92 1/11/92 15/11/92
Ulfa and Sulfa on the brink

ULFAS (original), Sulfas (surrendered) and Dulfas (duplicates) have all enjoyed their share of the spoils. While top Ulfa leaders reportedly run businesses and lead an ostentatious life, their men fight in the jungles. This belated realisation has forced many a cadre to surrender. The Sulfas are a class apart. After their surrender in 1992 they were allowed to keep their weapons for self-protection and enjoyed political indulgence. The primary objective was to use them to contact their comrades and wean them away. That it did not happen is beside the point. They became a law unto themselves and some of them had to be "arrested" and put under protective surveillance. The ruling AGP has failed to disarm them. The Dulfas are opportunists and downright criminals. The murder last week of former militant Amrit Phukan who surrendered in April along with 520 others could well be a turning point in the struggle for supremacy. The Ulfa has sent a message that it will eliminate anyone who dares oppose them. The threat of retaliation by Sulfas and their resolve "not to rest till the Ulfa is wiped out" has dangerous implications; it will put relatives and families of both militant units in danger. The state seems to be heading for another spell of mindless killings. The question is what are the state authorities doing to prevent this.

Saikia, after all, was not entirely wrong in thinking that the two groups would fight it out and weaken the cause of the movement. The dream of Swadhin Asom becoming a reality is fading. The recent successful mass anti-insurgency rallies in the North-east reflect the public mood. If the Ulfa leaders are to avoid the danger of fading into oblivion they must find time to improve their image by giving up the path of violence.

THE STATESMAN

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