

## Ulfa men gun down 16 in Bongaigaon

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

GUWAHATI, Nov. 30. — Suspected Ulfa militants shot dead 16 Hindi-speaking people and injured 11 in Bongaigaon district this evening.

With this, the toll in the offensive against non-Assamese people in the state by Ulfa has gone up to 57 since 23 October.

Two motorcycle-borne militants raided a railway labourers' colony known as Gang Quarters in Bongaigaon around 6.30 p.m. and fired indiscriminately from AK-series rifles. They killed eight people and injured eight.

Some militants in a Maruti van attacked a settlement at the Birjhora tea estate in the same area and shot five members of a family and injured one at around 5.45 p.m.

Militants attacked what is called the 'Bihari line' at Lal-mati village in the Abhayapuri area, killing three persons and injuring two at around 8 p.m.

THE STATESMAN

1 DEC 2000

# Army needs to step up vigil to put down militant might



A militant surrenders before Assam chief minister Prafulla Mahanta recently. — Caroline Singh

*P.P. Singh*  
GUWAHATI 1 DECEMBER  
SINCE SEPTEMBER there has been a perceptible rise in the number of militants slipping past the arms of law. But what is alarming is that despite the army and the paramilitary troops being near the venue of the incidents, the killers managed to escape "under the cover of darkness." This puts the role of the army in the state under cloud.

Over sixty people lost their lives in eight different incidents of violence in five districts. And in many areas, the role of the army and the paramilitary forces can easily be questioned due to their proximity to the scene of the violence.

"Yes... I heard the news... I really don't know what's gonna happen to my place... (sic)." This is what a young Assamese boy in Delhi told his friend back home while chatting online, when he was told about Thursday night's

killings in Bongaigaon. But unfortunately the effort goes more into blaming each other and experimenting on the redeployment of forces in the Unified Command structure or demanding President's Rule in the state.

All this is happening while the Ulfa is losing its popularity among the people here and most of its middle level leaders have come over ground. The recent one being Lohit Deuri — the man in charge of arms procurement.

Till September the state police, together with the other paramilitary forces like the CRPF, was able to thwart several terrorist attacks but the scenario changed after September. It is since then that the paramilitary forces have been asked to take care of counter-insurgency operations under the direct command of the army, which has left the state police high and dry.

Police officials said it is not

just during counter-insurgency operations that they have to fight militants, even while they are on routine duties they are attacked by terrorists. The state police has lost large number of officers while on such routine duties. The police pointed out that it is under such circumstances that the role of the Unified Command becomes questionable.

With the Centre pledging to meet only insurgency-related expenditure, the state government is not in a position to demand a bigger force for their routine law and order duties as it exceeds the budgetary provisions. Thus, for the fund-starved state it's a Hobson's choice.

The police today is questioning the replacement of former Assam DGP P.V. Sumant which was said to be done more under pressure from forces outside the state than from within. It was under him that the police had achieved major successes.

# Naga peace talks positive HR 11

Shishir Gupta

New Delhi, December 1 9/6/87

THE THREE-DAY meeting between NSCN (IM) representatives and Home Ministry officials ended on a positive note today with both sides agreeing to explore avenues to modify the ground rules of ceasefire in Nagaland.

However, there were differences over the NSCN (IM)'s demand for extension of the three-year-old ceasefire beyond Nagaland. Citing that law and order was a state subject, the Home Ministry officials told the NSCN (IM) team that they would have to discuss the issue with Chief Ministers of other north-eastern states before arriving at a final decision.

While the NSCN (IM) team was headed by its former "Army Chief" General Atem, the Home Ministry was represented by Special Secretary (Internal Security) M. B. Kaushal.

It is understood that the two sides are expected to meet again on December 12-13 for the sixth round of discussions on the ceasefire rules.

According to Government sources, the two sides have converged on modifying the clause prohibiting the NSCN (IM) cadres to carry out raids or operations during the ceasefire. The NSCN (IM) wanted that suspension of raids and operations should be applicable only for the security forces and not any other individual

or insurgent group. The Home Ministry, on its part, had earlier maintained that this clause included everybody.

However, after the conclusion of the fifth round of discussions, the Home Ministry was toying with a view that this clause could be modified so that it encompasses only the security forces and civilians. The Ministry also wanted to accommodate the NSCN (IM) on adding a clause in the ceasefire rules that prohibits the security forces personnel from "harassing" Naga citizens.

The NSCN (IM), on the other hand, was told by Home Ministry officials to set up more camps for their cadre in Nagaland and ask them not to carry weapons.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

- 2 DEC 2000

# N-E international borders to be fenced

Syed Sajjad Ali  
Agartala, December 3

THE INTERNATIONAL border along Tripura will soon be fenced. The State Government has already issued a notice seeking acquisition of land along the border.

The Union Government had erected a barbed fence along the Bangladesh border a decade ago. It was aimed to check infiltration and cross-border terrorism.

The international border of four North-East States—Assam, Mizoram, Meghalaya and Tripura—will be fenced under the Central Government scheme. Work has already begun in Assam and Meghalaya. In the first phase, 1,650 km of border will be fenced at a cost of more

than Rs 709 crore. The project, funded by the Centre, has been entrusted to the BRTF and BRO.

Tripura shares 84 per cent of its border with Bangladesh and security experts had always advised the need for fences along the border.

"Insurgents often travel to and from their hideouts across the porous border and barbed wires will put an end to this," said a senior police officer. Many feel that infiltration adds to the woes of the people of the strife-torn State and concrete steps should be taken to stop cross-border movement.

In Tripura, one third of the border would initially be fenced. Geographical barriers, tough terrain and densely populated areas along the

Bangladesh border might hamper work in the region. Fencing will begin at Purba Karangicherra in Khowai sub-division.

According to the notification issued by the District Magistrate (west), 11.39 acre is marked for acquisition. Owners of the plots will be compensated. Local people realise the need for barbed wires but they fear the loss of agricultural land.

In Lower Assam's Dhubri district, the Bhogdanga village was left out of the fencing. The village is linked with the rest of country through a gate that remains open during the day, but shuts after sunset. Many villages in the region share Bhogdanga's fate after the Indo-Bangla agreement barred permanent construction within 150 yards of the border.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

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THE largely irrelevant sur-render of arms by mili-tants has become routine over the past 20 years. There's hardly any sign of respite in Tripura's ethnic rebellion, though. Armed tribal groups have continued to proliferate and the situation has worsened.

During the last Assembly session in Agartala, Chief Minister Manik Sarkar tabled a list of 29 outfits, informing the House that about 7,000 tribal gunmen from these groups had surrendered. The strength of Tripura's two main, outlawed militant groups, the National Liberation Front of Tripura and the All Tripura Tiger Force, is about 1,200. Many armed outfits have been dissolved after large-scale surrenders. But hardly any sophisticated arms have been handed over by them, only improvised and obsolete weapons.

The government has rehabilitated about 2,241 of them. Those yet to be rehabilitated get a cash allowance, pending "economic resettlement". According to the Centre's terms of surrender, at least one fire arm must be deposited by each militant to be entitled to a government rehabilitation package. Many, including tribal women, came overground empty-handed.

The growing animosity between the two dominant ethnic groups in Tripura is of prime concern. The politicians' "competitive tribalism" is aimed at winning votes. There are the anti-Left units in the hill region identified for their parochial stance on the one hand and the ruling Marxists on the other. Till recently, the latter had been trying to lend political legitimacy to the state's tribal insurgency.

Without assessing the implications, the issue of the hill people's socio-economic deprivation had featured in Left leaders' campaigns in a big way, since the Left Front came to power in 1978.

It is unique in the history of the Communist movement that a remote, hill community formed the nucleus of the Marxist organisations in Tripura in the late 1940s. It also protected the state's Communist strongholds till the mid-1970s, against ruling-class onslaughts. This explains the Communists' sympathy for the cause of the poor and backward tribals there.

This feeling of commitment was misinterpreted by Tripura's majority Bengali community. The Communists' pro-tribal stance helped the Congress — which ruled the state till the mid-1970s — to consolidate its base among Bengali refugees from former East Pakistan.

In 1967, the Tripura Upajati Juba Samity's emergence in the scene as a staunch anti-Communist tribal force was significant. But it

# Guns speak louder in tribal Tripura

The emergence of the Indigenous People's Front of Tripura, a conglomeration of anti-Left hill regional units, has polarised the dominant ethnic groups in the state, writes  
**SATYABRATA CHAKRABORTI**



Militants surrender to the authorities in Agartala and left; women and children take shelter in a camp after violence and arson perpetrated by insurgents in hill Tripura forced them to flee. — Romakanta Dey.

suffered many splits. The diehard, tribal nationalist factions floated many hill regional units on a parochial plank. These included Vijoykumar Hrangkhawl's TNV, the Tribal Students' Federation, the Tripura Hill People's Party and the Tripura Tribal National Conference. These units later jointly formed the Indigenous People's Front of Tripura, now identified as the political wing of the NLFT.

Parties with bases in hill Tripura have always stressed that the crossing over of the Bengali refugees from former East Pakistan after the partition was one of the main reasons for the emergence of tribal insurgency.

The refugees outnumbered the state's original hill population, resulting in large-scale alienation of tribal land. Backward tribesmen are lagging behind in an uneven,

justice is restored and economic development ensured for the tribals.

Political campaigns triggered events leading to an ethnic polarisation in the state. Jyoti Basu viewed Tripura's problem differently. "...certain historic compulsions consequent upon partition forced thousands of Bengalis to cross over to Tripura. None came here after leaving their ancestral homes simply to join a picnic. We must realise it when we can hardly deny the fact that there has been large-scale alienation of tribal land in the state. The situation is delicate and it must be dealt with care."

The soft handling of the situation by the state government since the late 1970s has allowed militants to call the shots in the hill regions. The Left Front's stand boomeranged. Parochial elements killed CPI-M leaders and activists. This anti-Left terror by banned rebel

socio-economic groups has threatened the ruling party's hill bases. Hundreds of CPI-M leaders and activists fled the hills under intense pressure from the rebels.

The emergence of the Indigenous People's Front of Tripura, a conglomeration of anti-Left hill regional units has given a new dimension to politics in tribal Tripura. The IPFT is instrumental in polarising the dominant ethnic groups in the state.

The NLFT forced the tribal people in the hill areas to vote for the IPFT in the April-May elections to the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council. It functions according to the provisions of the Constitution's Sixth Schedule. The NLFT's violence, which helped the IPFT sweep the hill council polls, put the Left Front government in dire straits. After its debacle in the council elections, under the Marxists' command for the past 14 years or so, the Left Front leaders were forced to confront the grass-roots reality in the hill areas and get tough.

The CPI-M state committee empowered Manik Sarkar, who also holds the home portfolio, to take steps to tackle insurgency. The state police have been given the cutting

edge in counter-insurgency operations, in the absence of the Army and adequate central paramilitary forces in the state.

The police did a commendable job under the leadership of BL Bhora, the state's new director-general of police. The Centre has gone back on its assurances of providing all help for fighting militancy. The floating of new outfits by Bengali militants and the massacre of innocent tribals have made things worse.

The Congress and the Trinamul Congress have failed to play the part of a responsible Opposition. Though the state's 27 police station areas were declared disturbed in 1997, the Centre has pulled out all Army battalions. The National Democratic Alliance government's approach to Tripura's insurgency problem is confusing. Though LK Advani has often expressed concern over stepped-up violence by the ISI-backed armed groups in the north-east, the Union home secretary Kamal Pande, during his recent visit to Agartala, poured cold water over the state government's new security plan by saying 'Tripura's situation is not "alarming" enough to require immediate troop deployment.

The rise in incidents of group clashes between different tribal clans on religious lines is an ominous sign. The NLFT's excesses in the hill regions, forcing the poor and backward poor tribals to embrace Christianity and give up their rituals at gun-point, have made the hill people suspicious of clandestine designs.

The community chiefs of the hill clans like the Jamatiya, the Reang, the Chakmas and the Uchais have revolted against the NLFT's "ban" on the tribals' socio-religious practices.

Political circles were sceptical about the IPFT's silence on NLFT excesses in the hills. The NLFT's threat to launch an agitation in protest against "wanton violation of tribal human rights by the state police and central paramilitary forces in the name of counter-insurgency operations" is worrying the authorities. The IPFT also wants the government to disband the Tripura State Rifles, a specially trained force to combat militancy, for its "anti-tribal actions."

The Tripura Upajati Juba Samity's move, aimed at having a mainstream image by forging an alliance with the Congress in the early 1980s, did not pay.

The party is alienated from its hill base. The gunmen-backed IPFT has virtually uprooted the TUJS to pose a formidable threat to the Marxist strangle-holds in hill Tripura.

(The author is The Statesman's Agartala-based correspondent.)

# Leader reveals Ulfa hand in killing Hindi-speaking people

P.P. Singh

GUWAHATI 6 DECEMBER

CAPTAIN RAMEN Nath, a former Ulfa leader and commander of Ulfa's Enigma unit on Wednesday disclosed that despite denials by the Ulfa that they were not involved in the recent killings, it was a handiwork of their Volcano unit and were planned about four months ago. He said he had been a party to the plans.

Nath, addressing a function at Guwahati to accept their surrender, stated that the Ulfa, having lost their mass base, feels with President's Rule in the state and the present AGP government's dismissal they will be able to revive their base and increase their activities.

He said Hindi-speaking people were picked up and killed because they felt these people formed a major chunk of the BJP supporters in the state. This forced the Centre to impose President's Rule in the state.

He said with inner party democracy almost becoming non-existent they have been voicing their concern on the same but the only person who calls the shots



**REDEMPTION: Assam governor S K Sinha accepting ceremonious surrender of guns by 170 militants at Guwahati on Wednesday.** — Caroline Singh

in the Bhutan camps is Raju Baruah.

Nath also said that there is virtually a vertical split in the party with the army unit reigning supreme and the lives of their chairman Arvinda Rajkhowa, general secretary Chitrabhan Hazarika and Ashanta Baghphukan are in danger for if they ever visit Bhutan, they are likely to be arrested by Raju Baruah under orders from Paresch Baruah.

Earlier Assam chief minister P.K. Mahanta, while addressing the rally, stated that since July 1997, when they took the first batch of former militants into the mainstream, so far 2667 former militants have surrendered arms, which includes most senior Ulfa leaders leaving the organisation in the hands of a couple of people who, they say, have no ideology.

Mahanta invited those still within the Ulfa ranks to join in reconstructing the state.

*The Economic Times*

7 JUNE 2000

7 JUNE 2000

# Ulfa guns down 28 more

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

GUWAHATI, Dec. 7. — In their continuing strike against the non-Assamese, suspected Ulfa militants gunned down 28 people and injured 14 at Sonpura inside Kukuramara Reserve Forest in Sadiya subdivision of Tinsukia district around 5.30 p.m. today.

Most of the victims were Hindi-speaking.

The Tinsukia deputy commissioner, Mr SK Sinha, said the militants waylaid five trucks in which the victims were returning from a weekly market at Teju in Arunachal Pradesh, 3 km from the incident site.

Five militants reportedly came in a car, stopped the trucks and asked the passengers to get down. "They then shot them," the DC said.

Twenty-six died on the spot and another two at the Sadiya civil hospital where the injured were taken, he said.

"We shall send more forces and

try to bring the injured to hospitals in Tinsukia, if necessary, after daybreak."

Mr Sinha said the spot where the massacre took place was uninhabited and the nearest border outpost was 3 km away.

The Ulfa has reportedly been trying to set up camps in Arunachal areas adjoining Tinsukia district after having come under pressure from the Bhutan government to leave

## ■ Police protect Ulfa boss's home, page 2

that country. Two camps had been busted earlier in Arunachal. The Ulfa ally, NSCN (Khaplang), is said to have infiltrated into Tirap and Changlang districts of Arunachal.

The string of massacres of non-Assamese started on 22 October in Tinsukia district when 15 people were killed. Since then 68 others, including today's victims, have been killed. The killings have forced a large

number of people, particularly migrant labourers from Bihar, to leave Assam.

An Ulfa militant, Ramen Nath, who surrendered yesterday, said the outfit had planned the killing of Hindi-speaking people to have President's rule imposed on the state.

Killing Hindi-speaking people, perceived to be BJP supporters, would move the Centre towards promulgating Article 356, the Ulfa think-tank felt. The outfit expects to gain mileage from imposition of President's rule, the Sulfa leader said. He was part of the team which had planned out the strikes in an Ulfa camp in Bhutan.

However, a group calling itself the Assam Tiger Force had claimed responsibility for the killings, saying that it would continue to do so till the non-Assamese left the state.

Mr Nath said the Ulfa had itself floated ATF to mislead people. No such group exists in Assam, he said.

THE STATESMAN

8 DEC 2000

# Centre rushing forces to Assam

HT Correspondents

New Delhi/Guwahati, December 8

THE CENTRE tonight decided to rush 27 additional companies of central forces to counter the fresh challenge posed by ULFA and other insurgent groups in Assam.

A decision in this connection was taken at a high level review meeting convened by Home Minister L.K. Advani following series of attacks on Hindi speaking people in the State. The meeting was attended among others by the Assam Governor, the Chief Minister and senior army officials.

A decision was also taken to make special security arrangement in the areas inhabited by Hindi speaking people. Around 1800 pockets have already been identified. Night curfew has been imposed in the border areas and more deployment of forces has been done on Indo-Bhutan border to check infiltration by the ULFA insurgents.

Meanwhile, an anti-Bihari wave has hit Guwahati. Four youths barged into a Bihari barber's shop on Zoom Road on Friday and pasted a "quit notice" written in English. The notice ordered the owner and people of his ilk to leave Assam in 48 hours. Similar notices are being served to non-Assamese people here, as authorities look helplessly on.

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The notices, coming in the wake of a series of killings targeted at Hindi-speaking people, have created great fear among the non-Assamese people here. Many have already fled to smaller towns elsewhere in the state.

The slaughter of the traders, mostly Biharis, was followed by simultaneous attacks on the kin of two top ULFA leaders in Nalbari district on Friday morning. Unidentified gunmen killed Deepak Choudhury, brother of ULFA foreign secretary Sasha Choudhury at Halosa village in Nalbari district.

Nearby in Ghograpur, the house of another ULFA leader Babul Sharma was attacked by a group of armed men, though no one was injured. Sarma is in charge of the medical unit in ULFA's Bhutan camps.

The twin attack is seen as a reaction to the ULFA killings. Unknown assailants had on Tuesday night attacked ULFA commander-in-chief Paresch Barua's house in Tinsukia district.

Senior police officials, giving details of the Sadiya killings, said the victims were killed when they were returning from Tezu in Arunachal after peddling their wares at the weekly market.

This is the eighth such incident since October 22, taking the toll beyond the 100 mark in two months. The victims have been Biharis, Marwaris, Nepalis and Bengalis.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

9 DEC 2000



# Arms alert in North-East

Syed Sajjad Ali  
Agartala, December 6

THE ARMY is on hair-trigger alert at key North-eastern locations for a possible landing of a huge arms consignment at Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh. The cache could be worth up to \$750,000, and is meant for a tribal insurgent group in the region, Lt Gen. T S Shergil, GOC 3 Corps, told a news conference here today.

Cox's Bazar is an international port in southwestern Bangladesh, just 40 km from the border subdivision of Sabroom in South Tripura. The BSF, CRPF and State security forces have been put on maximum alert along the border in all North-eastern States. Two battalions of crack commandos were being airlifted to add muscle to the vigil, Lt Gen. Shergil said.

The shipment had been ordered by a particular group, but the arms

might find their way to members of more than one organisation after they entered India, the General said. The arms had been bought by the NSCN(I-M). The NLFT is likely to play a major role in ensuring the shipment has a smooth journey through the State. Troops are in position along all routes the smugglers are likely to take.

"The consignment could be of improved weaponry, comprising assault rifles of the AK series and M-16 grenade launchers, sophisticated grenades and explosive devices," Lt Gen. Shergil said at the Assam Rifles headquarters. Brig. B K Ponwar, the State's highest Army officer, was present.

Lt Gen. Shergil said the arms were reported to be of Chinese make, but did not suspect Beijing was involved in the operation. He said the Army was in touch with its Myanmarese counterpart to avoid misunderstanding. India has

accepted Myanmar's apology for the killing of three Assam Rifles jawans by Yangon's forces in a case of mistaken identity recently.

Lt Gen. Shergil said the ceasefire agreement between the Central Government and the NSCN(I-M) had been a success in Nagaland. "The Government of India is always ready to talk with any underground outfit," he said.

The NSCN(I-M) has, however, been complaining of "ceasefire violations" by the Army. The militants have also been demanding that the ceasefire be extended to all Naga-inhabited areas including those lying outside the State of Nagaland. Lt Gen. Shergil said Assam Rifles planned to expand its area of operation, and that the force had been successful in maintaining peace in the area of its operation. He lauded recent successes achieved by the police, TSR and CRPF in counter-insurgency operations.

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# ULFA men surrender, Mahanta elated

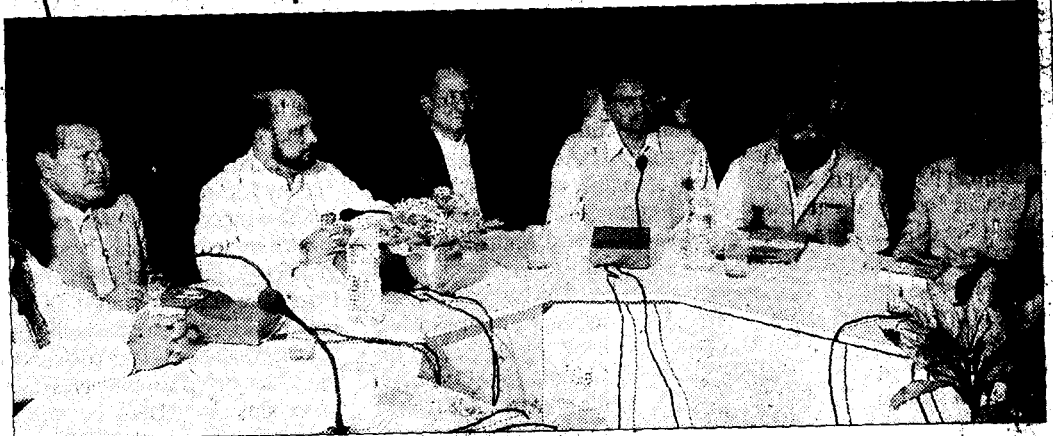
■ Assam pipeline was blown up at ISI's behest, reveals militant

SAMUDRA GUPTA KASHYAP  
GUWAHATI, DEC 6

**E**VEN as the Assam Government began putting in renewed efforts to bring the situation into its grip, as many as 160 militants, almost all but seven belonging to the ULFA surrendered here today, with Chief Minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta claiming the militant group has been further weakened.

Those who surrendered included its action group deputy commander Ramen Nath, who later claimed that the ULFA was now vertically split, with the political wing headed by chairman Arabinda Rajkhowa increasingly losing grip over the armed wing led by Paresh Barua.

The 160 youth who surrendered today included as many as 35 from Nagaon, the Chief Minister's home district, while the others came from 12 other districts. There was also one woman cadre called Minati Mahanta. The youth, who had quit the ULFA during the past four or five weeks, also laid down 19 AK-series rifles, three machine guns, four revolvers, ten high explosives, three sten carbines and 1500 rounds of ammunition,



Chief Minister Mahanta addresses an all-party meet at Guwahati on Tuesday to discuss the recent killings of Hindi-speaking people in the state — PTI

apart from other small fire-arms.

Addressing the surrender function at the Dispur Parade Ground, Chief Minister Mahanta said that more and more members of the ULFA were realising that they were on the wrong path, and have been contacting the police and the Army to come back to the mainstream. He also appealed to those holed up in Bhutan, Bangladesh and Myanmar to come out as early as possible. State governor SK Sinha on the other hand described the recent massacres of Hindi-speaking settlers as the beginning

of the end for the ULFA. "It all began when the ULFA killed Sanjoy Ghosh in Majuli, raped and murdered a young girl called Rashmi Bora in Nagaon and CPI(ML) leader Anil Barua during the 1998 elections," Governor Sinha said.

Governor Sinha, while condemning the recent massacres, also said that what the ULFA was currently doing was a self-destructing activity. Ramen Nath, till recently action group deputy commander, speaking on behalf of the 160 youth on the other hand said the ULFA was now fully into the

ISI's grip. "When we blew up an oil pipeline a couple of years ago, it was not only the armed wing chief Paresh Barua who congratulated me, but one Pathan also rang up from Pakistan, who told me not to worry about arms and ammunition as far as destroying oil installations was concerned," Nath said.

He also said that favouritism had also crept into ULFA, with senior leader Raju Barua, who hails from Nalbari district, awarding promotions and 'good' postings to those who came from his home district.

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7 JAN 2004 00

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## Assam's angst

9/12/87

### But clamping President's rule would play into ULFA's hands

**W**ITH the situation in Jammu and Kashmir claiming the attention of the nation, response to equally worrying developments in Assam tends to be slow and unfocused. Indeed, it is a reflection of the general indifference the nation accords the Northeast that the recent ugly cycle of violence that the state witnessed drew only an apathetic response from administrators or politicians. Perhaps, if the State had responded with the required alacrity and force when the first massacre occurred on October 22 — resulting in the death of 15 people in Tinsukhia district — some 68 lives would not have been lost. Such action would have also spared Assam the ghastly incident that occurred on Thursday evening when 28 men, women and children were mowed down and several others wounded at Sonpura, in the same district.

The pattern in the latest outrage was chillingly similar to those that occur with sickening regularity in J&K. This was nothing but a carefully planned and ruthless executed attempt at ethnic cleansing, when five truck-loads of non-Assamese workers were waylaid and gunned down in an isolated area by a small group of ULFA militants. What the militants hope to achieve by this is also quite clear. At one level, they aim to keep driving a wedge between the local Assamese population and Hindi-speaking migrants, whether they be Bihari labourers or Marwari businessmen, through such incidents. At another, they wish to buttress their political relevance in the re-

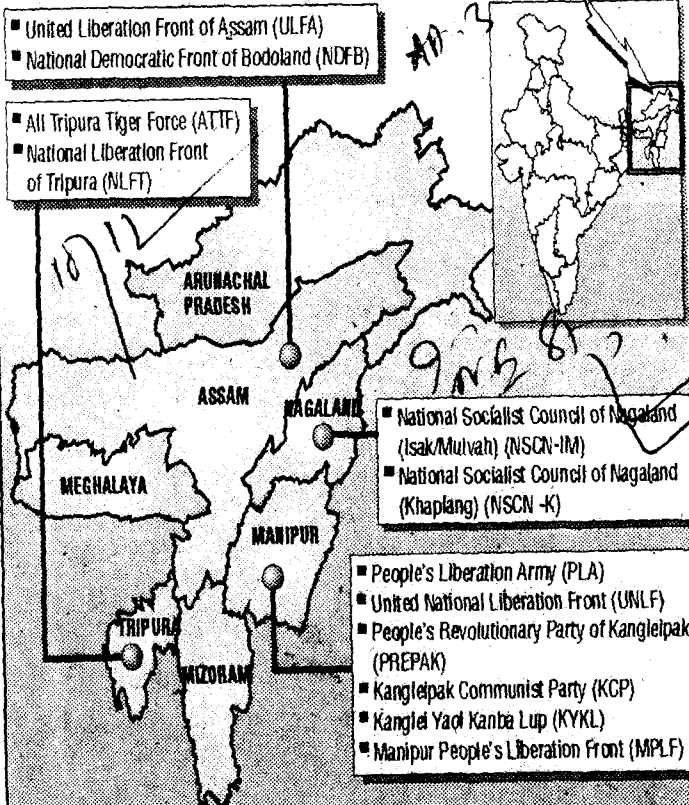
gion by grabbing national headlines. The ULFA, it must be remembered, is going through an existential crisis of a kind. Their base camps at Bhutan are now under threat, with the government there exhibiting a firmer resolve to get them out of its territory. It is this development, as well as intelligence reports of the widespread smuggling of arms across the Indo-Bangladesh and Indo-Myanmar borders, that have put the security forces in the area on high alert.

All this should have made the Assam government more alert to the possibility of terrorist attacks but the Prafulla Kumar Mahanta government has displayed a shocking lethargy in protecting vulnerable communities in his state. Not surprisingly, then, the Opposition there has even called for President's rule in the state. Yet, according to information provided by some captured ULFA militants, the terrorist outfit is hoping to provoke the Centre into taking precisely such a measure, which is bound to alienate public opinion in the state. President's rule is not the answer to Assam's present plight — in any case, the state goes to the hustings next year. What Assam needs is a united political and public response to the politics of terror. Ironically, earlier this week, political parties in Assam had jointly resolved to work towards maintaining unity and communal harmony in the state and Mahanta had personally vowed to provide full security to all sections of the people in the state. The time has come to redeem that pledge with all the force at his command and the Centre should assist him in this.

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9 DEC 2000

## MAJOR MILITANT OUTFITS IN NORTH-EASTERN STATES



In addition, there are numerous other militant groups like the Bodo Liberation Tiger Force (BLT), Achik National Volunteer Council (ANVC), Hymnietrap National Liberation Council (HNCL), People's Liberation Front of Meghalaya (PLFM), Dimasá Halm Daogah (DHD), Bru National Liberation Front (BNLF) etc.

Source: P. S. Saikia, Unstarred Question #1789, Ministry of Home Affairs

THE ASIAN AGE

10 DEC 2000

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# Assam ablaze

9/2/88

**B**Y SEPTEMBER, the situation in violence-ridden Assam had appreciably changed for the better. There were fewer cases of individual murder and acts of sabotage by the militants. The State Government, the police and the Army were claiming that three years of anti-insurgency operations by the Unified Command had broken the back of the ULFA. A large number of militants had surrendered and there was considerable resentment in the middle-level cadres against the top leadership, further weakening the outfit.

But suddenly in the later part of October, the ULFA came back to reassert its presence, as it were, by committing a series of massacres across Assam, targeting mainly the Hindi-speaking people and the trading community from Rajasthan. At least 80 people were killed in seven weeks.

The responsibility for the massacres was owned by a mysterious and unknown organisation calling itself the Assam Tiger Force (ATF). But the police claimed the killings were the handiwork of the ULFA. After the Nalbari massacre on October 27, Mr. G. M. Srivastava, Additional Director-General of Police, said the ATF was a "non-existent and fictitious" organisation. It was the ULFA all right.

The police are still sure of the ULFA hand. This Wednesday, the Deputy Inspector General, Mr. K.

Sarmah, said the police had actually "got" an ULFA boy at Nalbari who had "confessed" to having taken part in the killings.

He declined to name the boy as he had still not been formally arrested but added that two of the 159 militants who had surrendered that morning at Dispur, Mr. Ramen Nath and Mr. Suresh Bora, had also admitted they had been sent to Assam from the ULFA's Bhutan camp to organise these killings. Mr. Sarmah claimed the police had also intercepted

***More than 80 people killed in seven weeks in Assam. But, says BARUN DASGUPTA, the political parties are more interested in running down one another.***

wireless messages of the ULFA that confirmed it had carried out the massacres.

Incidentally, Mr. Nath denied the involvement of any political party in the massacres and said ULFA's objective was to create conditions for President's Rule in Assam. Under Central Rule, the security forces would be given a freer hand, this could lead to human rights violations and strengthen secessionist tendencies.

Despite the assertion of the police, rumours are flying thick

and fast. Various theories are being aired about the "real" identity of the killers and their "real" objectives. A senior Minister said he had heard it suggested that an "intelligence agency of the Centre" might be involved. Insinuations have been made that parties (read Congress and BJP) that want Assembly elections held in Assam under Central Rule are behind the killings.

Another theory doing the rounds is that the ULFA is acting as a tool of the ISI which wants to create instability in north India as well. If Hindi-speaking people continue to be targeted in Assam, it is said, there may be a serious backlash in other States.

The three major parties — the ruling AGP, the Opposition Congress and the BJP — are continuing their vitriolic mutual recriminations. The AGP and the Congress are accusing each other of having a "nexus" with the ULFA and being behind the killings, while the BJP is accusing both of maintaining clandestine contact with the militant outfit and blaming the AGP Government for failing to maintain law and order and protect the lives of the people.

But while the Congress has stepped up its campaign for dismissal of the Mahanta Government and imposing Central rule in Assam, the BJP is averse to taking such a step. Its leader, Mr. Jana Krishnamurthy, said his party would prefer to come to power through the ballot rather than through the "backdoor".

For quite some time, Mr. Mahanta has been alleging that the Congress is helping and being helped by ULFA. He has gone to the extent of demanding that the Congress be barred from contesting the next Assembly elections.

He has also charged the Congress with complicity in the recent killings by the ULFA for creating a situation warranting imposition of President's Rule.

He says he has sent documentary evidence of the Congress' nexus with the ULFA to the Union Home Ministry but is shying away from taking action because the Congress being the main Opposition party, any action taken against its leaders before the elections may be misconstrued! The Congress dares him to order a judicial inquiry by a Supreme Court judge into the allegation of nexus of political parties with the ULFA.

The people are not amused by this mutual mud-slinging by the political parties who seem less concerned about the killing of the innocent and more interested in running down one another and reaping maximum political advantage from the situation with an eye on the coming elections.

Several eminent citizens and intellectuals have called on them to stop this and address themselves to the task of mobilising the people against such violence and infusing in them a sense of security.

THE HINDU

10 DEC 2000

# Assam falls prey to 'reoriented' ULFA

*In less than two months, the ULFA has killed over 105 non-Assamese people, mainly Biharis and Marwaris. Is the ULFA in the grip of the ISI as the police claim? Rahul Karmakar reports from Guwahati.*

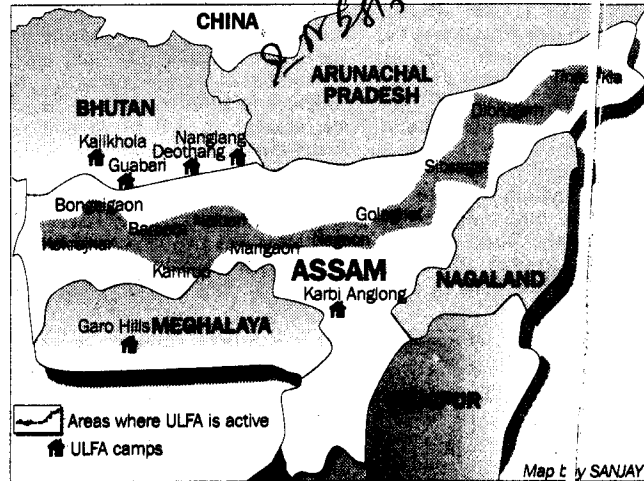
ASSAM NEVER had it so bad, not since 1,500 immigrant Muslims were massacred at Nellie at the height of the Assam Agitation in 1983. In less than two months since October 22 this year, a 'reoriented' ULFA killed over 105 non-Assamese people. Most of them were Biharis, a few Marwaris, Nepalis, Oriyas and Bengalis.

Though ULFA has led the attacks on minorities, the trend started in April this year by the lesser known NSCN-backed United Peoples' Democratic Solidarity (UPDS). The UPDS killed about 60 non-Assamese, besides mowing down nine policemen at Bloangphar on September 13, before it decided to keep low.

Over the last two months, the Christian-dominated National Democratic Front of Bodoland killed over 25 people, mostly non-Assamese woodcutters. But none of these operations have been as shocking as the ones carried out by the ULFA. The ULFA, as a policy, had always desisted from indulging in ethnic cleansing or executing mass murders. Now, the ULFA seems to have changed tracks.

Additional DGP (Operations) G M Srivastava said that the ULFA had changed its strategy on instructions from the ISI to create a Kashmir-like situation in Assam. "The Assam Tiger Force, which had claimed responsibility for the killings, is nothing but a fictitious organisation floated by the ULFA," he said. The police had intercepted wireless messages where ULFA leaders congratulated smaller organisations for their operations.

Ramen Nath and Suresh Bora, ULFA's field leaders, confirmed that the outfit had overhauled its strategy. Nath and Bora came out of hiding last Wednesday. Nath, who con-



fessed to having planned some of the massacres, denied the involvement of any political party. "ULFA's motive behind these killings was to have President's Rule imposed in Assam," he said.

Nath said that the ULFA leadership chose to target Hindi-speaking people, as they were perceived to be BJP supporters. Killing Biharis and Marwaris would prompt the BJP-led Centre to clamp President's Rule in Assam. That would have meant a free hand to security forces, harasser

and torture of common people and alienation of people from the security forces. This would eventually help the ULFA regain lost ground.

The security forces, particularly the Army, had succeeded in winning the confidence of the people over the last few months. The Army had conducted orientation camps to help youth get jobs in the forces. People-friendly programmes also saw an anti-militant wave sweeping across the State, with villagers forming defence parties against the ultras. A few months ago, Morigaon villagers lynched a top ULFA militant, Poalimoni.

Insurgency experts, however, are of the opinion that the relative peace until September this year had made the Unified Command - the Army, paramilitary forces, police and state government - complacent.

The smugness had crept in after the forces succeeded in strikes against the ULFA. They also succeeded in infiltrating the outfit to trigger a battle in its Bhutan camps in September.

The police went overboard in claiming that they had weakened the ULFA, after over 1,000 cadres were killed and more than 3,500 men including some top leaders surrendered. But the ULFA hit back with a vengeance.

This forced the government to replace P V Sumant with Harekrishna Deka as the new DGP.

The killings have caused a fear among the natives that Assamese in other States, particularly the northern states, could be victims of a backlash. Rumours that the Assamese were being dragged out of trains passing through Bihar have created a panic.

On the other hand, many non-Assamese, most of them from Bihar, have left for their native states.

# What's the bigger game plan?

THE ULFA's attacks on Bihar labourers in Assam is seen as a strategy to eliminate competition for Bangladeshi immigrants who have threatened to swamp half the State.

Intelligence officials believe that the ULFA, controlled by Pakistan's ISI and Bangladeshi authorities, is only carrying out their orders.

Dhaka has been pushing its surplus population across the border, though it has always denied the presence of millions of illegal Bangladeshis in Assam.

From tilling land to building houses and pushing carts, Bangladeshis seem to have taken over all menial jobs that were the monopoly of Biharis until recently.

The ULFA's ISI-scripted game plan could be to scare the Biharis away and help immigrants gradually grow in number and status and be able to dictate terms in Assam.

The fact that Muslim immigrants have outnumbered native people in six districts of Assam further strengthens this theory. Immigrants' population has crossed the 40 per cent mark in these districts.



Congress MPs from Assam demanding President's rule in Assam at Parliament House on Monday. Photo: Arvind Yadav

There are fears that the forthcoming census could reveal a Muslim domination in two of these districts. The steady influx of Bangladeshis, apparently for economic reasons, has bred fanaticism and militancy. Police have dossiers on at least 24 Islamic out-

fits led by the Muslim United Liberation Tigers of Assam and the Islamic Revolutionary Army. Though these outfits have not carried out any major operations, their activists have been acting as couriers for the ULFA and other top militant groups.

# NDFB kills 11

## Bodo Tigers

SFI  
12/12  
UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

GUWAHATI, Dec. 12. — At least 11 Bodo Liberation Tiger militants were yesterday killed in a clash with members of the National Democratic Front of Bodoland at Rangdhara village in Assam's Barpeta district.

The BLT had unilaterally suspended its operations and initiated talks with the Centre to find a solution to the Bodo problem.

NDFB casualties were not known. Civil and police officials today visited the site and investigation was on. The incident happened one day after the killing of a Bihari couple by suspected Ulfa militants at Khagrabari village in the same district.

Meanwhile, the Centre has deployed 18 companies of CRPF in the state and prohibitory orders under Section 144 of CrPC have been imposed along the state's border to prevent entry of extremists. The Sontpur DM has imposed prohibitory orders within 10 km from the border with Arunachal Pradesh. The Jorhat DM also clamped night curfew within five km from the border with Nagaland.

The state has been rocked by massacres of Hindi-speaking people since October and reprisal killings of Ulfa militants' relatives. Nearly 100 people had been killed.

The All Assam Students' Union adviser, Mr Samujjal Bhattacharyya, has demanded the removal of the Governor, alleging that Lt Gen SK Sinha was inciting communal passion over the killings.

The Aasu has called a statewide bandh on 18 December in protest against the killings. Warning that Assam was fast becoming the "second Jammu and Kashmir," the Aasu demanded that the Centre announce a unilateral ceasefire in the state during the Magh Bihu festival next month to create a conducive atmosphere for talks with militant groups.

THE STATESMAN

13 DEC 2000

# MURKIER IN MANIPUR

Opposition move may invite Central rule

**M**ORE than insurgency, what is disturbing in Manipur is the alleged politician-rebel nexus. At a press conference in Imphal last September when union joint secretary for home in charge of North-east, GK Pillai charged the state government with having underground connections, chief minister W Nipamacha Singh, who was present, did not react. He also kept quiet when Pillai suggested that the CBI be given a free hand to investigate corruption charges. He may have either been asked to keep quiet, or he could not have cared less. Nipamacha Singh seems more busy with keeping his flock together than worrying about affairs of state. Manipur is seething with trouble. Manipur Rifles personnel are up in arms against non-payment of arrears. A woman has been fasting for more than a month demanding withdrawal of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act. The Opposition no-confidence motion against the government, admitted on 1 December and which was to have been taken up within 10 days, will now be heard in mid-January, the Speaker having postponed it on the plea that time would be required to repair the furniture, windows and microphones damaged in clashes following the adjournment of the Assembly sine die. That this will work to the Opposition's advantage is evident. Three ministers have already joined the Opposition, reducing the ruling coalition's strength to 35 in the 60-member House. Siding with the Opposition, the Speaker has disqualified the horticulture minister and the fate of eight more defectors hangs in the balance.

Even assuming that the eight-month-old Nipamacha government is pulled down, it would be naive to believe that the Opposition, which claims the support of 24, will be able to cobble together a coherent team. What the Opposition parties need to realise is that their move may eventually invite Central intervention, an outcome no party really wants.

**THE STATESMAN**

16 JAN 2 00



# BJP takes steps to impose President's Rule in Manipur

Bharti Jain

SILVASSA 17 DECEMBER

MANIPUR MAY well be heading for President's rule, with the government actively lobbying for the Congress' support before invoking Article 356 in the North Eastern state.

This was indicated by Union home minister L.K. Advani here on Sunday. He told reporters in this industrial town of Dadra & Nagar Haveli that he would discuss the Manipur situation with the Prime Minister. With governor Ved Marwah

having expressed reservations against the continuation of chief minister W. Nipamacha Singh, during his meeting with Mr Advani last week, the government is only waiting for a green signal from the Congress — a must for the passage of the President's rule motion in the Rajya Sabha — to pull the rug from under the feet of the Nipamacha ministry.

"I had spoken to Congress president Sonia Gandhi on Friday to discuss the option of imposing President's rule, to check the deteriorating law and order situation in Manipur... She agreed to a detailed briefing on the government's assessment of the situation by Union home secretary Kamal Pande," he disclosed.

Mr Pande met senior

Congress leader Pranab Mukherjee on Saturday in this regard and the latter is said to have indicated the Congress' views. The home minister will now discuss the matter with Mr Vajpayee.

The government's caution

can be explained by its bitter experience while trying to impose President's rule in Bihar. The Vajpayee ministry had faced much embarrassment when the Congress, after having criticised the "misrule" of the RJD government in Bihar,

refused to okay the imposition of President's rule in the Rajya Sabha. The presidential rule had to be revoked ultimately. By holding detailed sessions now with the Congress to extract a concrete assurance from it on supporting Central intervention in Parliament, the government is trying to avoid a repetition of its Bihar mistake.

The Union home minister, who was in Silvassa to preside over the raising ceremony of an Indian Reserve battalion, told reporters that the general situation in Manipur was "very bad". Although he did not go into the specifics, going by the reports available with the Union home ministry, the state government has been totally ineffective in controlling the law and order.



Advani: Wielding Article 356

The Economic Times

18 DEC 2000

# UlfA chief hurt, deputy killed in Chittagong Hills shootout

HT Correspondent  
Agartala, December 17

PARESH BARUA, the ULFA "commander-in-chief", was seriously wounded and his deputy, Raju Barua, killed in a gun-battle between factions of the militant outfit today in the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh.

Raju is said to have masterminded the recent massacres of Hindi-speaking migrant labourers in Assam.

(A UNI report from Guwahati, however, quoted Assam Director-General of Police Hare Krishna Deka as saying Paresh Barua was not injured in the shoot-out. He said he had no information on Raj Barua's visit to Bangladesh, but he confirmed that some fratricidal encounters had indeed taken place. Defence sources in Tripura confirmed that the ULFA chief had suffered bullet injuries and his deputy had been killed.

In New Delhi, the Union Government refused to confirm the injury to Paresh Barua. "We have no information on this, a Home Ministry official said.)

An Assam Rifles release in Agartala this evening said: "It has been reliably learnt that there was a shootout between ULFA factions in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, which left Paresh Barua seriously wounded. Raju Barua was killed."



Paresh Barua

"It is believed that Paresh Barua has been shifted to a Dhaka hospital under tight security," Major A Bhargava, Army spokesman here said in the release. The communique did not explain how the clash began or who had provided security cover to Barua. Unconfirmed reports, however, claimed that rival ULFA factions clashed at their base camp in Bangladesh's Khagracherry district, near Sabroom in South Tripura.

The recent spate of killings might have fuelled tension in the ULFA ranks, sources here said. Senior leaders of the organisation, including Paresh Barua, had not approved of the bloodletting. He had apparently arrived at the base camp from Dhaka to attend a meeting to discuss the recent massacres.

A report from Guwahati says Babul Phukan, a surrendered ULFA activist staged the attack.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

18 DEC 2000

## Friendly neighbourhood?

EVEN AS the ULFA is facing serious internal dissension, judging from reports about the injuries sustained by its 'commander-in-chief' Paresh Barua and his deputy during a gun battle, it is time that the role of Bangladesh vis-a-vis the militants is considered in some detail. As the news emanating from Agartala suggests, the incident took place in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, which has always been ideal territory for guerrillas because of its inaccessibility. This does not detract, however, from the failure of Bangladesh to be more energetic in tracking down the militants. When it was East Pakistan, the rulers in Dhaka had little hesitation in supporting the rebels opposing the Indian Government, just what Pakistan does today for Kashmiri or Khalistani subversives. After the liberation of Bangladesh — with Indian assistance — there was a sea change in Dhaka's attitude. It is believed that one reason why Laldenga opted for peace in Mizoram was the loss of his bases in Bangladesh.

In recent years, it has been clear that insurgents fleeing the Indian authorities have found shelter in Bangladesh. It has been known for quite some time that Paresh Barua was in that country. An indirect evidence of Bangladesh's complicity was provided by the change of tactics of the Assamese chauvinists. At one time, an aggressive movement was organised by them against the illegal immigrants from Bangladesh living in Assam. During the agitation, Bengali-speaking people, whether from West or East Bengal, had to face the wrath of the parochial sections among the Assamese. There was a distinct change of attitude from the early Nineties, especially where the ULFA was concerned, in respect of the illegal immigrants. Now it has taken an ugly turn with attacks on Hindi-speaking people. In fact, it is this particular development which is said to be behind the outbreak of internecine hostilities in the ULFA.

Whatever the ULFA's internal problems, the fact of the organisation operating from Bangladesh is obvious enough. Now there are reports of two Khasi-Garo militant groups setting up training camps in Bangladesh. None of this can be construed as acceptable behaviour from a supposedly friendly neighbour, especially when the ISI's involvement, especially with the ULFA, is widely suspected.

THE HINDIISTAN TIMES

19 DEC 2000

19/12 #19-15  
**NORTHEAST VIOLENCE / WALKOUT IN LOK SABHA**

# Uproar over Advani statement

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, DEC. 18.** Voicing concern over growing incidents of violence and killings in Assam, Manipur and Tripura, and dissatisfied over the Union Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani's statement on the situation in the Northeast, opposition Congress and Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) members today walked out of the Lok Sabha.

Angry members from the Opposition benches felt that the Home Minister's statement had not spelt out any concrete measures to check militancy in the troubled Northeastern region.

Seeking clarifications, members said the Centre should take political leadership and State Governments into confidence while negotiating any settlement with the insurgent groups. They wanted enough deployment of security forces in the Northeastern States to keep a check on violence as also incidents of extortion and kidnapping.

Some of the members also objected to the reported statement of the Assam Governor asking Hindi-speaking people in the State to defend themselves in the face of increasing attacks by the ULFA.

But the Home Minister said criticism of the Governor was "unfair" as his statement had

not provoked any parochial sentiments.

Mr. Advani admitted that the situation in Assam, Tripura and Manipur was causing concern and the Centre was keeping a constant watch particularly on situation in Manipur. He said the State Government had been repeatedly advised to deal firmly with the police personnel responsible for loss of weapons. The State Government had also been asked to deploy more force on counter-insurgency operations, he told the House.

Referring to situation in Tripura, he said the situation was being closely monitored by the Home Ministry and added that he had visited Agartala earlier this year and comprehensively reviewed law and order.

He said the Government was distressed over the spate of recent killings in Assam, mainly by ULFA cadres who targeted Hindi-speaking people.

Mr. Advani said the ULFA had been rapidly losing public support over the recent years and there had also been demoralisation in the ranks of militant organisation as during the last three years nearly 3,000 ULFA cadres had laid down arms and surrendered.

As a first step, the Government had drawn up an action plan and 27 additional companies of the Central Reserve Police Force were

being placed at the disposal of Assam Government.

He said that militants of the Northeast were taking refuge in neighbouring countries and told the House that India had taken up the issue with Bhutan, Myanmar and Bangladesh, and they have assured necessary action.

Referring to ceasefire in Nagaland, Mr. Advani admitted that it had not given way to a political situation so far but added that it had helped in bringing down incidents of violence and kidnappings.

In a related development, the senior Congress leader, Mr. Pranab Mukherjee, who was briefed by the Home Secretary, Mr. Kamal Pande, on the situation in Manipur, today described the situation in the State as "bleak".

Briefing newsmen this evening, Mr. Mukherjee said that any move to bring Manipur under President's rule would have to be initiated by the Centre. If the Centre wanted to impose President's rule for 60 days, it did not even need approval from Parliament, he said.

According to Mr. Mukherjee, the Government had not asked the Congress for support on any action plan which it proposed to take in Manipur and therefore it would be "premature" for his party to state its position.

THE HINDU

19 DEC 2000

92-6  
2/12

Militants run the state here

# Manipur madness

**W**E stand today on the cusp of the third millennium of the Christian calendar. To gain some perspective into where India stands today, permit me the conceit of comparing where we stand today with where we were in A.D. 1000.

Truth be told, it is a depressingly familiar story. The three-way battle for power between the Rashtrakutas, the Palas, and the Pratiharas had exhausted all three, leading to a dangerous vacuum in the Gangetic valley. The states at the periphery — Kashmir and Kamrupa for instance — were so involved with troubles of their own that they were gradually drifting away from the national mainstream. Over the whole host of petty principalities hung the threat of an Afghan invasion. Only South India, thanks to the Cholas, offered any signs of hope.

How much has changed? South India, with its commitment to reforms, is still the hope of India. The barbarians from Afghanistan continue to gather at the gates of India. Kashmir and the Northeast continue to be as troubled as ever. And the masters of the Indian heartland, the teeming plains of the Ganga, continue to bicker.

Or do they? I confess that I may be clutching at straws here, but I see some faint hope that India's leaders have learned the lessons of history and are, finally, able to rise above personal interests where national interests are concerned. While this column has never been a fan of the Congress (I), let me pay tribute where it is due — to Sonia Gandhi.

The president of the Congress (I) has been taken to task on previous occasions for her hemming and hawing. In Bihar, she began by calling for the resignation of the Rashtriya Janata Dal ministry — and then proceeded to form a coalition with it. The Congress (I) tried taking credit for initiating reforms — and then senior Congress-

men mauled Marimohan Singh. Against this background, may I say how refreshing it was to see the Leader of the Opposition step forward to take two measured, courageous steps: On Manipur and on economic policy.

Sonia Gandhi's speech at the FICCI meet was a pleasure to hear. While warning her audience that there were compulsions to being in the Opposition, she seized the occasion to reiterate her party's commitment to economic liberalisation. I don't know who her speech-writer was for the event, but I hope that the Congress (I) president keeps him on!

Or could it be that we were finally hearing the voice of Sonia Gandhi herself, untrammelled by

minister attending a militant's funeral after he was brought down by the security forces? If not, look no farther than the deputy chief minister of Manipur! But he was not alone — two terrorists were found in the transport minister's bedroom, and another minister allegedly paid lakhs of rupees to another outfit to buy arms. Some say as much as Rs 50 crore pumped in by ministers as a group every year!

The police is completely helpless. In fact, officers have admitted that they are forced to pay "protection money" to the militant groups. The situation is so bad that funds have been sanctioned so that policemen can buy back weapons that have been captured from them!

The policemen's col-



T.V.R. SHENOY

**Ever heard of a minister attending a militant's funeral after he was brought down by the security forces? If not, look no farther than the deputy CM of Manipur!**

anyone in her entourage? That is a possibility, given that she followed up one courageous pronouncement with another: Her decision to back the Union Government on Manipur.

I am not sure if most people realise just how bad the situation has become in the Northeast. Our beloved western neighbour has made sure that the ISI has gained a claw-hold. There are some elements supported by China. And it is all too easy for militants to disappear across porous frontiers into Bangladesh and Myanmar. So what exactly is it that makes Manipur worse than its sister states?

Simply this: Nowhere else are ministers accused of being hand in glove with militants. Have you ever heard of a

leagues, the officers of the mighty Indian Administrative Service, have been cowed into absolute compliance. They sit at home rather than risk running into some militant in office. That is not an exaggeration — Manipur's terrorist groups think nothing of strolling in to dabble with files.

I assume they are just taking turns to practice running the state. This, if matters continue to drift, cannot be too far away. The militants are already running a parallel government — operating everything from ration shops to collecting taxes. Other than IAS and IPS officers, does anybody in the wretched state actually pay income tax to the Government of India?

By any reckoning Manipur is a fit case for President's Rule. The Constitutional machinery hasn't just collapsed in the state, it has been taken over by the militants. These facts are nothing new, but have been long known to the Government of India. So why hasn't the Manipur ministry been kicked out long since?

The answer is that such a decision must be ratified by both Houses of Parliament. It is known to everyone that the Vajpayee ministry lacks a majority in the Rajya Sabha. Effectively, the threat of President's Rule is meaningless unless the support of the Congress (I) is forthcoming.

I would like to pay my tribute to the front benches on both the Treasury and the Opposition for the maturity they displayed on this occasion. The prime minister decided to approach the leader of the opposition in a kind of 'Track Two' diplomacy. Once she signalled her interest, the home minister spoke to her in person, and the Union home secretary presented her with all the unhappy details.

It would have been easy for Sonia Gandhi to pretend that this was something for the Union government to handle on its own. She could have threatened to block any move in the Rajya Sabha. She did nothing of the kind, instead offering to work together in the interests of the nation.

Manipur is a small state, but that does not diminish what Sonia Gandhi has done. She has just signalled her determination to offer cooperation where national interests are at stake. If we are lucky, we may see more of the same when it comes to tackling the ISI, or the Women's Reservation Bill, or disinvestment.

The last year ended on a bitter note thanks to the hijacking of Flight IC-814 to Kandahar. Today, thanks in part to Sonia Gandhi, I can sincerely wish everyone a "Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!"

INDIAN EXPRESS

21 DEC 2000

# Bhutan Govt likely to flush out Assam militants from kingdom

SAMUDRA GUPTA KASHYAP  
GUWAHATI, DEC 24

THE recent attacks on Bhutanese nationals by Bodo militants in Assam may finally prompt Bhutan to flush out the 2,000-odd Assamese armed rebels holed up in the jungles of the tiny kingdom.

During the past week, militants of the outlawed National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) have attacked Bhutanese either passing through Assam or coming to the state to sell woollen garments, killing 14 persons, including a 14-year-old girl.

Earlier this year, the National Assembly of Bhutan had recommended deploying the Army to flush out the Assam rebels and the Royal Bhutan Army had started preparations for a full-scale operation against the militants in July. The decision was taken following several attempts made by Bhutanese authorities to hold talks with the top leaders of both the groups and persuade them to make a "peaceful withdrawal" from their country.

Accordingly, the Royal Bhutan

Army had increased its strength by raising two additional battalions, and setting up camps close to the United Liberation Front of Assam and Bodo rebels' hideouts. As many as 8,000 Royal Bhutan Army personnel have been on special deployment from Kalikhola to Daifam, on the east of which are located the rebels' camps.

At Dewathang, on the other hand, the students and staff of the Royal Technical Institute have been shifted out and the campus taken over by the Army. Additional security posts and troop accommodation facilities on the hand have been established at Bhurkhola and Dholkhola to guard two vital bridges on the Sarphang-Gelegphu highway.

But most importantly, the National Assembly has also recommended the blocking of all supply lines to the rebels' camps, and taking action under the National Security Act against those found assisting the rebels.

Prior to this, Bhutanese authorities had held at least three rounds of talks with the Assam rebels, and every time, the latter were asked to quit Bhutan as early as possible.

While the first round of talks were held in November 1998 with some middle-level leaders, it was ULFA armed wing chief Paresh Barua who met Bhutan Home Minister Lyompo Thinley Gyamtsho in May 1999.

Gyamtsho had conveyed to Barua the Assembly's concerns over the presence of the rebels' camps in Bhutan and asked him to move them out soon. Barua was also advised against fighting the might of the Indian Army. But Barua pleaded inability to shift immediately, asked for 18 months' time.

Bhutanese authorities once again invited Barua for discussions, and asked him to bring United Liberation Front of Assam chairman Arabinda Rajknight howa along. Barua promised to come but neither showed up.

Similar talks were also held between National Democratic Front of Bodoland chief Ranjan Daimary and the Bhutan Home Minister.

But the former turned down the request altogether, citing security risk as a reason.

Meanwhile, Lt Gen H.S.

Kalkat, the GOC of Eastern Command visited Bhutan in September this year and reviewed the Bhutan Army's preparations for carrying out a full-fledged operation against United Liberation Front of Assam and Bodo rebels.

G.K. Pillai, Joint Secretary, Union Home Ministry (in charge of the North-East) had also revealed that as many as 2,000 soldiers of the Royal Bhutan Army have been already been trained by the Indian Army in counter-insurgency operations.

Earlier this week, Bhutan King Jigme Singye Wangchuk himself paid a visit to the districts in which the United Liberation Front of Assam and Bodo rebels have set up their camps, and appealed to his subjects to stop any kind of help to the militant cadres.

The latest round of attacks on Bhutanese nationals inside Assam is seen as an indication that the rebels have no intention of moving out prompting speculation that Bhutan might finally decide to take action against them and a safe refuge for the militants might be a thing of the past.

INDIAN EXPRESS

25 DEC 2000

# Shanti Bahini twist to 'strike' on Ulfa boss

FROM SEKHAR DATTA

Agartala, Dec. 25: Splashing a fresh version of the supposed attack on Ulfa chief Paresh Barua on its front page, Tripura's largest-circulated newspaper today punched holes in all official accounts of the "ambush" and claimed that a Bangladesh security agency made arrangements for the militant leader's telephonic interaction with the media from his hospital bed.

The newspaper, *Dainik Sambad*, said Barua was indeed seriously injured and his long-time deputy, Raju Baruah, killed in the "ambush" at Khagracherri in the Chittagong Hill Tracts on December 16.

However, it dismissed the Assam Rifles' claim that the Ulfa commander-in-chief was targeted by his own men.

"Barua and his deputy were attacked by assailants owing allegiance to the Jana Samhati Samity, a political offshoot of the now-defunct Shanti Bahini," the newspaper claimed.

*Dainik Sambad* extensively quoted "sources across the border" to substantiate its claims. It said Barua had begun "interfering in tribal politics", which was one of the reasons why he was a marked man in Bangladesh.

"A group of former Shanti Bahini rebels broke away from the Jana Samhati Samity early last year in protest against their leader, Santu Larma's failure to

force the Bangladesh government to implement the peace accord signed in December 1997. Helped by Barua, they formed a rag-tag outfit to challenge Larma, who is a pro-Awami League leader," the newspaper said.

It reported that the Ulfa even supplied a huge consignment of weapons and paid Rs 5 lakh in cash to the former Shanti Bahini rebels recently.

"This infuriated the Jana Samhati Samity leadership and an armed group owing allegiance to Larma ambushed the Ulfa chief's convoy on the Khagracherri-Maicherri road at 4.30 pm on December 16. The militant leader was seriously injured in the attack, while his deputy was killed on the spot," *Dainik Sambad* said.

The newspaper said a "Bangladesh agency that keeps tabs on anti-India militants" shifted Barua to a hospital in Dhaka shortly after the attack.

"The same agency made arrangements for Barua's interaction with newspapers and two television channels. The Ulfa leader's denial of any attack on him was intended to prevent panic in the outfit's ranks," it added.

A senior Assam Rifles official said the report in *Dainik Sambad* backed what the security forces had been saying all along. However, he declined to comment on the newspaper's version of the circumstances leading to the supposed attack on Barua and his aide.

THE TELEGRAPH

26 DEC 2000

## GAMES IN MANIPUR

Centre may avoid President's rule

THE decisive factor that made Delhi think in terms of intervention in Manipur is the ruling party's nexus with militant outfits. Law and order is no longer the criteria. Had it been the case perhaps Assam, Manipur, Tripura and Jammu and Kashmir would have passed under central rule long ago. Ironically, the coalition government is the ally of the NDA. Sonia Gandhi was said to be on the point of agreeing to the Centre's proposal for imposition of President's Rule but changed her mind following developments in the Bofors case. What could have influenced her decision is also the reported "overtures" by Nipamacha Singh for an alternative government. This eminently suits the Congress as most of the chief minister's followers are former Congressmen. He and Congress can muster the required numbers. Given the circumstances in which the chief minister finds himself, this appears to be the only way out to avoid central take over.

There is urgent need to end political stalemate caused by Speaker's disqualification of a minister and the threat to book eight other defectors. He has also adjourned the Assembly sine die after admitting a no-confidence motion against the Nipamacha ministry. While the chief minister wants the Assembly prorogued, Governor Ved Marwah feels it would be inappropriate to do so when a no-trust motion is pending. The nine-month-old government was plagued by dissensions. Financial mismanagement forced the eleventh finance commission to cut funds for maintenance of roads and bridges. It received just Rs 52 crore compared to Nagaland's Rs 274.89 crores. Perhaps it is not wrong to suggest that a short spell of central rule will do wonders for the border state.

THE STATESMAN

27 DEC 2000



# 24-hr DD channel for North-East

HT Correspondent  
Guwahati, December 27

MINISTER for Information and Broadcasting Sushma Swaraj on Wednesday formally launched a 24-hour North-East channel of the Doordarshan.

Addressing a gathering, the Union Minister said television viewers all over the globe would be able to access programmes of the region telecast through the new satellite channel.

Echoing the sentiments of other speakers, Sushma Swaraj admitted that the North-East was not given attention by successive Governments at the Centre. She said her Government would "try and rectify the past mistakes as best as it can". The launch of the 24-hour channel, exclusively for the North-East, was just the beginning. "We will be announcing many such new projects soon."

In his address, Assam Chief Minister Prafulla

Kumar Mahanta requested the Union Minister to immediately fill up the 300 posts vacant in Prasar Bharati from the North-East. Swaraj assured that the same would be done soon.



(From left) Meghalaya Chief Minister E K Mawlong, Union Minister of State Bijoya Chakraborty, Information and Broadcasting Minister Sushma Swaraj and Assam Chief Minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta at the opening ceremony of the 24-hour channel at Guwahati on Wednesday.

Photo: Utpal Baruah

Arunachal Pradesh Information Minister Takam Sanjay said while Doordarshan programmes did not reach the interior areas of his State, the programmes from some Chinese and Burmese television channels were accessible. As a result, the people of these areas were feeling alienated, he said. "I hope steps will be initiated to address this problem soon."

Deputy director general of Doordarshan and All India Radio (North-East) in his welcome address said programmes would initially be telecast in nine different languages of the region. Programmes in

other languages would also be incorporated soon. The new channel would be made available to the audience worldwide through a transponder of the Australian satellite, Apstar.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

27 DEC 2000

# Assam reels under violence in year of Ulfa resurgence

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

GUWAHATI, Dec. 27. — Insurgency-related violence continued to dominate Assam throughout the year, with a reoriented Ulfa targeting the Hindi-speaking community, even as the state government induced many ultras to surrender.

The first day of the millennium began with the Ulfa blowing up the ONGC's Lakwa-Moran pipeline at Disangpani area in Sibsagar district, causing damage worth Rs 6 lakh.

This was followed by the outfit blowing up the Dulaijan-Barauni crude oil pipeline at

Numaligarh in Golaghat district, and an attempt to blow up a gas pipeline between Halmari and Bahdari in Dibrugarh district.

Along with these activities of sabotage, the Ulfa continued to attack politicians, its traditional targets. Assam's forest and PWD minister, Nagen Sarma, was assassinated in Nalbari in February. The very next day, the Ulfa made a bid on the life of the state veterinary and power minister, Mr Hiranva Konwar, but were unsuccessful.

But what shocked the state was a change in the Ulfa's tactics, probably influenced by

Pakistan's ISI, of targetting the Hindi-speaking people of Assam. The ethnic violence saw the killing of more than a 100 people within a span of only one and a half months.

The massacres of the non-Assamese began on 21 October, when Ulfa militants attacked Nauholia village in Dibrugarh district killing four people and the very next day 11 people were massacred at Kakojan in Tinsukia district.

The scene of violence then shifted to lower Assam as nine Marwaris were killed on Diwali-eve on 27 October in Nalbari district, followed by the massacre eight people at Sukhrungbari in Barpeta district.

Seven more Marwaris were killed in Sibsagar district on 17 November, and after a brief lull, three Biharis were hacked to death in Tinsukia.

The most tragic killings occurred on 7 December, when the banned outfit killed 29 Biharis, who were returning from the market, inside a remote forest in Sadiya bordering Arunachal Pradesh.

Mr Ramen Nath, a deputy in Ulfa's central headquarters in Bhutan, later claimed that the self-styled commander, Raju Barua, was the brain behind the massacres, which were carried out by the outfit's "Enigma unit."

In apparent retaliation,

several family members of Ulfa cadres were either killed or attacked, including an attack on the house of the Ulfa chief, Mr Paresh Barua, at Jeraigaon in Tinsukia district. Moreover, Mr Barua denied the reports next day by calling a few vernacular dailies and saying both he and his deputy were safe.

The state government, however, is continuing its effort to bring more militants to the mainstream by making them surrender. Altogether 1,740 militants have surrendered so far this year, which includes several top leaders like "captain" Ramen Nath, Mr Lohit Deuri, Mr Dilip Bora and Mr Subrata Sarania.

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THE STATESMAN

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HD-12

## A PEACE PLAN FOR THE NORTHEAST

THE PROBLEMS OF insurgency or militancy in the northeastern States continue to disrupt normal life and development activities in the region. There has been a sudden spurt in killings in Assam, a kind of ethnic cleansing exercise. The talks with the Naga rebels, notably the NSCN, have not really taken off. And there is a fresh crisis in Manipur, with the Centre keen on clamping President's rule, at least for a brief period. Assam will be going to the polls around April 2001. After unveiling a massive package for the northeast, the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, has not been able to follow up on that generosity. A few projects in communications and IT have got off the ground, but investors are not willing to take chances when the climate on the law and order front remains far from satisfactory. Unfortunately, the State Governments are not doing enough to stabilise the situation and make it attractive to the private sector. They are content with blaming the Centre for not releasing more funds to contain militancy. This is a syndrome that needs to be checked. There has to be a partnership between the Centre and these eight States to work together and shift the focus from insurgency to development.

Since the Congress was not very supportive of President's rule, the BJP has managed to split the Manipur Congress Legislature Party in a bid to form a new Government. In November, the Centre, particularly the Home Ministry, appeared to be taking a fresh initiative on the Naga front. Having extended the ceasefire, Delhi dispatched the rebel-turned-Chief Minister of Mizoram, Mr. Zoramthanga, to Bangkok to meet the NSCN general secretary, Mr. Thuingaleng Muivah. Some progress was reportedly made at these talks. Mr. Muivah has taken the view that such delicate negotiations are better handled by seasoned politicians who can un-

derstand the socio-political problems better than bureaucrats. Apparently, the former Home Secretary, Mr. K. Padmanabhaiah, was not able to achieve a breakthrough in his negotiations and the talks broke down on the controversial issue of a larger Naga homeland. Politicians like the late Rajesh Pilot and then Mr. Swaraj Kaushal had taken the talks forward. The problem is both sides do not always keep their commitment and there seems to be no urgency about solving the problem. Mere agreements are not going to end the decades-old insurgency.

It is unfortunate that the national parties are steadily losing ground in the northeast. In the era of advancing regionalism, these States are also coming up with their own local parties and politics, because the national parties failed to deliver on local promises. Regional identity and local issues have gained such significance these days. But the track record of most of these State Governments does not inspire much confidence. They have failed to deal with insurgency both politically and socially. In Assam, there was a farcical statement that the ULFA chief, Mr. Paresh Barua, was shot at in an internal flare-up. The State Governments have been tardy in implementation of projects and inefficient in administration. Given the high rate of literacy, there can be no valid reason for the lack of development of the region. The incidence of AIDS and drug trafficking is also the highest in the northeast. Just as the Centre must guide the States with a firm hand, the State Governments must realise their responsibilities. Unless they start working together, there can be no end to the insurgency and no thrust for development. With the help of the Northeast Council, the Centre must evolve a policy framework for peace in the region. Neither peace nor development can be imposed.

THE HINDU

30 DEC 2000

# Massacre-belt border sealed

FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT

Guwahati, Dec. 29: The army today sealed the Assam-Nagaland border in Karbi Anglong district even as police rounded up 10 persons for interrogation in connection with the massacre of eight Hindi-speaking people yesterday.

Militants suspected to be from the United People's Democratic Solidarity, a Karbi outfit, gunned down eight migrant labourers from Bihar at Rangana-gar village under Howraghat police station in the hill district at 6.30 pm last evening. The victims included four minors

and a 70-year-old woman.

District superintendent of police Anil Phookan said police and CRPF personnel were combing the nearby Singhason hills for the militants. The assailants, who were dressed in army fatigues, served extortion notices on some Hindi-speaking people living in the foothills of Singhason after carrying out the killings, he said.

The district today observed a bandh in protest against the massacre. Phookan said the killings were "extortion-oriented" and part of the Karbi militants' strategy to "create a fear psychosis" and force the migrants to pay up.

The UPDS had gone on a killing spree in April, mowing down as many as 22 migrants from Bihar and Nepal in the span of just 10 days.

It was on its "raising day" last year that the UPDS began serving quit notices on various minority communities living in Karbi Anglong district. All migrants who settled in the district after 1955 were asked to leave.

The people targeted by the rebels include Muslims, Bodos, Nepalis, Kukis and migrants from Bihar.

The police suspect that 80 per cent of the money extorted by the

UPDS goes to the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (Isak Muivah), which has been extending material and logistical help to the Karbi outfit.

Phookan said the UPDS was basically a stooge of the NSCN(I-M) and was being used by the Naga outfit to implement its plan to gain control over the entire hill district. The police recently arrested eight NSCN(I-M) militants near Bokajan on the Assam-Nagaland border. The SP said all these rebels hailed from NSCN(I-M) general secretary Th. Muivah's native village in Manipur's Ukhrul district.

THE TELEGRAPH

30 DEC 2000

# Assam minorities want protection

BY MANOJ ANAND

Guwahati, Oct. 31: Battered by three consecutive massacres the Bihatar Hindi Speaking Coordination Committee has sought adequate protection for their people in Assam.

Panic stricken businessmen and traders of the state staged a sit-in strike under the banner and registered their protest against three massacres here on Tuesday. They also submitted a memorandum to the Assam Governor Lt. Gen. (Retd) S.K. Sinha expressing their apprehension and fear in running their trades in different parts of the state.

The newly formed organisation which is comprised of leading traders and businessmen, also expressed apprehension that ultras may resort to similar attacks against the Hindi-speaking communities in other places unless stringent measures are taken against them.

Talking to *The Asian Age*, one of the senior leaders of the Committee and managing director of G.L. Publication group Mr G.L. Agrawala said, "Three massacres

have rocked the confidence of the business community in the state."

The people in general had started refusing to pay any heed to the militant's threat but three consecutive massacres have shaken their confidence, he pointed out.

He added that "we want that the government take immediate measures to check the recurrence of such incidents."

Mr Agrawala said that the way militants tried to mislead people by distributing pamphlets of unknown organisations like the "Assam Tiger Force" indicated that their motives were to divide Assamese society.

A hand-written pamphlet that was recovered from the massacre site at Nalbari had threatened Marwari and Bihari communities to leave Assam. Ulfa militants in three separate incidents in Assam had killed at least 26 people recently.

Mr. Agrawal said "A section of people are also trying hard to brand us as non-Assamese. How is it possible? We are here for several decades and even many of us have started our education in Assamese first than in Hindi."

THE ASIAN AGE

1 NOV 2000

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# Bhutan's no to foreign help to oust ultras

Utpal Parashar

Guwahati, November 1

H-7  
9-11-92  
BHUTAN WOULD not seek help of either the UN security forces or troops from some other country to push back the militants of United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) and National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) from its soil, said King Jigme Singhye Wangchuck.

According to reports appearing in the latest edition of Kuensel, Bhutan's national newspaper, the King made these remarks while discussing national issues with the people of Haa district located in north Bhutan bordering Tibet.

Responding to queries from residents of Haa about the possibility of requesting the UN security forces to resolve the ULFA-NDFB problem, the King stated that Bhutan would not seek outside help to resolve the problem.

"Our people should understand that the UN security forces will not come to Bhutan to resolve our problem and that we should not depend on others to help us remove security threats to our nation," the King stated. He added that whenever Bhutan's security and sovereignty was threatened, it was the responsibility of the Bhutanese people to come forward

to protect the nation.

The King said that despite talks with the militants not resulting in anything fruitful, the Bhutan government would still pursue the process of dialogue to find a peaceful solution to the problem. If the militants do not leave Bhutan peacefully force would be used to throw them out, the King asserted.

Responding to requests from students to enrol themselves for military training to fight ULFA and NDFB militants, the King asked them to concentrate on their studies at present. Bhutanese Home Minister Lyonpo Thinley Gyamtsho stated that if military action was initiated against the militants, the people of Bhutan might have to undergo severe hardships and sufferings.

"Development work and economic activities will be seriously affected and schools, hospitals and other facilities in all the affected dzongkhags (districts) in the south would have to be closed down," the Kuensel reported the minister as stating.

Following Army action against them in 1992, ULFA and NDFB had shifted base to the jungles in south Bhutan bordering Assam, and set up several training and operational camps there.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

NOV 2 1992

## SHADES OF PINK

But CPI-M not in ecumenical mood

IT might seem that with the Thiruvananthapuram plenum of the CPI-M ratifying the proposal to share power with "bourgeois" parties at the Centre — read the Congress — its political differences with the CPI no longer exist. Yet Harkishen Singh Surjeet reacted coldly to CPI general secretary AK Bardhan's call for a merger of the two parties, preferring to raise the ghost of old ideological differences. The split between the CPI and the CPI-M grew out of the Sino-Soviet split in international Communism, which is a number for the history books now, with the Soviet Union withering away in line with communist theories about the state and the Chinese busy pouring capitalist wine into communist bottles. Domestically, the principal difference between the two parties lay in the CPI-M's opposition to the Congress and the CPI's cosiness with it, but that too has been taken care of by the Thiruvananthapuram plenum. It formalised a process that had been evident through the 1990s — the CPI-M striving to fill the Nehruvian socialist space vacated, albeit slowly and reluctantly, by the Congress since Manmohan Singh's economic reforms in 1991.

But having arrived at this space it found the CPI already parked there, and must have found the latter's I-told-you-so smirks intolerable. Moreover the CPI has been showing sparks of independence in West Bengal politics, not likely to have passed unnoticed by big brother — the former has criticised government corruption, as well as the CPI-M role in the violence in Kespur. The CPI exhibited certain symptoms of revolt when the CPI-M decided not to renominate Gurudas Dasgupta for a Rajya Sabha seat, but were later browbeaten into submission. From the CPI-M leadership's point of view, absorbing the CPI into itself could mean altering hardliner-liberal equations and strengthening the hands of dissidents within the party, something it is unwilling to countenance. But the hardliner-liberal struggle within the party is bound to hot up in the coming days, with Jyoti Basu out of the way. What is of greater moment is that the CPI and CPI-M are by now two separate bureaucracies, which find it difficult to merge, for much the same reasons that Central or state level bureaucracies find it difficult to rationalise and avoid duplication of functions and turf wars. Now that the CPI-M has taken the parliamentary plunge and is open to being courted by "bourgeois" parties, the relevant factor is no longer the CPI's communist pedigree but the fact that it commands only three parliamentary seats.

## DUCKS AND DRAKES

Mizoram, Tripura and the Reang <sup>5-6-20</sup> ~~un~~ ~~und~~

THE first phase of repatriation involving 16,000 Reang refugees from Tripura to Mizoram, scheduled to start on 30 October, was a non-starter. It is unfortunate that Aizawl should play ducks and drakes with the decision arrived at in the Delhi meeting in August of Mizoram and Tripura chief ministers Zoramthanga and Manik Sarkar, respectively. The process has been beset with problems from the very beginning because of Mizoram's shifting stand. It says the 41,000 refugees languishing in Tripura camps are not their citizens. It also sets preconditions that the Bru (Reang) United Liberation Front (championing the cause of evacuees and supporting the demand for an autonomous district council) eschew violence before negotiations. A final list of 31,236 was prepared but they will have to go through "a proper verification", implying that they will be accepted after they have proved their bona fides with valid documents. That even after the Tripura government's reported submission of details Aizawl is unmoved suggests it is a ploy to prevaricate the issue.

Charity begins at home. Zoramthanga would do well to resolve the Reang issue before accepting the invitation by the Nagas and the Centre to create an atmosphere of mutual trust for the success of the peace dialogue. Mizoram witnessed a spate of abductions and killings early this year by the BNLF, making a mockery of the peace bonus Aizawl received from the Centre. The ruling Mizo National Front which, under Laldenga, took up arms against the establishment in 1966, is in a better position to deal with Reang militants. The rebels were said to be getting arms from the National Liberation Front of Tripura, but of late they have started killing each other. Aizawl must exploit this to its advantage. Because the Reangs had to flee Mizoram following ethnic riots in October 1997, Mizoram has to show some new sense of direction.

# 3 N-E States unite against militancy

HT Correspondent  
Agartala, November 5

**T**HE NORTH-EASTERN States have joined hands to combat insurgency. Security forces of Assam, Tripura and Mizoram are planning to launch joint operations along the borders to flush out militants.

Stating this Tripura's director-general of police B L Bohra told newsmen here on Sunday that he had spoken to his counterparts in the other two States about the joint venture.

He said the State police with the help of the CRPF, the Assam Rifles and the Tripura State Rifles has been effective in curbing militancy in the past few months.

During the past three months (August to October), security forces have eliminated 25 extremists in different parts of the State in 28 encounters. This year so far the security forces have arrested 124 militants and 748 overground workers of the militant outfits.

Inspector-general of police (law

and order) K Saleem Ali said that this year 51 militants and collaborators were detained under the National Security Act and NSA orders issued against 66 others.

Most of the captured belonged to the banned National Liberation Front Of Tripura (NLFT) and All Tripura Tiger Force (ATTF).

Police recovered many weapons including AK-56, AK-47 rifles, Sten guns, Chinese make rifles and a cache of grenades and 21 country-made weapons and explosives.

The DGP said the State police planned to modernise their armoury to cope with increasing militancy and the Union Home

Ministry has sanctioned Rs 5.6 crore towards this.

Bohra discussed the matter with Mizoram DGP M. Tunsanga and recently transferred Assam DGP P

V Sumant. Sumant has been replaced by Harekrishna De-ka, and Tripura DGP will talk to him soon.

While lauding police success, Bohra refuted allegations of police excesses. He said such allegations are common in times of stringent measures to restore peace.

Tripura Police has already launched a spe-

cial operation—Operation Synergy—to crush insurgency in the State.

"The joint operation is crucial in the border areas because the insur-

gents of all the three States are active in the fringe areas," the DGP of Tripura said.

Bohra said steps had been taken to modernise the police force in the State.

"We have bought sophisticated weapons, bullet-proof jackets, good number of vehicles and we will purchase night vision devices soon," he said.

"We have also developed an efficient communication system between police headquarters in sub-divisional levels and the police station. More police stations were being set up to provide security to the people from the insurgents," he said.

A special task force (STF) had been formed with selected jawans of Tripura State Rifles who underwent special training in anti-insurgency operations in the jungle warfare school in Mizoram, said Bohra.

The DGP said the morale of the police force was high now and it was playing a positive role in containing insurgency with active support from villagers.

**Tripura police with the help of the CRPF, the Assam Rifles and the Tripura State Rifles has been effective in curbing militancy in the past few months**

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

5 6 NOV 2000



## BLOOD BORDERS

The boundaries of insurgency are getting alarmingly blurred. And the "Northeast" — a distant abstraction for most in lower West Bengal — is getting to be closer home than imagined. The police in north Bengal had a rough day on Sunday, fighting armed militants in the dense and hilly jungles near Kalimpong. It did manage to kill at least two militants, but 10 policemen were injured and one homeguard killed. These highly trained and sophisticatedly armed militants are widely suspected to be Naga rebels brought over to train fledgling insurgents, probably belonging to the Gorkha Liberation Organization.

The uncertain identities are significant. Insurgent outfits in Nagaland, Assam, Meghalaya and Tripura now network so extensively that their separate agenda, finances and territories are beginning to get confounded. This makes them individually and collectively more powerful, and hence more violently difficult to tackle. In north Bengal, Kamtapuri terrorism and Gorkha separatism (itself divided into at least two factions) work on overlapping terrains and are assisted by the same outfits from the neighbouring states. The United Liberation Front of Asom, the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (Isaak-Muivah) and the Bodo militants from Assam have all managed to work their way into the various terrorist movements in Bengal, particularly in the Terai area with its tea estates and forested hills near the Bhutan border. This is opportune for both the ULFA and the NSCN (I-M). The terms of the Centre's ceasefire with the NSCN (I-M) remain equivocal. The security forces, the Centre's representative, the convenor of the ceasefire monitoring cell and the outfit itself are sending out totally conflicting information regarding the scope of the ceasefire. The Nagaland-Nagalim confusion persists. The Naga Hoho, exasperated with this impasse, is attempting to organize its own ceasefire zones with the cooperation of the Sema and the Ao communities. The ULFA, particularly its leaders and cadre stranded in Bhutan, are feeling increasingly restive, insecure and confused. One of their linkmen is also revealing a nexus involving militants and politicians in Assam, which is leading to another kind of impasse between the Congress and the Asom Gana Parishad. Meanwhile, abductions and extortions, with some neighbourly abetment, are improving the expertise, finances and armoury of these outfits, equipping them better to take over the dysfunctional economies of the north Bengal terrain. With around 80 per cent of the population living below the poverty line, and basic amenities like water, power, health and education remaining woefully inadequate, the Dooars area is turning out to be one of the most effective targets for the outreach activities of these organizations. The Centre has displayed grievous ineptitude and lack of political will in handling this spiralling terrorism. It remains to be seen whether the West Bengal government is any different in confronting what it can ill afford to look away from.

THE TELEGRAPH

14 NOV 2000

# 'NSCN sets up N Bengal base'

Klinsuk Basu  
Calcutta, November 13

INTELLIGENCE REPORTS today confirmed that some disgruntled NSCN militants who had set up base in the dense Tinkothari forests had yesterday fought a four-hour gun battle with Darjeeling police.

Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, briefing reporters at the Writers' Buildings, confirmed an outfit from the North-east had set up camp in the north Bengal forest. But he stopped short of naming the NSCN. "For obvious reasons I don't want to name the outfit. But we are almost certain about its identity."

State intelligence officials today sent a report to the Union Home Ministry. It said a group of about 25, drawn from among dissenters in both the Isaac-Mujivah and Khaplang factions of the NSCN, had weeks ago trekked down to the thick Tinkothari woods to train in the use of sophisticated arms. The area is within the jurisdiction of the Jaldhaka police station.

These ultras, apparently opposing the ceasefire in Nagaland, had spoken out against the official line taken by their parent outfits.

"With both the I-M and Khaplang factions favouring the truce, these youths thought it best to leave their home State, train in this remote hilltop hideaway and then launch their separate homeland stir. Most of them are young and missed out on training sessions conducted by the two groups. So, they wanted a separate session of their own," a senior member of the district intel-

ligence wing said over the telephone from Siliguri.

The men, mostly in their early twenties, reached north Bengal in buses from Srirampur, Kokrajhar. They crossed the Sankosh River, took the National Highway and crossed the Coronation Bridge.

Police teams that reached the den found cooked monkey meat. Villagers living nearby said they had seen caged monkeys in the hideout. Nagas are known to eat both dogs and monkeys and this gave away the identity of the man killed in yesterday's encounter and the rest now on the run.

"We found vessels containing cooked monkey meat. Besides, there was evidence that the gang members had eaten dog meat only days ago. Also, villagers living nearby claimed they had heard the men speak a strange language — probably Konayak," a senior intelligence branch official told *The Hindustan Times*.

The intelligence report does not take cognizance of the district police claims that the Naga men were training Darjeeling Gorkha Liberation Organisation (GLO) cadres. The intelligence officers, however, admitted that GLO leader Chattré Subba, sympathetic to the Naga cause, might have had a hand in helping the ultras sneak in. Subba, who set up the GLO after he fell out with Subash Ghising, is married to a Naga girl.

Flush-out efforts by the district police drew a blank today. The forces have fanned out in the jungle, but with heavy rains lashing the area, progress is slow. Senior officers are supervising operations.

Another report on Page 3

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

14 NOV 2000

# Mahanta has proof of Congress-ULFA nexus

SAMUDRA GUPTA KASHYAP  
GUWAHATI, NOV 14

GOING a step further from Monday's revelation that a particular political party was involved in the killings in Assam, Chief Minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta today named the Congress as the party to have close links with the ULFA, and said some of its workers were even involved in the recent spate of killings in the state.

To buttress his claim, he showed some video clippings to media persons in which at least one person arrested in connection with the recent incidents said he was an active member of the Congress and that he had helped the

ULFA identify some of the persons who were later killed by the rebels.

"The government has informa-

## Backs claim with video clipping on Congman saying he harboured ULFA militants

tion that some opposition parties are out to create more trouble in the state because the state assembly elections are drawing closer," Mahanta claimed.

He said the state government

had already submitted a report to the Union Home Ministry giving details of "one political party" having close links with the ULFA, giving enough indications that the party was none other than the Congress.

Mahanta also reiterated the Asom Gana Parishad's earlier demand that the Congress be debarred from taking part in elections in the state, "because it had links with the ULFA which in turn was in the grip of the ISI of Pakistan." "Some opposition parties are demanding President's Rule in the state. But they are not seen condemning the killings. They are also opposed to programmes

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

# Mahanta has proof of Congress-ULFA nexus

taken up to condemn and protest violence," Mahanta added.

One of the four persons who figured in the video clippings taken during interrogation by the police was Ghotuk Lahon, who confessed that he was an active member of the Congress and was holding the post of president of a block-level Congress committee in Tinsukia district of Upper Assam. Lahon, in the clipping, said he had not only given shelter to a group of ULFA militants in his house on

October 21, but had also given them names of some persons who had allegedly helped the security forces in locating some ULFA cadre the previous month.

The ULFA cadre who stayed in his house on October 21, next evening gunned down eleven persons, all Hindi-speaking in No 2 Kakojan village under Doomdooma police station in Tinsukia district, Lahon in the video clipping, said.

Mahanta also showed another

clipping in which Nripen Das, one of the accused in the Nalbari killings of October 27 was involved, figured. Nripen Das however introduced himself as a local businessman, in contrast to the Congress party's claim that he was an active AGP member.

When asked about the political status of Nripen Das, Mahanta said, "had he been member of any political party he would have definitely stated that during his interrogation."

Mahanta also lashed out at a section of the local leaders of the BJP and said that while the BJP's national leaders including the Home Minister were satisfied with the state's improved law and order situation, the local leaders had failed to gauge the correct situation.

"The state unit of the BJP is seen busy in trying to derive political mileage out of the recent killings, ignoring the ground realities," Mahanta added.

INDIAN EXPRESS

15 NOV 2000

# NORTH-EAST'S WOES

## Promises Galore, But No Performance

By SATIS C KAKATI

**N**ORTH-EAST India comprising seven sister states — Assam, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura and Arunachal Pradesh. Before Independence the region consisted of one full-pledged state, Assam, two native states of Manipur and Tripura and the North-Eastern Frontier Agency. Presently, the region covers seven full-fledged states six of them being of district-size in respect of population and territory. On the eve of Independence the region was very sensitive from the point of its geographical situation and was on the verge of being made part of Pakistan in terms of the British Cabinet mission plan of 1946.

However, due to the efforts of Lokapriya Gopinath Bardoloi strengthened by the support of Gandhiji, the region was saved but was still left with some complex problems such as a corridor linking the north-eastern region with the rest of the country and, of course, endless migration of refugees from East Pakistan.

Be that as it may, after Partition, the North-East was expected to proceed with measures to remove backwardness which had accumulated during the 120-year-old British Rule. A British Governor of Assam, Sir Michael Keane (1932-1937), called Assam "a problem province" not because the area was afflicted by problems like insurgency, secession, ethnicity but because he was worried about a three-fold problem: floods and erosion; malaria, kalaazar and smallpox; and valleyism arising out of rivalry between the Brahmaputra Valley and the Surma Valley quarrelling over issues like the seat of a University.

### INSURGENCIES

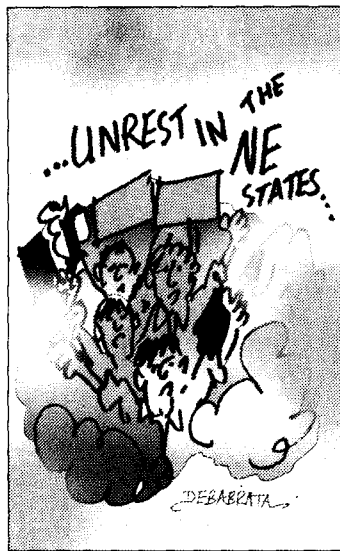
What, however, has been afflicting Assam over the decades is essentially economic backwardness which is a British legacy later compounded by insurgency in all the seven states all in the name of either secession or separate states. It was the Nagas who started insurgency for an independent Nagaland. The Mizos later under the banner of the Mizo National Front took to rebellious method for an independent Mizoram though Laldenga, after jungle life for 20 years, confessed on 20 August 1984 that he could not do anything for his people. After he became chief minister of Mizoram he was able to serve his people in a constructive manner and realised the futility of confrontation.

In Assam a section of the Assamese youth did not lag behind in pursuing the goal of a *Swadhin Assam* and has taken to insurgency like the rebel Nagas. In the initial years (1979-88) the outfit the United Liberation Front of Assam received popular support but presently that support has reached its nadir. However, this has not discouraged the Bodos, the principal plains tribe, to agitate first for a separate Bodoland. Similar organisations have cropped up in Meghalaya, Tripura, Manipur and even in quiet Arunachal Pradesh. They have links with each other, causing serious problems to the state governments.

Why all these terrorist outfits have erupted in the post-Independence period is a question that deserves to be examined. Admittedly, the Naga movement for independent Nagaland started almost at the time

of India's attainment of Independence. The Naga rebel leader, AZ Phizo argued that since Naga areas were not a part of India and that Britishers forcibly included them in India it would be proper, he argued, for the authority of independent India to free the Nagas from India's shackles. Phizo received inspiration and assistance in his rebellion from the British tea planters and missionaries. In any case, terrorism has spread in the area in the last few years.

Generally, it is believed that the main cause of the unrest in the NE states is its backwardness and unemployment. The government of India is



aware of this. Prime Ministers who have visited the region from time to time have acknowledged it, central ministers visiting the area announce grandiose schemes — all for eradication of poverty and backwardness. But the crux of the matter is that the gulf between the promises and performances has widened. The Shukla Commission's recommendations have remained unimplemented and the package announced by Atal Bihari Vajpayee in January this year has not yet received the Planning Commission's nod.

Floods in Assam have been a perennial problem and the problem remains acute as ever rendering lakhs of people homeless and damaging crops. But come the winter and the dry season and both the government and the affected people forget the problem. The mighty Brahmaputra and its tributaries present a serious problem specially after the earthquake of 1950.

### UNCOMMITTED

The Centre appointed the Brahmaputra flood control board but it is yet to evolve any worthwhile project to mitigate the hardship of the people. Similar is the case with the North-Eastern Council which was formed in 1971.

On the unemployment problem, the less said the better. The fact that over 16 lakhs of unemployed youths are on the register in Assam alone speaks for itself. No wonder terrorist outfits like the United Liberation Front of Assam, the National Democratic Front of Bodoland, the Bodo Liberation Tiger of Bodoland, the Barak National Council of the Tripura and the Tripura Resurrection Army have posed serious problems not only in the states where these outfits work but all the terrorist organisations have a close nexus among themselves besides having a link with foreign agencies like the Inter-Services Intelligence of Pakistan. Significantly, the tribes of the region are also more active in their terrorist activities.

Those who have been following events in the north-

east, particularly Assam, will agree that the people had to launch popular movements to secure attention and support. Two instances will prove this. When the government of India decided to set up a public sector refinery, the people of Assam, which is a storehouse of crude oil, urged the Centre that it should be established in Assam. But the then Petroleum Minister, KD Malaviya, refused to accept Assam's demand stating that the state was vulnerable to attacks from China. The then chief minister BP Chaliha promptly retorted in a letter to Nehru that if the government of India was unable to protect a refinery in this part of the country how then could the Centre save Assam for an attack from China. His contention was proved when the Chinese troops came close to Assam in 1962. Nehru had issued "a farewell message" to the people of Assam on 21 November 1962 though fortunately the Chinese troops unilaterally withdrew.

Nehru then ruled out Malaviya's plea, accepted Assam's demand and inaugurated on 1 January 1962 India's first public sector oil refinery at Noonmati near Guwahati constructed with Romanian assistance. Earlier on 10 January 1960 Nehru laid the foundation stone of the first-ever rail-road bridge in India across the Brahmaputra at a cost of Rs 10 crores.

Few will dispute the fact that MPs from the North-East (Assam 20, Meghalaya 3, Nagaland 3, Manipur 3, Tripura 3, Arunachal Pradesh 3 and Mizoram 2) can do little individually to build up an effective lobby in New Delhi but collectively they can make policy makers listen.

### LANGUISHING

True, some MPs from Assam have got berths in the Union Council of Ministers but they are not credited with playing any effective role in solving the region's problems. Dev Kanta Barooah was content with his slogan "Indira is India and India is Indira" while Fakhruddin Ahmed was unmindful of Assam's problems and signed the Emergency proclamation. Moinul Haque Choudhury was interested in the influx of migrants from East Pakistan and their well-being and safety.

Dinesh Chandra Goswami and Birendra Kumar Baishya of the Asom Gana Parishad though they held important portfolios are not known to have exerted their influence. PA Sangma held the Labour portfolio but did nothing for five lakh tea garden workers or for the tribes.

In the circumstances, the 40 million people of the strategic region can hardly hope that their problems will be solved in the foreseeable future. But the central leadership cannot afford to be indifferent.

In the first spell of the Vajpayee government, a separate ministry for north-east affairs was mooted but it did not take any concrete shape. Recently, a report gained currency that a special cell for the north-east would be opened in the Prime Minister's Office but that too seems to have suffered the fate of the earlier proposal.

In the second part of Anil Divan's article, "Not Cricket" (16-17 November) the paragraph in the third column beginning "Under the Constitution...", should read: "Under our Constitution there can be no retrospective penalties imposed for past activities."

The author is the former editor of The Assam Tribune.

# 16 massacred in Tripura attacks

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

AGARTALA, Nov. 19. — At least 16 people were butchered today in North Tripura's Kan-  
chanpur as tribal militants attacked a village and a non-tribal mob carried out a revenge massacre.

The killings began soon after 7 a.m. when National Liberation Front of Tripura guerrillas swooped on Barahaldi, a village with a mixed population, and gunned down a tribal man and six non-tribals, including three women and two children.

They left behind several wounded, most of whom are fighting for life at the district's government hospital.

The backlash came within hours. A mob of non-tribals, led by United Bengali Liberation Front militants, attacked tribal villagers at neighbouring Falgunjoypara, hurling some 200 bombs, hacking nine people to death and burning homes.

The attackers threw the bodies into the burning huts.

The rioting spread in the

neighbourhood, with both tribal and non-tribal mobs taking it out on each other. By the time the madness ended, 40 homes had been razed in Barahaldi and neighbouring villages, and hundreds had fled their homes.

The non-tribal villagers were tonight camping at local school-houses; the tribals had crossed the river Deo and fled to the forests. Section 144 had been clamped on Barahaldi and its neighbourhood.

The Assam Rifles, the Tripura State Rifles, the Special Task Force and the CRPF were patrolling the area. Officials described the situation in the area as "tense but under control".

The chief minister, Mr Manik Sarkar, and the ruling Left Front condemned the NLFT killings and the mob attacks. The Opposition demanded that the government resign.

At Ganganagar in Dhalai, a Barak National Commando Force of Tripura militant was shot dead by police.

■ Photographs on page 2

THE STATESMAN

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## INNER RESISTANCE

9/11/00 10/10/00 11/11/00  
**E**thnic terrorism continues to devastate Tripura. Yet the long violence between tribals and non-tribals in the state is finally creating forms of resistance within the tribals themselves. This is the only ground for hope in the face of civil society having come to a brutal standstill in the state. The most recent episode in the Kanchanpur area of north Tripura shows the usual symmetries. The massacre of non-tribals by insurgents from the National Liberation Front of Tripura provokes non-tribal retaliation, leaving 18 people dead. The violence of the killings (the victims have been shot, charred, lynched and hacked) is enhanced by the arson that has gutted entire villages. The unbridled extremity of these acts speaks of the extent to which the ethnic conflict has gone out of hand. Ever since the Indigenous People's Front of Tripura wrested control of the Tripura Tribal Area Autonomous District Council in May, after the most bloodily coercive election witnessed by the state, the NLFT (the IPFT's militant wing) and the All-Tripura Tiger Force have been ceaseless in their attacks on the non-tribal "immigrants". The insurgents' demand for autonomy — expressed through massacres, arson, abduction, extortion and religious conflict — has resulted in a non-tribal backlash, the formation of the United Bengali Liberation Front. Hence, the familiar and seemingly unstoppable vicious circle.

But the tribal Chakmas of Tuichakma village have been standing firm in their attempt to break this circle. They have unanimously organized a resistance movement against the NLFT, and their firmness has incurred the wrath of the insurgents. The NLFT has taken two Chakma women hostage after the Chakmas had threatened it with dire consequences if the tribals failed to surrender arms. Like the Jamatya and Uchoi tribals of west and south Tripura respectively, the Tuichakma tribals have dissociated themselves from violence, initiating a more clear-sighted understanding of the futility of this kind of terrorism. Given the continuing inability of the Centre and of Tripura's Left Front government to implement any resolution of the conflict, such incipient resistances speak for a clarity and courage which the state could ill afford not to build on.

THE TELEGRAPH

21 NOV 2000

# Mizoram CM enlisted as peace broker?

Continued from page 1  
with the fact that the Mizo National Front leader was the deputy of late Laldenga when the Mizo Accord was signed and peace returned to Mizoram.

On their part, the Nagas seem very pleased that at last a politician who understands their problems came to talk to them.

The General Secretary of NSCN (I-M), Mr Muivah clarified that Mr Zoramthanga was not received by his organisation "as the representative of the government of India" but only as someone who was committed to the Indo-Naga peace process.

Mr Muivah, however, believes that there was no way the Mizoram Chief Minister would have come to

meet the NSCN (I-M) without a nod from the Prime Minister's Office or the Home Ministry.

Mr Muivah said that it did not take Mr Zoramthanga long to understand the Naga problem. "His practical experience is invaluable to us," he said.

The Naga leader said that he made it very clear to Mr Zoramthanga that as far as the NSCN (I-M) was concerned, the cease-fire agreement had no area limitation. Since the cease-fire agreement was with the Indian government, he was told that the Naga rebel forces would not fire upon any Indian security forces—whether it is the Army, the paramilitary forces or the police—in any state of India.

Mr Muivah said that Mr Zoramthanga immediately recognised that since the cease-fire agreement was between the government of India and the NSCN (I-M), there could be no fighting between the two anywhere.

"We told him that if the government of India accepts three things—one, that the cease-fire is without any area limitation; two, that the Indo-Naga issue is a political issue which needs to be solved through peaceful negotiations involving politicians; and three, that all the terms and conditions agreed upon earlier are to be strictly honoured by the two parties—then there will be no problem from our side," Mr Muivah

said.

Was the Mizoram Chief Minister the new Indian emissary to negotiate a solution to the Naga problem? Would the NSCN (I-M) prefer that? "No. That will be an entirely different story. The point is that Mr Zoramthanga is a highly sensible Chief Minister and someone who is prepared to understand us. He understands the value of peace and he has the practical wisdom to recognise the difficulties involved in attempting a negotiated settlement. His experience tells him that political issues can be solved through peaceful means only by politicians taking the responsibility for the talks," the Naga leader said.

(To be continued)

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

22 NOV 2000

# Set an ex-rebel to deal with rebels

**Bangkok:** Is New Delhi finally jettisoning its bureaucratic approach to the Naga peace talks and putting them back on the political track? It would seem so. To break the deadlock in the peace talks with the Naga rebels, the government is now attempting to use one of their own kind—an old underground rebel leader and the current Chief Minister of Mizoram, Mr Zoramthanga, to talk to them.

Mr Zoramthanga has had two meetings with the underground leadership of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isak-Muivah) in the Thai capital on November 8 and 9. He met the Chairman of the NSCN (I-M), Mr Isak Chishi Swu and its General Secretary, Mr Thuingaleng Muivah, who was released from a Thai jail after eight months in a passport-fraud case on September 13.

The three-year-old cease-fire with the Naga rebels is currently precariously perched because of disputes over the area of cease-fire coverage and whether besides the Indian army, the cease-fire also covers the paramilitary and the police forces in the North-Eastern states. The Indian negotiators have been claim-

## NAGA PEACE TALKS - I

Bharat Bhushan



Zoramthanga

T. Muivah

ing that the cease-fire applies to the state of Nagaland alone. The NSCN (I-M) says that it

applies to the other Naga inhabited areas also which fall under Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh.

Up to last month, the Prime Minister's office had been using former Home Secretary K. Padmanabhaiah to deal with the Nagas. He still continues to wear the hat of Prime Minister's Special Emissary for the Naga peace talks. Either because of his brief or because of other factors, the Naga peace process nearly broke down during his tenure as the chief Indian negotiator.

Indeed, ever since he was released from jail, Mr Muivah has distanced himself from any negotiation with Mr Padmanabhaiah, choosing to send one of his deputies to talk to him in Amsterdam in late October. When asked why the last round of talks was not held in Bangkok where he could participate, Mr Muivah said, "Whenever a bureaucratic approach is used for addressing political problems, I tend to lose interest because I know that nothing will come out of it."

Using Mr Zoramthanga to talk to the Nagas may have much to do with these factors as also

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## MANIPUR CRISIS

518  
23/18  
Speaker in the forefront again

**P**OLITICIANS in Manipur seem more concerned with self-aggrandisement than with redeeming election promises. The temptation to sit in the chief minister's chair is irresistible and is the main cause of instability. W Nipamacha Singh's 26-month rule before the February assembly elections was characterised by dissension; he earned three reprieves in as many months. But many expected him to sail through smoothly after his Manipur State Congress Party and Federal Party of Manipur combine secured 29 seats in the 60-member house. The fresh crisis follows the disqualification of agriculture minister T Kipgen, who is among the eight facing Speaker Sapam Dhananjoy Singh's wrath if they do not join his group. Kipgen was elected on the NCP ticket and joined the MSCP along with two of his colleagues. If Nipamacha Singh is brought down, history will repeat itself, since it was the latter who, as Speaker, masterminded the fall of Rishang Keishing. The trouble with Nipamacha Singh is that he does not have loyalists and must count upon the support of deserters and opportunists who have no qualms about selling themselves to the highest bidder.

Not only did the BJP fail to forge an electoral alliance with the MSCP; it did not join the Nipamacha ministry because of differences between stalwarts like RK Dorendra and Bhupon Singh. The BJP with six members is a constant threat to the chief minister. The present crisis is the predictable consequence of the secret meeting the Speaker reportedly had with RK Dorendra in Calcutta in June. A shrewd politician, Dorendra was chief ministers three times. He is no mean manipulator, an expert in horsetrading. Little wonder then that Manipur is once again headed for instability.

THE STATESMAN

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# We haven't received arms from China for last 20 yrs: Muivah

**Bangkok:** "We have not received any arms or ammunition from China for more than 20 years now," Mr Thuingaleng Muivah, the General Secretary of the underground Naga organisation the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isak-Muivah) said. He was responding to press reports in India about Mr Anthony Shimrey, a senior official of the NSCN (I-M) allegedly making a visit to Kunming in China to purchase arms.

Mr Muivah accused some bureaucrats and intelligence officials of feeding such "biased" reports to the media. He claimed that the Nagas did not have "millions of dollars" to purchase arms, as alleged in the media.

"Do the Indian intelligence agencies not know what the whole world already knows—that it is no longer necessary to get arms from any country? They are available on the international market for the asking. So why should we go to China or any other country? The fact is that for the last three years, we have strictly honoured the cease-fire agreement with the Government of India. Any talk of arms procurement by us at present is totally unfounded," the Naga leader said.

Why then did he think such reports had appeared in the Indian media? "Magnifying unfounded news of our buying arms from China to me demonstrates the intention of the Indian Intelligence Bureau and the Indian media to undermine, if not sabotage, the Indo-Naga peace process," Mr Muivah claimed. But why

## NAGA PEACE TALKS -II

Bharat Bhushan



"who want to crush the Nagas and see that as a solution" and a section of the media was willing to oblige them.

What was Mr Anthony Shimrey's job in the NSCN (I-M)? Was it that of being the chief arms procurer? "He is just an officer without any specific task. He being our chief arms procurer is a fabrication by the Indian intelligence agencies. They are always after some conspiracy or the other. I have already told you that we have had no arms dealing with China or Pakistan for the last two decades. Sensible Indians should realise that it is not China or Pakistan that stands in the way of a negotiated settlement of the Naga problem. So there is no need to be over-apprehensive about them as far as the Naga issue is concerned. We are here to work out an honourable solution with the Government of India and not with anybody else," the Naga leader replied.

Why then had he visited Pakistan? Mr Muivah, after all, was arrested in Bangkok after disembarking from a flight from Karachi for carrying a fake passport. Had he not been to Pakistan to attend, as believed by some in India, a conclave of anti-India insurgent

did he think that the Indian media wanted to undermine the peace process? Mr Muivah claimed that there were some elements in India—especially in the Union Home Ministry—

Continued on Page 11

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# No arms from China: Muivah

Continued from page 1

groups at Murree near Islamabad? "For the future it is hard for me to say whether we would or would not attend any such meeting. But as of now, we have not attended any such meeting anywhere in Pakistan," the Naga leader claimed.

Mr Muivah, however, admitted that he himself had taken the initiative to go to Pakistan as he felt it necessary "to keep them informed of the peace process because no country should misunderstand us."

He claimed that Pakistan had been of immense help to the Nagas before the formation of Bangladesh and that since it was a friendly country, "we have an obligation to inform it of the peace process."

In retrospect, did he think it was a plain bad decision to go to Pakistan or was it just an act of indiscretion to do so when the

## Advani briefed

MIZORAM CHIEF Minister Zoramthanga on Wednesday met Home Minister L K Advani and apprised him of his meetings with Th Muivah in Bangkok recently. Advani requested Zoramthanga to continue his peace efforts as the "North-East rebels would understand his language," official sources said.

PTI, New Delhi

Indo-Naga peace talks were on?

Mr Muivah claimed that the Nagas "could not sever relations with their friends all over on account of the peace process. In fact, we want the world to understand the necessity of the peace process with India."

Did he really think that anyone in

India would buy this argument? Would India not be justified in being even more suspicious of him?

"There is no ground for any Indian to be suspicious of me on this score. To inform other nations and other organisations about the Indo-Naga peace process is not an act of indiscretion. If we are not getting a single bullet, a single gun or any money from Pakistan, why should India be worried?" he asked. Would India be wrong in believing that he and his organisation might facilitate Pakistani contacts with other insurgent groups in North-Eastern India?

"I do not think that the Pakistanis need our help in doing that. If they want, they can find their own way of making contact with these groups," Mr Muivah replied.

(To be continued)

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

21 NOV 1979

# Don't waste opportunity for peace, says Muivah

<sup>HCA</sup>  
Bangkok: Describing his eight months in Thai jails as "a fine opportunity," Mr Thuingaleng Muivah, general secretary of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isak-Muivah) said that jail allowed him to think about politics and understand "the wickedness of Indian policy".

"The Indian authorities tried to take inordinate advantage of my being in jail. That wasn't the right thing to do," he claimed. How had India done that? Mr Muivah claimed that even though peace talks had been going on between him and the Indian representatives, this was not acknowledged by India to the Thai authorities and the world

at large. "Just because I was in jail, the Indian authorities tried to brand me as a terrorist leader. They should not have done that," Mr Muivah said.

"India should have been true to itself and openly acknowledged that there were peace talks on between the NSCN (I-M), represented by Thuingaleng Muivah and the Indian government, represented by the Indian Prime Minister and his emissary. However, when the Indian Foreign Minister, Mr Jaswant Singh, was in



Bangkok and was asked about the peace talks by some responsible people, he simply denied that any such talks were on. Even the Indian Embassy here was instructed to ensure that I should be detained in jail for as long as possible," the Naga leader claimed.

He maintained that the problem would not go away even if he was not there on the scene. Referring to earlier "agreements" with the Nagas, Mr Muivah wanted to know, "Did the

July 1960 agreement with the Naga Peoples' Convention solve the Naga issue? Did even the Shillong Accord of November 11, 1975 solve the Naga problem? India must realise that the Indo-Naga

## NAGA PEACE TALKS -III

Bharat Bhushan

issue has an objective dynamic of its own. It will go on unless it is resolved politically and honourably. It has little to do with individuals." Mr Muivah said that the current juncture represented "the finest opportunity" to seek a political solution to the Naga problem. "But is it being utilised to that end? No. The tragedy is the political leadership in India is easily misled. The intelligence agencies and the bureaucrats in India think

Continued on Page 6

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

24 NOV 2000

# Xenophobia or plain lawlessness?

By Wasbir Hussain

**H**IT-AND-RUN OFFENSIVES by elusive guerrillas fighting for independent homelands have long ceased to be big news in Assam. But when gunmen with automatic weapons emerge from nowhere and kill 40 people — mostly Hindi-speaking — in five different attacks within a month, it certainly is news and ominous at that. Call it xenophobia or plain lawlessness, the fact remains that the recent organised violence against Marwaris (from Rajasthan) and Biharis marks the beginning of a new round of terror in Assam. From Tinsukia and Sivasagar in the east to Nalbari in the north, the pattern is the same, a sort of pogrom.

On October 21, unidentified gunmen descended on village Nauholia in the eastern tea growing district of Dibrugarh and killed four persons, all Hindi-speaking. The next day, a strike at village Kakojan in adjoining Tinsukia district took a toll of 11 lives, all Biharis. On October 27, Diwali day, armed men alighted from a vehicle in the heart of the western district town of Nalbari and pumped bullets into nine unsuspecting persons, eight of them Marwaris, mostly traders. They died on the spot. The next massacre was in Barpeeta district on November 8. The toll: eight killed, seven of them non-Assamese. Gunmen then struck on November 16 in Sivasagar district, once the capital of the Ahom royalty who ruled Assam for 600 years. Here, seven Marwaris were killed, three of them from one family.

Except for the November 8 attack in Barpeeta district where the hand of the banned National Democratic Front of Boroiland (NDFB) — a separatist group fighting since 1986 for an independent Bodo homeland — is almost confirmed, there is a dispute over who is behind the killings of the Marwaris and the Biharis. The police and the highest authorities in the Assam Government insist that the outlawed United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) is carrying out these massacres. The ULFA, however, has denied its involvement. The mystery deepened with the surfacing

of pamphlets in the name of the unheard of Assam Tiger Force after the October 27 massacre at Nalbari. The ATF owned up the three attacks in Dibrugarh, Tinsukia and Nalbari, a claim dismissed by the Assam Police. According to the police, the ULFA carried out these killings and wanted to pass it off as acts of the non-existent Assam Tiger Force. The dispute aside, the ATF pamphlets spoke of its opposition to all outsiders living in Assam, not just the illegal Bangladeshi migrants.

Things though are not so simple. As-

ed a tough posture against the illegal migrants from Bangladesh despite the general anger in the State over the aliens. It is an open secret that top ULFA leaders have been operating out of Bangladesh. But, can the outfit afford to keep quiet or go against the popular sentiment in Assam against illegal Bangladesh migrants just because its leaders could be staying in Dhaka? The answer is both yes and no.

Strategies of a guerrilla group faced with a sustained counter-insurgency offensive can, however, change. The Army,

## *The recent organised violence against Marwaris and Biharis marks the beginning of a new round of terror in Assam... Could there be a deeper game at this crucial poll-eve juncture?*

police and paramilitary authorities agree (despite differences in approach and claims over success in counter-insurgency operations) that the ULFA, of late, is facing a severe fund crunch. They argue that since the rebel outfit has ceased to act as a cohesive force any longer in the wake of the sustained security offensives, its extortion operations have been hit hard, leading to cash reserves drying up.

Therefore, these officials say, the ULFA could be covertly engaged in attacking the wealthy Marwari and Bihari business community to instil a sense of fear among the non-Assamese before slapping hefty extortion demands on them. One does not know for sure, but there is some weight in this argument. Because, ever since the Prafulla Kumar Mahanta Government brought the security forces in Assam under a Unified Headquarters, with the Army heading the counter-insurgency operations, businessmen and others receiving extortion notices have started reporting such matters to the authorities. This was not the case earlier. Even big tea companies paid protection money to the ULFA without letting the authorities know anything whatsoever.

The serial killings on the eve of the

State Assembly elections (polls are due by February-March next year) has led to a blistering statement war in Assam with political parties accusing each other of being hand-in-glove with the rebels and so on.

The ruling Asom Gana Parishad accuses the opposition Congress of having a nexus with the ULFA. The Congress throws back the same charge at the AGP. The BJP, fast becoming a key player in Assam's murky political arena, has accused both the AGP and the Congress of maintaining links with the rebels.

Could there be a deeper game at work at this crucial poll-eve juncture? Are the selective attacks on the Hindi-speaking people engineered by political forces out to dislodge the AGP-led Government so as to have the polls under a spell of President's Rule? Nothing can actually be ruled out. After all, the murderous attacks on the Marwaris and the Biharis have already led to a national concern, both in the media as well as in political circles. For once, after a long time, the killings have got front-page coverage in most metropolitan dailies.

In so far as the response of the political parties is concerned, the BJP president, Mr. Bangaru Laxman, has said that a Jammu & Kashmir type situation is prevailing in Assam. A BJP fact-finding team arrived in Assam from New Delhi and returned after making an on-the-spot assessment of the security situation in the State in the wake of the serial killings.

In the winter of 1990, a massive fear psychosis had gripped the State's tea industry due to stepped-up insurgent attacks. That led, among other things, to the secret air-evacuation of several executives belonging to subsidiaries of the U.K.-based Unilever Group. This state of affairs had eventually brought down the Mahanta Government and President's Rule was imposed. Could the recent killings push the Mahanta Government to the brink of collapse once again?

(The writer is Editor, *The Northeast Daily, Guwahati*)

# Insurgency is big business in N-E

Rahul Karmakar  
Guwahati, November 24

HR 11/24/11

THE MEGHALAYA government's decision to ban two militant outfits - Achik National Volunteers Council and the Hynniewtrep Achik Liberation Council - last week has evoked the usual reaction. Whether the outlaw tag will help glorify two ragtag outfits, relative greenhorns in the region's insurgency business remains to be seen. Members of these outfits, notwithstanding the ANVC's avowed struggle for a separate Garoland state to be carved out of Meghalaya, were projected by the police as criminals posing as gun-toting patriots.

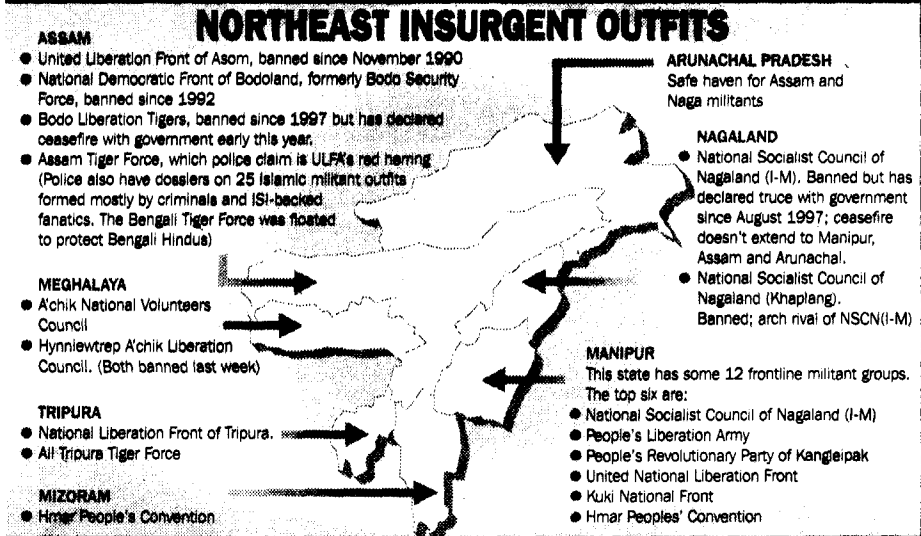
The policy of outlawing a rebellious, "non-conformist" group in order to discredit or crush it, has been a hotly debated one in the Northeast ever since Phizo's Naga National Council declared war on a "suppressive" Indian government in the 50s.

Many here feel that banning elevates the status of an outfit from extortionists and killers who then start projecting themselves as Robin Hoods, gradually going on to lead luxurious lives abroad. It is counter-productive and emboldens militants, they add.

The ULFA became a major force after it was banned on 27 November 1990. Similar was the case with the National Democratic Front of Bodoland, outlawed since 1992.

Others disagree. "Banning an outfit helps us take prompt action against militants under NSA, POTA and other Acts", says a top Assam Police officer declining to be quoted. "Most importantly, it deters political parties from maintaining direct links with these outfits and use their extortion money".

Banning also has its perks, he asserts. The Mizo National Front's proscription ended when



Graphic by VINEY

it came overground in 1986 and as per condition its chief Laldenga became the Chief Minister of Mizoram after Congressman Lalthanhawla stepped down. It was the turn of the Tripura National Volunteers two years later to dabble successfully with politics.

A popular belief is that an outfit is propped up by a political party. Nagaland Chief Minister SC Jamir is alleged to be close to the NSCN (Khaplang) group. And in Assam, both the Congress and the Asom Gana Parishad accuse each other of nursing the ULFA.

The Union Home Ministry bans an outfit on the basis of its notoriety and feedback from the state government, reviews the decision every

two years and extends if necessary. But the yardstick is often ridiculous as outfits like the UPDS and DHD, terrorising certain pockets of Assam, are not banned while the ULFA and NDFB are.

According to Manoj Goswami, executive editor of the Assamese daily Amar Asom a debilitating factor is the generalisation of insurgency.

"In the case of Assam it is poverty and unemployment while the rebellion in the hill states has been fuelled by tribal sentiments and a feeling of alienation. There should be solutions accordingly". However, for the moment in the Northeast, there's no business like insurgency when employment is scarce.

# From ceasefire to the cessation of hostilities

The third ceasefire in Nagaland, this time agreed upon between the government of India and the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (Isak-Muivah), started on August 1, 1997. The Khaplang group of the NSCN also declared a "goodwill ceasefire" before the year ended on December 15. Though Kuki-Naga and Kuki-Paite clashes continued with less intensity, with ceasefire and the commencement of political dialogue between the government and the NSCN, there was hope in the public mind that the violent past would be buried in the quest for peace. The Naga Hoho also declared the willingness of all sections of the Nagas to live in peace.

What was less noticed amidst the widespread sense of relief was that along with this had started the old game of creating and propping up the opposition to the rebels in the form of the Nagaland chief minister, S.C. Jamir. Just six months before the declaration of ceasefire, Jamir had declared on December 28, 1996, his intention to seek Interpol aid to secure the extradition of the rebel leadership.

This was an indication that the history of the failed ceasefire of 1964 would be repeated. At that time, the participation of A.Z. Phizo,

the leader of the Naga National Council, in the ceasefire talks had been opposed on the ground that he was in exile. The year, 1964, is worth remembering. Having created a new administrative unit called the Naga Hills Tuensang Area and placing it under the ministry of external affairs, Jawaharlal Nehru had entered into a 16-point agreement with a section of the Nagas to create the state of Nagaland within the union in December 1963. This statehood policy was primarily a piece of *Realpolitik*, dividing Nagas into moderates and rebels, and deepening the chasm between the government and society, and within society itself. Therefore it could not be the road to peace, and this was probably known to the government as well.

Six rounds of talks between the government and the rebels were held between 1964-67. Not surprisingly, nothing substantial emerged, although among the rebels there was a young man who later became the chairman of the NSCN, Isak Chisi Swu, and who had then participated in the dialogue with remarkable patience. The peace mission's efforts had brought nothing except the unsuccessful ceasefire agreement of 1964.

Just as the ceasefire agreement of 1964 signified nothing in terms of achieving a substantive political dialogue, there is now a possibility that the latest ceasefire may also come to nothing. The conditions agreed upon by the two sides — unconditional talks, talks at the highest level and the venue of talks to be outside India — may be woefully inadequate. Meanwhile, threats against the rebels allegedly continue, divisive tactics re-

portedly go on, and the substantive part of the discussion may be eternally postponed. Typically, Jamir commented in 1997 (and this was indicative of the government line of thinking) that the Naga Students Federation's theme of rapprochement between various sections of the Naga society is not enough, and that without spending too much time and energy over what happened in the past, Nagas should think of this rapprochement in terms of "bridging the gap between past, present and future".

Both Jamir and the Baptist Church of Nagaland wanted to become players for peace. Predictably the rebels, wise after the experience of the Sixties, refused to accept the entry of Jamir who, in their eyes, was the manipulator of the peace talks in the 1997 World Baptist Conference in Atlanta. However, the ceasefire initially agreed to by the NSCN (I-M) for three months continued.

Other problems, besides the Jamir factor, soon raised their heads. The rebels would lose no time to remind anyone willing to listen to them, that the two previous ceasefires in 1964 and 1974 were either preceded or followed by a split in the

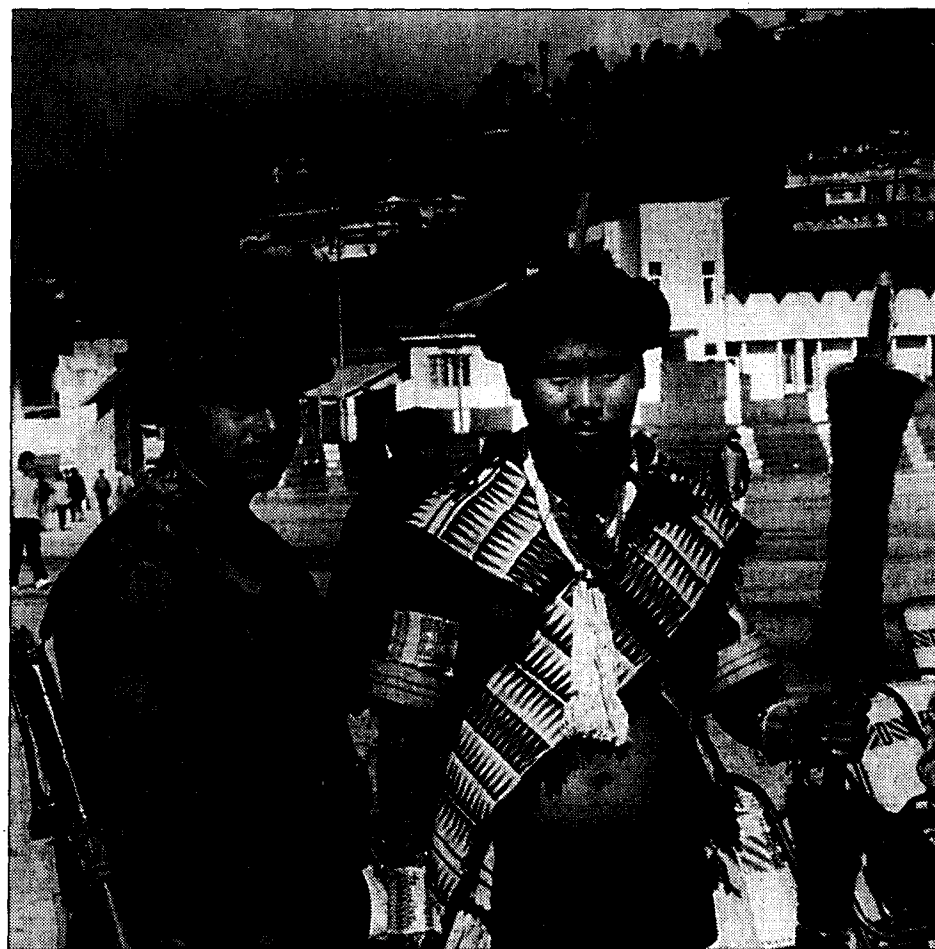
**‘Six rounds of talks between the government and the rebels were held between 1964-67. Nothing substantial emerged’**

rebel ranks and a political grant from the government of India that meant only surrender to them. The ceasefire in 1964 had been preceded by statehood, and that of 1974 had been followed by the Shillong Accord — both now recognized as disasters in the chronicle of the peace process.

Even in 1964, the ceasefire had extended to the rebel operations in Manipur. But this time the ceasefire was confined to Nagaland areas only. This denied the stand of the NSCN (I-M) that Naga areas had all along included parts of what is known today as upper Assam and Manipur, and that an eventual political dialogue would have to deal with not only the artificial entity called the Nagaland, but the Naga nation. I.K. Gujral declared in Parliament that fratricidal confrontations between Naga groups and other rebel groups had seriously disturbed public order, and the ceasefire in Nagaland would usher in progress. Rumours started circulating to the effect that peace talks would lead to the break-up of Manipur. The chief minister, Rishang Keishing, declared in the state assembly that the union home ministry had assured him that "there was no question of disturbing Manipur's territorial integrity in view of the peace talks with Naga rebels".

The union home secretary, K. Padmanabhaiah, declared that the agreement would be valid only in the state and a panel would be formed to supervise the agreement. But while certain ground rules were framed and decided upon, political aggression by the Union government continued. It was, at best a "moth-eaten peace and autonomy cheque"

The Naga peace process can be salvaged, not by high level political dialogue, but by involving the common people in it, writes **Ranabir Samaddar**



People's peace

being offered by the government.

Meanwhile, the Armed Forces Special Powers Act continues to be implemented. On the basis of this, raid and search operations are continuing. Threats of detention without trial, search and seizure, shooting to death, public control measures, confiscation, and declaration of public assemblies as illegal remain as ever. Nagaland remains beyond the bounds of Articles 19 and 21. The ceasefire monitoring office of the NSCN (I-M) in Dimapur was suspended for sometime and has been allowed to function only recently.

In the Naga areas of Manipur, land alienation of the Nagas through the extension of land acts continues. The ceasefire has not brought a halt to the operation of the old colonial laws, such as the Land Acquisition Act of 1884 and the Forest Laws. Yanganpokopi has been taken from the Maring Nagas for a national park. One hundred thousand acres of land have been taken from the Tangkhul Nagas. Loktak hydroelectricity project has

resulted in land alienation among the Zeliangrong Nagas. Similarly, political talks are now interrupted by new demands and questions by bureaucrats to the extent that the NSCN (I-M) leader, T. Muivah, was forced to declare, "We are not toys to be played around with". The government, of course, had the last laugh when Muivah was arrested in Thailand early this year, a development that showed the rebels the reach of the government's arms. So, though the ceasefire has been extended this year with effect from August 1 for another year, things are beginning to look ominous.

All this is not a product of a malice-driven campaign. Swaraj Kaushal, the government's interlocutor in 1998-99, spilled the beans at the time of his fall from grace, when he remarked in his widely quoted report, "We agreed to the word 'ceasefire' whereas this should have been 'cessation of hostilities'". Kaushal, of course, did not explain what he meant by that.

Cessation of hostilities is a broader term. It would have implied not only ceasefire, but also withdrawal and cessation of all measures considered as hostile. It would have meant, in the first place, withdrawal of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act, the scourge of the local people. It would have inaugurated a gradual, but concrete, plan of demilitarization including withdrawal of army to the barracks, stopping of physical checks and harassment. It would have implied cessation of menacing patrolling, full restoration of civil liberties, and above all, the withdrawal of the ban on the NSCN (I-M).

Also, it would have meant cessation of hostilities in Manipur. In short, with a broad-spectrum step, this would have signalled an agenda for the creation of trust, essential for a peace dialogue.

Instead, what has happened? On alleged grounds of inter-Naga clashes, the ceasefire-monitoring cell office of the NSCN (I-M) in Dimapur was closed down. The mutual charges of violation of ground rules were allowed to continue. On April 6 this year, Major Peter Parik reportedly asked the NSCN (I-M) to vacate the designated camp at Munglaimukh. The complaint about this went unheeded. Before that, on March 22, Captain Jouhal of the Indian army had again reportedly issued a similar "request" for the movement of the armed forces personnel in certain rebel-controlled areas.

A member of the monitoring group of the NSCN (I-M) was arrested and held without trial in Diphu jail. Several other cadre were detained during the ceasefire period under the National Security Act. The houses of some members of the rebel army were raided. On July 25 this year, Momba Moa, a rebel army sergeant major, was arrested at Jingkieng Nongshiliang in Meghalaya. Some of the outposts of the rebel monitoring arrangement were forcibly closed down. For six months, the government took no initiative to have the ceasefire monitoring group meeting.

The Indian government's argument was that these outposts were being misused for rebel activities and regrouping. The army's argument was that while there was a ceasefire, its normal activity under the Armed Forces Special Powers Act should and would continue. The added irony to the already twisted scenario was that the NSCN (I-M) was an illegal organization. It had been allowed to function within "strict limits" by the government in the interest of peace, and it wanted the latter to realize that.

No wonder, the NSCN (I-M) thinks that the ceasefire has only enabled the government to continue its policy of suppression under the garb of the cessation of fire. It complains of 149 incidents of violation of ceasefire by the government. Equally unsurprisingly

the government, following the murder of a senior functionary of the Khaplang group and the attempted assassination of Jamir, thinks that the ceasefire has become, for the rebels, a "license to kill".

The Nagas wonder what the ceasefire is worth if no substantive dialogue takes place, and injustice and the denial of basic rights continue. If the Indian constitution can be amended about 80 times, why can it not be done once more for bringing peace? If the legal-bureaucratic process is allowed to overtake the political process, will not this ceasefire embitter a situation which is already sullied between two unequal parties?

Ceasefires, in the recent history of peace politics all over the world, have been shown to be a part of the politics of war. That is why, in Sri Lanka, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam never took government offers on ceasefire seriously. In Kashmir, the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front declared a ceasefire which led to nothing. The ceasefire declared by the Hizbul Mujahedin collapsed on account of a lack of trust and the lack of a policy in the government to conduct the political dialogue.

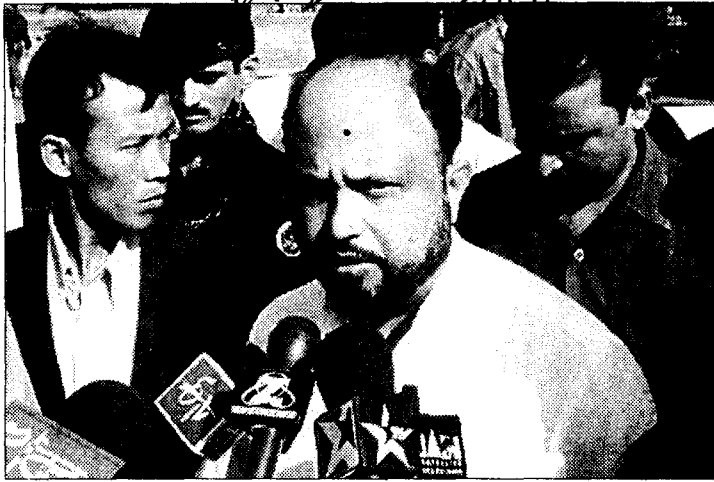
**‘Not only diplomacy, but also popular participation and social initiatives can make the peace process democratic and sustainable’**

A ceasefire delinked from the agenda of democratic peace is typical of a statist peace where the state thinks that by talking to the leader of the adversarial camp, peace is achieved. It is a thinking that divorces from the peace process the condition and feelings of the people, their desire for justice, and their activism for peace.

Is not the recent Palestinian experience enough to make us realize the futility of this much-talked-of peace process? Do we not have the alternative ethic of truth and reconciliation, which is built on the path of transforming retributive justice to restorative justice? Not only diplomacy, but also popular participation and sociopolitical initiatives make the peace process democratic and sustainable. The ceasefire in Nagaland is fast crumbling. The only people who will enjoy such a situation will be those who live off guns.

The sole way to salvage the peace process in Nagaland is to involve wide sections of the people — the Naga Students' Federation, the Naga People's Movement for Human Rights, the Mothers' Front, the Naga Hoho, the church and various other solidarities who have sympathy for the cause for which the rebels took up arms, but who desire justice and peace. Unfortunately, neither the government nor the rebels had the larger vision to argue for a democratization of the process. To do this they have to free themselves from this deadlock by broadening the agenda and extending their notions of who ought to be participating in the peace process.

# Mahanta in peace plea to neighbours



**Mahanta: A bagful of problems**

**P.P. Singh**

GUWAHATI 27 NOVEMBER

ASSAM CHIEF minister P.K. Mahanta on Monday called upon governments of Bhutan and Bangladesh to launch operations against North East militants as has been done by the government of Myanmar.

Mr Mahanta talking to the journalists after a peace rally organised by the Kamrup district administration at the Judges Field here said all these killings are carried out by militants based in the neighbouring countries and not from their bases in Assam.

He said during his recent visit to Delhi he had met the foreign minister, Mr Jaswant Singh, and defence minister George Fernandez and told them about the need for increasing the pressure on Bhutan and Bangladesh so that these militants are not allowed to operate from the friendly neighbourhood.

Mr Mahanta said the Unified Command has been successful to a great extent in curbing militancy in the state but these recent killings are signs of desperation

and show bankruptcy of any kind of ideology in the groups who claim to be benefactors of the people of the state.

The chief minister said the selective killings of a linguistic minority in the state by these militants are a game plan master-minded by forces outside the country to divide the people of the state on communal, religious and on linguistic basis which their government will never allow.

He said though the Centre is trying to help solve insurgency it is also very unfortunate that they feel the problem of J&K is more serious. They must realise that strategically the security problem of the entire North East is no less than the one in Kashmir, thus they must give equal importance to all the states having militancy problem.

When asked if he has any documentary evidence to prove his statement regarding the involvement of some of the leaders of the Congress in some of these killings, Mr Mahanta said they have positive information about the same.

*The Economic Times*

28 NOV 2000



# Northeast CMs reject truce extension plan

FROM OUR SPECIAL  
CORRESPONDENT

**New Delhi, Sept. 28:** Chief ministers of four northeastern states today expressed reservations about Centre's proposal to extend the ceasefire with the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (Isak-Muivah) to "other Naga-inhabited areas" in their states.

The refusal of the four states — Assam, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya — has put a spanner in the Centre's scheme of things.

Chief ministers of Assam, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya met Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee at 7, Race Course Road and aired their "reservations."

They had been summoned as part of the Vajpayee government's efforts to convince them and elicit a feedback on the proposed extension of the ceasefire to Naga-inhabited areas in the four states.

Briefing newsmen at the end of the meeting, an official spokesperson said the chief ministers felt that extending the ceasefire to Naga-dominated areas would create law and order problems.

The meeting, which lasted for over two hours, took place in the backdrop of the Centre's principal representative in the Naga peace talks, K. Padmanabhaiah's letter to NSCN(I-M) chairman Isak Chisi Swu on September 11, ex-

pressing the Union government's willingness to consider extension of the ceasefire if the insurgent outfit did not interpret it as an "acknowledgement of its demand for a greater Nagalim."

Padmanabhaiah also said the ceasefire would be extended only after consulting the concerned states. Swu reportedly accepted the condition.

The NSCN(I-M), which threatened to walk out of the ceasefire agreement, had been demanding extension of the ceasefire to Naga-inhabited areas in Assam, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya.

Assam chief minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta and his Manipur counterpart W. Nipamacha Singh had earlier said they were against the extension of ceasefire in their territories since both the states were battling terrorism and "they should not be held responsible for violations of ceasefire norms."

Nagaland, which had not been invited to today's meeting, had even passed a Cabinet resolution against extension of the ceasefire. The stand taken by four chief ministers at the meeting, which was also attended by Union home minister L.K. Advani, K. Padmanabhaiah and home secretary Kamal Pande, was not unexpected. Sources said the chief ministers held a separate conclave to evolve a common strategy before proceeding to Vajpayee's residence.